



the voice of career federal executives since 1980

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March 9, 2017

The Honorable Mick Mulvaney
Director
U.S. Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20415

Ms. Kathleen McGettigan
Acting Director
U.S. Office of Personnel Management
1900 E Street, NW
Washington, DC 20503

Dear Director Mulvaney and Acting Director McGettigan:

The Senior Executives Association (SEA) has determined that the hiring freeze, coupled with other factors such as natural attrition, the Presidential transition, and limited ability to backfill positions, has created a critical “leadership vacuum” within the Federal government. As a result, I am writing to request that you provide immediate relief to those agencies that have vacant mission critical career leadership positions exacerbated by the hiring freeze.

SEA has long advocated that career senior executives should work closely with an incoming Administration to ensure a smooth transition. We have also advocated that some positions that have been filled by political appointees in past Administrations – such as CIOs, CHCOs, Principal Deputies – should be classified as “career reserved” to guarantee that there are no gaps in work flows and knowledge between Administrations.

This is why we were heartened to hear President Trump say recently on Fox News: “In many cases, we don’t want to fill those jobs.” This is wise public policy because SEA believes there should be a bright line between political appointees who are tasked with developing the President’s policy agenda and the career senior executives who execute that agenda. Without this bright line, we have the present situation where mission critical positions are unfilled.

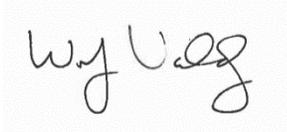
A *Washington Post* analysis (November 13, 2016) indicated that there are 811 total non-career SES positions that were vacated when the Obama Administration left office. As you are aware, OPM has the latitude to grant agencies the ability to fill these non-career slots with career SES positions. We believe that a process should be in place to define which of those positions will not be filled by the Trump Administration and should be allocated to the career SES given their importance to the functioning of government.

This would ease the leadership vacuum we have identified, which has been created by three circumstances, all of which can undermine the effective and efficient functioning of government:

1. Senior career leaders in “acting positions” do not have the full authority required to do their jobs. If the Trump Administration has determined that these positions should be filled with career senior leaders, then that should occur as soon as possible.
2. Senior career leaders in “acting positions” are typically “double hatted” and given the nature of these jobs, it is essential that the positions they formerly occupied be filled.
3. There has been natural attrition in the ranks of senior executives since January 20th due to retirements and it is essential that these positions also be filled as soon as possible.

Please let me know how SEA could be of service to you. We believe it is essential that this problem be addressed immediately and stand ready to work with you to find a solution that improves the effective and efficient functioning of government.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "W. Valdez". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Bill Valdez
President