



Outsourcing has Gone too Far, Official Says

The government is outsourcing an unprecedented amount of work, and the Obama administration wants more work in federal employees' hands, Gordon says

By Matthew Weigelt

Apr 27, 2010

The government's current outsourcing issues are not on a pendulum that has swung far to one side and is coming back, the president's procurement policy administrator has said.

Never before have agencies outsourced as much of their work to the private sector as they are now, said Daniel Gordon, administrator of the Office of Federal Procurement Policy, arguing that the current circumstances aren't simply the far end of usual cycle.

Gordon told an industry group April 26 the federal government has reach an unprecedented level of outsourced work.

"You can't say, 'Boy, did we ever outsource in the 1930s,' " and then compare it to today, Gordon said. There's no past comparison.

He was responding to comments from some experts who say the Obama administration's program to take work from contractors is a typical reaction to a continually swinging pendulum. The experts also have said another president may see the situation through a different set of lenses than President Barack Obama has and will react differently.

Gordon took questions for roughly an hour on April 26 afternoon about his March 31 policy proposal on defining inherently governmental functions and jobs associated with those special types of work. The event was hosted by the Professional Services Council and the American Bar Association's Committee on Privatization, Outsourcing and Financing Transactions.

Gordon wants federal employees to handle more of their agencies' work, particularly jobs that are central to an agency accomplishing its duties. He also said simply questioning whether a job is or isn't inherently government misses a larger point. He said the issue is more complicated than getting a yes-or-no answer.

Gordon also said his office's No. 1 priority is building up the acquisition workforce, a field of work that often handles inherently governmental work. The acquisition workforce also does jobs that are closely associated with work for federal employees only.

Overall, Gordon is trying to "rebalance" the workforce so fewer contractors are working so closely to the intimate decision-making.

The inherently governmental function policy proposal is open for comments until June 1.