Introduction

This book is designed to strip away the mysteries surrounding the federal legal establishment—what it consists of, where it does its work, how it recruits and hires attorneys, how to get hired, what to watch out for, what the future holds, and where the best opportunities reside. Upon finishing *Landing a Federal Legal Job*, it is my hope that you will have a solid understanding of the U.S. government’s legal employment opportunities and hiring processes, and that what looks at first glance to be a confounding rat’s maze will become clarified for you, enough so that you can make an intelligent decision about whether you want to work for the largest legal system in the world. The other primary objective of this book is to give you a decided edge over your competitors in pursuing a U.S. government attorney or law-related position.

It is not my intention to act as a promoter of government legal employment. Rather, in the course of explaining what the federal legal system is all about, I aim to bring to light both its attractive features and its warts, both of which are abundant.

I have spent a large portion of my career studying the federal legal system and its countless nuances, and performing the detective work necessary to find answers and solutions to the often daunting and perplexing adventures of applying for and securing a federal legal job and crafting a rewarding and satisfying federal legal career.

This book is my attempt to share the results of my studies and experiences—as well as those of my legal career counseling clients—with you, as well as the solutions that I devised to help them obtain a federal legal job. To do this most effectively and efficiently, I have divided the book into eight parts:

- **Part One: Federal Legal Demographics** examines the size of the federal attorney population, the number of attorney and law-related jobs, who makes up the U.S. government attorney workforce (its diversity), and how this compares to the civilian workforce.
- **Part Two: The Pros and Cons of a Federal Legal Career** is an in-depth look at the pluses and minuses associated
with working for the federal government and provides you with the opportunity to balance the good against the bad of federal employment, as well as suggestions on mitigating the downsides.

- **Part Three: Where the Federal Lawyers Are** reviews the geographic scope of the federal legal establishment, the federal legal structure, and the many practice areas and law-related arenas in which federal attorneys do their work.

- **Part Four: How the U.S. Government Hires Lawyers** explores the federal legal hiring process in general (as well as specifically for mainstream attorney positions, law-related positions, top-level and lower-level political appointments, and special hiring programs) and discusses some of the ways in which candidates can gain a competitive edge.

- **Part Five: Frequently Asked Questions about Landing a Federal Legal Job** poses the most common questions that outside candidates have about federal employment and provides the answers.

- **Part Six: Getting Hired** describes the strategies and techniques that differentiate successful candidates for federal legal jobs from the competition.

- **Part Seven: Long-Term Trends** predicts the factors that are likely to impact federal legal jobs and careers in the first part of the twenty-first century.

- **Part Eight: Where to Work** offers the author’s assessments of the best and most interesting functional areas where attorneys work, law-related positions, and federal legal offices.

- **Appendices** include the following:
  - *Appendix A*, “U.S. Government Job Listings,” directs you to more than 20 websites that provide the best information about current federal job opportunities.
  - *Appendix B*, “U.S. Government Information Resources,” contains 30 resources where you can go for both general and specific government information useful for a federal job campaign.
• **Appendix C**, “Useful Networking Organizations for Federal Legal and Law-Related Jobs,” lists almost 60 organizations that are relevant to federal job campaigns from the standpoint of providing you with knowledge, inside information, and potential contacts.

• **Appendix D**, “Credential Enhancers for Federal Legal and Law-Related Jobs,” is a selected list of 77 certificate and related educational programs in 26 subject-matters areas that can bolster your law degree and arm you with added credentials suitable for a federal job campaign.

• **Appendix E**, “An Application Ordeal,” presents a verbatim federal law-related job vacancy announcement that is representative of some of the more exasperating aspects of federal job-hunting.

• **Appendix F**, “Presidential Memorandum on Improving the Federal Recruitment and Hiring Process, May 11, 2010,” is included because it may have a significant, positive impact on the federal legal and law-related hiring processes.