

At first glance, moving titles into the Non-Competitive Class makes the city government's hiring process more like that of a private company, without the costly and cumbersome bureaucracy that has to create exams and rank eligibles. It gives more discretion to managers to evaluate candidates themselves.

In public service, such a move is unacceptable for some unions, which believe that this returns government to the days of politically connected and ambitious administrators giving jobs to their loyalists, rather than having the testing system produce candidates based solely on merit. As for broadbanding and consolidating civil service titles, unions fear that promotion in city agencies will be based on whom managers personally favor, rather than which front-line employee is most qualified to move up through the ranks.

'Loyalty Isn't to Public'

"All my life in the civil service I have seen the extent to which, especially the central office areas, the corruption can go on," said Mr. Croghan, a 40-plus-year veteran of the system. "You are not responsible to the public whatsoever, but

to] the person who gave you the job."

DCAS has long held that it will only move jobs into the Non-Competitive class if holding exams for a small number of candidates is too costly, or if there are industry standards to which DCAS can defer. For example, using the bar exam as a requirement when the city hires Attorneys. Ms. Hirst said that the reclassification process would be and is "transparent" and that it aimed to "rid the system of overlapping and redundant titles" in order to create a "more-manageable" system.

Commissioner Hirst also rejected labor's contention that DCAS was more concerned with eliminating Competitive Class titles than holding more exams.

"I would say that this is an inaccurate assessment," she said. "In other words, it's wrong."

Ms. Hirst argued that even Non-Competitive Class titles have objective criteria to which candidates are subjected.

Allows Adjustments for Change

"People have to meet the requirements that that type of position would require," she said. "It's a way of recognizing a change in the nature of the workforce and a change in the type of work that gets done in agencies."

But unions still have their doubts.

"The constitution has a very high standard in terms of what's impracticable," said Arthur Chelotes, president of Communications Workers of America Local 1180. "Most skills are tested for. You can't get through school without being tested for something. If testing is good through the educational system, if testing is good to qualify people for licensing, if testing is good for all these other categories—especially when you're talking about public-sector jobs, where access to those jobs is really a matter of people knowing that there's a level playing field—you want to make sure that everyone has a fair chance to get these jobs, especially in these tough economic times."

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