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September 15, 2020

The Honorable Carolyn Maloney
Chairwoman
Committee on Oversight and Reform
2157 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable James Comer
Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight and Reform
2105 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Maloney, Ranking Member Comer, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Senior Executives Association (SEA) – which represents the interests of career federal executives in the Senior Executive Service (SES), those in Senior Level (SL), Scientific and Professional (ST) and equivalent positions and other senior career federal leaders – I write to convey the association’s support for several pieces of legislation the committee will consider during the September 16, 2020 business meeting. While the Committee is taking up many important matter this week, SEA would like to specifically **encourage passage of the following bills:**

- H.R. 7107, THE PLUM ACT
- H.R. 7936, THE FEDERAL EMPLOYEE ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT
- H.R. 4774, THE INTERNET OF THINGS CYBERSECURITY TRAINING FOR FEDERAL EMPLOYEES ACT
- H.R. 5901, THE TECHNOLOGY MODERNIZATION CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE PROGRAM ACT
- H.R. 7340, THE CHAI SUTHAMMANONT REMEMBRANCE ACT

H.R. 7107, Periodically Listing and Updating Management (PLUM) Act of 2020

Over the course of a President’s term, they will non-competitively appoint over 4,000 individuals to serve in an administration, yet taxpayers and stakeholders remain largely unaware of who these decision makers are below those confirmed by the Senate because this information is currently captured only once every four years in the Plum Book. This data is instantly obsolete, never updated, and fails to reflect turnovers and vacancies. This critical legislation would make it possible for taxpayers to know who has been appointed to important policy-setting roles, which positions are filled and remain vacant, and how long those vacancies have lasted, and more.

SEA views this legislation as critical for ensuring transparency and accountability in government. With political appointees earning hundreds of millions of dollars in taxpayer-funded salaries, taxpayers deserve to understand who is working for and making policy decisions within their government. Additionally, greater visibility into the vacant positions within government can attract a wider pool of diverse candidates to pursue these opportunities to serve.

The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) already collects much of the data this legislation would mandate to be publicly reported in its ESCS system used to track SES and Schedule C appointments. Therefore, publishing the data on a publicly searchable website should be a fairly elementary activity that can be accomplished in short order. The ESCS system must be used by agencies to make political appointments, meaning there is a real-time database of appointments, therefore, Congress should require OPM to update the data no less frequently than quarterly, and ideally in real-time. Ultimately, enacting this legislation would require little effort to implement but would lead to a significant increase in public access to information regarding the thousands of political appointees making decisions in their government.

H.R. 7936, The Federal Employee Access to Information Act

The Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and the Privacy Act were enacted to provide avenues for the American people to engage transparently with their government to ensure proper accountability for government actions. When an individual becomes employed by the federal government, they should not be deprived of this right or risk retaliation for using these avenues for gaining information on agency activity. SEA firmly supports H.R. 7936 for protecting federal employees from facing this retaliation.

H.R. 4774, The Internet of Things Cybersecurity Training for Federal Employees Act

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) has labeled the need to address mission-critical skills gaps in our federal workforce as a [High Risk Area](#) since 2001. Cybersecurity skills are an important element of the skills gap that poses a direct threat to our national security and the ability of the federal government to effectively deliver services to the American people. This legislation is needed to assist federal employees in upskilling to meet the evolving cyber needs of jobs across government.

H.R. 5901, The Technology Modernization Centers of Excellence Program Act

The Information Technology Modernization Centers of Excellence Program Act would codify into law and accelerate the development of a program which has shown promise in helping agencies modernize their information technology (IT) systems. This legislation will be critical for ensuring agencies have access to services and support which effectively meet their needs as agencies undertake modernization challenges relating to commercial cloud capabilities, improving customer experience, usage of data analytics, infrastructure optimization, and artificial intelligence.

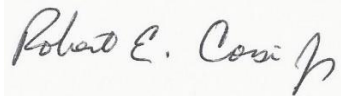
H.R. 7340, The Chai Suthammanont Remembrance Act

Our federal workforce is our nation's primary line of defense against the coronavirus pandemic. It is imperative that agencies have reentry plans and oversight mechanisms in place to ensure the continued safety of our civil servants. The Chai Suthammanont Remembrance Act, named for a civil servant who died after contracting coronavirus at work, establishes common sense guidelines for ensuring agencies have plans in place for maintaining the health of their workforce.

SEA supports this measure and further calls on Congress to modernize death benefits for federal employees as recommended by the Office of Personnel Management in 2016¹ to ensure families are supported should the tragic event of losing a loved one on duty occur.

Thank you for your consideration of SEA's perspective. Please have your staff contact SEA Director of Policy and Outreach Jason Briefel (jason.briefel@seniorexecs.org; 202-971-3300) for further information.

Sincerely,



Robert E. Corsi, Jr.
Interim President
Senior Executives Association

¹ Office of Personnel Management letter to Congress, Death Gratuity for Federal Civilian Employees, September 16, 2016, <https://www.opm.gov/news/legislative-proposals/death-gratuity-for-federal-civilian-employees.pdf>.