



# Press Release

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## **SEA Releases “A Message to the 44th President: Meeting Your Objectives through Partnership with the Career Executive Service”**

Washington, D.C. - The Senior Executives Association today released “A Message to the 44th President, Meeting Your Objectives Through Partnership with the Career Executive Service.” The paper, prepared for the next Administration, provides a comprehensive package that explains the issues affecting career executives, presents the Association’s recommendations, and will facilitate a more thorough approach to revitalizing the career executive service than the piece-meal reforms that are typically undertaken.

The issues and recommendations in the paper are divided chronologically, namely actions to take for a successful partnership during transition, upon taking office, and during the 44th President’s term of office. To persuade the new Administration that these recommendations are worth its attention, the paper begins with “Why Is the Career Executive Corps Critical to Meeting Your Goals?”

In remarks at a press conference today, SEA President Carol A. Bonosaro said, “We recognize that the paper we are releasing today will join a hefty set of documents from a number of good government groups, all seeking to advise the next Administration on how best to govern. We believe that our advice is critical – because it provides a foundation for success that is rooted in how to best utilize the critical human resource represented by the career Federal executive service.

“As the Senior Executives Association looked ahead to this year, we were focused on two major issues – restoring career leadership and reforming the Senior Executive Service pay and performance management system. The latter is especially important in view of the large number of career executives eligible to retire and the persistent reports of many talented and able potential applicants being dissuaded from aspiring to the SES positions which will be vacated.

“The foundation of this paper, however, rests on the cardinal role of the career Senior Executive – that of serving any and every Administration to the very best of his or her ability without regard to personal political beliefs. Put another way, the career executive is essential to the success of the political appointee(s) with whom he or she works.

“Therefore, we believe it important to also outline the steps which should be taken to facilitate the transition and contribute to the Obama Administration’s ability to achieve its objectives. While the career executive/political appointee interface typically functions well, a substantial amount of time can elapse before that occurs in a given relationship or in a new Administration. It is in everyone’s interest to minimize the time required for the career-political team to function successfully.

“At the time we started this project, few could imagine the huge challenges that would be faced by the next Administration. These challenges have made the message of this paper even more urgent. The Association looks forward to the 44th President and his Administration considering our recommendations carefully. We would also welcome an opportunity to work together to develop an effective partnership with the career executive corps, one that will better enable effectively addressing the issues confronting the nation.”

Among the recommendations for action during the transition are:

- Placing knowledgeable former career executives on the transition teams assembled for departments and agencies.
- Naming high-performing career executives to jobs that have become the province of political appointees, namely Assistant Secretaries for Administration and other key positions that require experience and longevity to accomplish long term agendas such as energy policy.
- Cutting the number of appointed positions substantially and reducing the political layers which have multiplied over the years to extremely negative effect, as typified by FEMA’s response to Hurricane Katrina.
- Developing a plan for a single, clear focus on the government’s most valuable human resource, the career executive corps. Management and cultivation of top leadership is the norm in private industry.

Recommendations for action once in office include:

- Meeting early in the first months with the career executive corps to send a signal of the Administration’s view of the career corps as partners in meeting its key goals.
- Ensuring that political appointees are fully briefed on the value and operation of the career executive corps.
- Directing agency political leadership to schedule, early in the term, focused, intensive meetings with their career executives to establish working relations and share policy and management goals.

Finally, recommendations for action during the term of the Administration include:

- To enhance communication and recognition, scheduling an annual Presidential address to career executive leaders at Constitution Hall, as well as the appearance of the President or the Vice President at the SEA banquet held each April in honor of the Presidential Distinguished Rank Executives.
- A series of administrative actions to restore career leadership, including requiring a pre-appointment review for all appointments of Schedule C and noncareer SES employees to competitive service positions (in contrast to the current requirement for such review commencing June 1 of an election year).
- Support for legislation 1) to improve the SES “pay for performance” system and address pay compression, 2) to restore career leadership, and 3) to authorize part-time employment for retired executives with no reduction in annuity to offset the impending massive loss of experience and institutional knowledge.

The full version of the white paper will be available on SEA’s website ([www.seniorexecs.org](http://www.seniorexecs.org)) by 1:00 p.m. today.

**The Senior Executives Association (SEA) is a professional association representing Senior Executive Service members and other career federal executives. Founded in 1980, SEA’s goals are: to improve the efficiency, effectiveness and productivity of the federal government; to advance the professionalism and advocate the interests of career federal executives; and to enhance public recognition of their contributions. The SEA Professional Development League (PDL) is a nonprofit educational organization committed to advancing the professionalism of career federal executives through the sponsorship of training, recognition, and research activities.**

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