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FEW Applauds Introduction of Diversity Bill; Pledges Full Support

(Washington, D.C.) – The members of Federally Employed Women (FEW) applauded the introduction in the Senate of the “Senior Executive Service Diversity Assurance Act” (S 1180) by Senate Federal Workforce Subcommittee Chairman Daniel Akaka (D-HI). “We have been working on this issue for many years, including testifying three times on Capitol Hill, and thank Sen. Akaka for again introducing the measure this year” remarked Sue Webster, FEW National President. “We will be working hard to move this bill through the Congress,” she added.

The bill will establish within the Office of Personnel Management a “Senior Executive Service Resource Office” to ensure that the Senior Executive Service (SES) reflects the nation’s diversity. The office will have the responsibility and the power to prescribe regulations and provide guidance to agencies concerning the structure, management, and diverse composition of the Senior Executive Service. Furthermore, the legislation establishes programs to recruit women, ethnic minorities and persons with disabilities at the interagency and collegiate level.

“The lack of diversity in the SES has been a longstanding concern of mine,” stated Cecelia Davis, FEW National Vice President for Congressional Affairs. “Diversity is valuable because it can bring a wider variety of perspectives and approaches to policy development and implementation. Minorities and women need to be at the table contributing when strategic planning, problem solving and decision making is taking place.”

The latest statistics show that women represented 44.2% of the federal workforce; yet they only accounted for 29.1% of the career SES employees and 37.2% of all employees in grades 13 through 15. In 2003, 26.2% of the SES force was women. Increasing the ranks of women in the SES by 3% over five years is simply not good enough. This bill will help increase those numbers.

Janet Kopenhaver, FEW’s Washington Representative, pledged the organization’s full support. “We have an active grassroots network and will be encouraging our thousands of members to send letters to their Senators asking them to co-sponsor this important bill,” she stated. Kopenhaver advised that co-sponsorship of these bills would be a component in the FEW scorecard measuring how well legislators in the 111th Congress supported our nation’s federal workforce.

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FEW is a private, non-profit organization founded in 1968 after Executive Order 11375 was issued that added sex discrimination to the list of prohibited discrimination in the federal government. FEW has grown into a proactive organization serving more than one million federally employed women – both in the military and civilian workforce.

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