

**Council of Federal Executive Secretariats  
April Council Meeting  
April 3, 2012  
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency  
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Ariel Rios Federal Building  
Rachel L. Carson Great Hall**

**Council members present:** See below.

**Others present:** Janet McCabe, Principal Deputy Assistant Administrator, Office of Air and Radiation, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Kristina Friedman, Special Assistant, Office of Air and Radiation, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.

**Welcome.** 9:15 a.m. Eric Wachter, chair of the Council of Federal Executive Secretariats, welcomed everyone to the April meeting and to the EPA. He described the EPA Office of the Executive Secretariat and its four units: correspondence, FOIA, records and CMS. He introduced Cynthia Gaines, the correspondence team leader and said that there are seven members of correspondence team, three in CMS, three in FOIA and two in records. The office processes about 10,000 pieces of correspondence per year and has two writer-editors on staff.

**Best practice – White House Casework Referral Process.** 9:22 a.m. Galen Main from the White House explained the referral process. Correspondence is reviewed by the mail analysis unit and then divided into foreign policy, economy, education, energy and environment. The correspondence is sent to the agency liaison or policy letter response. The agency liaisons decide if and which agency should respond and then sends it via email. The agencies respond directly to the constituent, if appropriate, and blind copies the White House on the response. The White House will attach the email to the case file and then close it out. Main then answered some questions from the attendees. Volunteers read the mail, divide it and enter the data. Sometimes volunteers come from different agencies. For some referrals, the White House will send a policy response which says what the Administration is doing. Her office still accepts faxes but they go directly into the processing system.

Kathryn Alvarez from the Department of Treasury explained the process once Treasury receives White House referrals. Correspondence is received in a group email account, divided by subject to the policy office for review and then sent a response. When a response is made via email, an email is sent back to the Treasury group email account. The case is closed when the response is sent back to the White House via email. In 2011 about 45 percent of Treasury's general public correspondence received was from the White House casework. Treasury mainly handles housing issues such as loans and foreclosures, which the Treasury Homeownership Preservation Office deals with directly by working with mortgage lenders.

Clarence Finney from the Department of State was not able to attend so James McAndrews from Treasury presented for Clarence. State's process is similar to Treasury's in that casework is received in a group email account, divided by subject to the appropriate bureau to review, sent a response and entered into the database Everest. A copy of the response is processed thru the database; the case is closed and sent back to the White House as a reply to the incoming casework email. In 2011 about seven percent of State's general public correspondence received was from the White House casework. State mainly deals with entry into the U.S., visa issues and adoptions. The correspondence and records team tracks and archives referrals to ensure signed responses are received and logged for future retrieval.

Catherine Dugan from the Department of Homeland Security explained that DHS' Executive Secretariat Mail Analysis Office receives the emails from the White House. ESEC saves the email in the shared drive and gives a copy to the appropriate ESEC correspondence team. The team member enters the letter into a tracking system (IQ) and assigns it to the appropriate DHS component for response. The component enters the response into the tracking system and sends it back to ESEC, which then emails the response back the White House from the tracking system and closes the case.

**White House Update.** 9:45 a.m.

**Committee Reports.** 9:50 a.m. Ann Brewer presented for the meetings and membership committee. The committee did not meet but discussed the membership roster. Tracy Catoe and Ann worked on getting all the names of the agencies. The committee would like to get the email list down to one or two people per agency so that everyone is not getting the email and that it is going to the right people. Some agencies are still not checking their general executive secretariat email boxes. In response to a question about not feeling comfortable sending email to the general office email addresses for fear of its not being checked, Eric Wachter said he would send an email to everyone on the list requesting the correct email address. He said he would have this list available by the May meeting. The committee reports were suspended upon the arrival of the keynote speaker.

**Keynote Speaker.** 10 a.m. Wachter introduced Janet McCabe, who has been at the EPA since the end of 2009. The Office of Air and Radiation has been very busy during the Obama administration. Before speaking about the Mercury and Air Toxics Rule, which is an important rule that requires power plants to reduce toxic air, McCabe explained that the 40-year old Clean Air Act is an incredible law, and we are very lucky to have it in this country as it reduces tens of thousands of heart attacks and other health conditions. It has turned out to be very cost effective, contrary to repeated industry claims. This country has been a leader in pollution control. The mercury rule is 20 years in the making. The utility sector is one of the biggest causes of pollution, particularly mercury and nickel. Mercury and nickel can affect the lungs and get into brain cells. The mercury rule will require power plants to install pollution controls to reduce the emissions of mercury and other air toxics

**Committee Reports, continued.** 10:53 a.m. After a 15-minute break following the keynote speaker, the committee reports resumed. Brewer said the meetings and membership committee is working on best-practice presentations for the year and hosts for June and the rest of the year. The May meeting will be held at Treasury, and there are no meetings in July and August.

