

2013 Roger W. Jones Award for Executive Leadership  
Nomination of Keith Washington  
Organizational Achievement

In time of war or national emergency, the Department of Transportation (DOT), the Maritime Administration (MARAD), and the United States Merchant Marine Academy (USMMA), under MARAD oversight, become vital to national security as the fourth arm of defense.

Mr. Washington has played a key role in addressing and solving longstanding challenges that existed in each of those entities.

When MARAD's Associate Administrator for Administration unexpectedly retired, Mr. Washington's talents and leadership style made him the logical choice to fill the void while a new Associate Administrator for Administration could be recruited. In that role, he engineered a major shift in emphasis in the MARAD Office of Administration to improve the organization as a whole. He resolved several sensitive personnel situations; moved numerous overdue deliverables to the Office of the Secretary; and conducted listening sessions with staff and other stakeholders that resulted in enhancing the work environment for all MARAD employees.

Mr. Washington has worked consistently to bring USMMA personnel together to solve problems, to collaborate effectively, and to improve communication across divisions and lines of authority. To accomplish this, he hosted a Human Resources Summit at the USMMA to build relationships and enhance human resources competencies. An outcome of this summit was the development of an Excepted Service policy for the USMMA. This policy has streamlined the hiring process for faculty positions and has improved the Academy's ability to recruit high-caliber personnel. With Mr. Washington's assistance, the USMMA can now carry out its mission to provide an exceptional educational experience for students looking forward to becoming shipboard officers in the maritime transportation industry. His tireless leadership both at MARAD headquarters and at the USMMA will provide lasting benefits to our nation.

He led the effort to realign functions at the USMMA to create a streamlined organizational structure that better meets the needs of the students. He played a key role in filling several Academy leadership positions, including the Dean of Students, Academy Counsel, Sexual Assault Response Coordinator, and the Head of Security and Public Works. He also developed the strategy for hiring a new Superintendent of the Academy incorporating best practices from institutions of higher learning and by bringing together all the various stakeholders of DOT, MARAD, and the Academy to include their input into the hiring process.

As the leader of the Office of the Administration, Mr. Washington established an Investment Review Board consisting of key agency leadership. For the first time in the history of the agency, the MARAD leadership clearly understands the information technology portfolio and the importance of a single, secure system supporting the Agency's mission. He also incorporated "buying green" into agency contracts to strengthen the environment. He has awarded hundreds of contracts with at least 27 percent going to small businesses. Finally, he has transitioned systems and the help desk from multiple contractors to the DOT information technology division saving taxpayers \$3 million dollars annually.

As Deputy Director, Departmental Office of Human Resource Management, Mr. Washington provided oversight for the Departmental Drug and Alcohol testing program. Over eight thousand tests were randomly conducted for safety and sensitive positions within the Department. He

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ensured that several positive and suspicious tests results were handled timely and efficiently. The proper administration of this program is critical to the Department's mission, and directly impacts the safety of millions of air travelers and other individuals each day. Mr. Washington's leadership skills were also paramount when the Administration imposed a Federal pay freeze. His efforts resulted in significant cost savings to the agency and ultimately for the taxpayer. Mr. Washington is an exemplary leader who gets results through the creative use of available resources, partnering with stakeholders, and empowering his employees. Because the functions of his offices are diverse in nature, leading them effectively is an exceptional challenge. Despite the challenge, he has transformed and influenced MARAD and continues to be a key player in bringing the MARAD leadership team, procurement, information technology, management services, and human resources programs into the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

His commitment and enthusiasm for what he does and the reputation he has built for MARAD and DOT have enabled managers to attract and retain highly experienced professionals. He has the combination of vision, perspective, and knowledge of industry practices that have enabled MARAD and DOT to effectively implement organizational change in a manner that consistently upholds the public interest and trust. He evaluates alliances, analyzes the impact of laws as appropriate, and understands the competitive implications of organizational mergers and acquisitions. He has met all these challenges by encouraging and transforming a staff of diverse persons with complementary skills. He models leadership and creativity. He designs approaches to managing government programs and rejects the idea that one style fits all. He goes beyond the extra mile, selecting staff carefully and finding the right synergies among them to ensure that his divisions deliver maximum value for the American taxpayer.

In summary, Mr. Washington has consistently demonstrated the energy, dedication, professionalism, and talents of an extremely effective government leader. His equanimity coupled with his freshness of approach is unmatched. He has the savvy and business acumen necessary to remain on the cutting edge of the Department's transportation and maritime responsibilities. He has engendered trust, admiration, and respect in Congressional offices, transportation industry, and academia. He has led the staff, built relationships, created alliances nationwide, pursued the vision, and achieved the results of a truly remarkable government executive.