

NEW ORLEANS
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CITY HALL

From Answers to Action

Post-Election Policy Making: Civil Service

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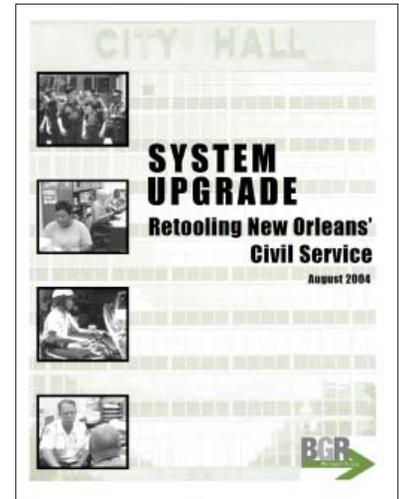


BACKGROUND

In 2004, BGR released a comprehensive study of the City’s civil service system.* The report found that, while the system was effective in preventing favoritism and politically motivated personnel decisions, it did a poor job of promoting merit-based advancement and a culture of professional excellence. The report made an array of recommendations aimed at building a higher performing City work force. Among other things, BGR called for significantly increasing managerial discretion in hiring and promotions. It also recommended creating mechanisms to accurately evaluate performance – and reward or correct it, as the case may be.

In 2014, the Civil Service Commission approved a set of civil service rule changes proposed by the City administration to address those and other recommendations.** The rule changes gave managers more discretion in the hiring and promotion processes, while protecting the core principles of merit selection and freedom from political pressure in City employment. In addition, the Commission approved a more thorough system of employee performance evaluation. The Commis-

sion, with subsequent City Council approval, amended the classified pay plan to give managers greater flexibility in awarding merit-based pay increases and retaining highly qualified employees. The rule changes also require managers to develop plans to improve poor performance by individual employees.



* BGR, *System Upgrade: Retooling New Orleans’ Civil Service*, August 2004.

** For the Landrieu administration’s summary of the changes, see: <https://www.nola.gov/mayor/press-releases/2014/20140824-great-place-to-work-initiative-approved/>.

CIVIL SERVICE

To obtain the mayoral candidates’ perspectives on the civil service system, BGR asked them whether they would support continued implementation of the 2014 rule changes and whether they were considering any other changes to the system. BGR did not pose the questions to the City Council candidates because the council does not approve administrative rule changes.

Q: Do you support continued implementation of the 2014 civil service rule changes? Why or why not?

Mayor LaToya Cantrell

I do support the continued implementation of the rule changes, because the public sector needs flexibility to make hiring decisions in the modern era. As it is, we have vital City departments, such as the Sewerage and Water Board, that are continuously delayed in making necessary hires due to the complications of the public service system process. We need to continue to provide flexibility to City government so that it can efficiently hire the personnel needed to do City work.

Q: Are you contemplating any changes to the civil service system? If so, please explain what the changes would consist of and why you think they are necessary.

Mayor LaToya Cantrell

I want to provide more training to Civil Service Commission staff and to human resource staff throughout City government. Our people need to be trained on how to implement best practices in the changing public sector environment. Again, this will help to ensure that we are hiring people quickly for needed positions.