Christine Brown reported that the plain-writing committee has had two conference calls. The committee discussed the results of plain-writing questions on the membership survey and will be working on items based on the survey. The topics in which people were most interested are best practices and training. The committee will be posting the latest information on Plain Writing Act on the website. Julie Frandsen volunteered to take the lead with the website committee in creating a Plain Writing Act section and posting resources such as the NIH training and SSA video on the website. Brown asked that if anyone had any training site they think would be a good resource to please email it to Brown so it can be included.

Tracy Catoe reported that the website committee had a conference call but she missed it because of an ill-timed fire drill. The committee is continuing to post seals and logos for each agency on the website. The committee is trying to capture what each executive secretariat office does and provide links. Most recent documents from the meetings will be posted on the site.

Eric Wachter reported that the technology committee is still collecting responses for the correspondence survey. There has been a good response, particularly from agencies that do not participate in the council meetings. There are few bigger agencies that have not yet responded, and David Aten is going to help with them. The committee expects to have the results of the survey to share at the May meeting.

Wachter also said that he received volunteers for the executive committee and that the committee had an initial call to discuss the results of the member survey and some things to improve the meeting, such as name tags and host agency descriptions.

**Old Business/New Business.** 11:06 a.m. Wachter asked if anyone had any thoughts about the results of the member survey now that they had more time to read it. Ann Brewer thought there was a good response to the survey.

Wachter said that he had tabled the end of the discussion from last meeting about transfer letters. Pat Morgan said she had some concerns about turnaround time but cleared up this issue by sending out emails directly to the agencies. Wachter asked that members email him if they continue to get hard-copy transfers, and he will send those agencies copies of the policy. Galen asked the council not to forward contact information along to constituents. Wachter said he would add this to the policy and send it out again.

Wachter was asked about the status of the contact list. He explained that there been some problems receiving the list but they he would have a completed list for the May meeting. Main also said she had some contacts as well if people needed them.

Wachter asked members to start thinking about summer luncheon options.

Wachter said that Gemma Button could not make the meeting but wanted to some initial thoughts on jointly signed letter guidelines, similar to the transfer letter policy. The council brought up concerns about how to handle when an under secretary signs and the order of logos and signatures. Wachter said the council would have a more thorough discussion at the May meeting.

**Open Floor.** 11:20 a.m. No comments or questions.

**Adjourn.** 11:20 a.m.

### **Council of Federal Executive Secretariats February Meeting Attendees**

<u>First Name</u>	<u>Last Name</u>	<u>Agency</u>	<u>Position</u>
Kathryn	Alvarez	Treasury	Correspondence Specialist
David	Aten	IRS	Acting Director
Gloria	Barrett	DOL	Senior Analyst
Kim	Bradley	SBA	Director
Ann	Brewer	NIH/HHS	Director
Christine	Brown	USAID	Lead Corresponce Analyst
Tracy	Catoe	DOEd	Deputy Director
Michael	Coogan	DOE	Writer/Editor
Catherine	Dugan	DHS	Senior Liaison Officer
Tim	Feeney	DOI	Writer/Editor
Julie	Frandsen	FDA	Junior Policy Analyst

Matt	Gewtil	VA	Executive Writer
Ann Marie	Gogniat	USDA	Writer Editor
Kimberly	Hughes-Valentine	DHS	Senior Liaison Officer
Galen	Main	White House	Assistant Director, Agency Liaison
Jean	Maybee	DOI	Chief of Staff
James	McAndrews	Treasury	Correspondence Specialist
Pat	Morgan	HUD	Correspondence Branch Chief
Elizabeth	Olson	EOP/WHO	Director
Dana	Pritchett	SSA	Executive Operations, Analyst
Diane	Reinke	HHS/OIG	Writer-Editor
Geraldine	Taylor	FCC	Management Analyst
Joseph	Tezak	DHS/CBD	Director
Eric	Wachter	EPA	Director
Sharnett	Willis	EPA	Staff
Darlene	Yuhás	EPA	Writer/Editor