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July 13, 2018

The Honorable Mac Thornberry
Chairman
House Armed Services Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Adam Smith
Ranking Member
House Armed Services Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John McCain
Chairman
Senate Armed Services Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jack Reed
Ranking Member
Senate Armed Services Committee
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Thornberry, Chairman McCain, Ranking Member Smith, Ranking Member Reed and NDAA Conferees:

On behalf of the Senior Executives Association (SEA) – which represents the interests of career federal executives in the Senior Executive Service (SES), and those in Senior Level (SL), Scientific and Professional (ST), and equivalent positions – I write to convey our perspective on several civilian personnel policies included in the House and Senate versions of the 2019 National Defense Authorization Act.

From the House bill, SEA supports the following provisions and encourages their inclusion in the conference bill.

- Section 1102, Modification of direct hire authority for DOD for post-secondary students and recent graduates
- Section 1106, Extension of authority to conduct telework travel expenses test programs
- Section 1107, Personnel demonstration projects
- Section 1108, Expanded flexibility in selecting candidates from referral lists
- Section 1109, Temporary and term appointments in the competitive service
- Section 1110, Expedited hiring authority for college graduates and post-secondary students
- Section 1112, Reporting requirement

From the Senate bill, SEA supports the following provisions and encourages their inclusion in the conference bill.

- Section 1101, Inapplicability of certification of executive qualifications by qualification review boards of Office of Personnel Management for initial appointments to Senior Executive Service positions in Department of Defense
 - SEA believes that, due to the transparency and reporting requirements, authorizing DOD with a limited two-year pilot authority to appoint up to 50 new SES per year without going thru the OPM QRB process is a meritorious experiment, and one we are willing to endorse, despite some concern and reservation because this is a governmentwide requirement for new Senior Executives. It should be noted that OPM data indicates the QRB only adds 12-15 days to the hiring process.
- Section 1122, Expedited hiring authority for college graduates and post-secondary students
- Section 1123, Increase maximum amount of voluntary separation incentive pay authorized for civilian employees
- Section 1124, One-year extension of temporary authority to grant allowances, benefits, and gratuities to civilian personnel on official duty in a combat zone
- Section 1125, One-year extension of authority to waive annual limitation on premium pay and aggregate limitation on pay for Federal civilian employees working overseas

These important proposals will better enable to government to attract new talent to federal service, and also provide agencies important authority to shape their workforces to meet 21st century objectives. Moreover, many of these authorities already exist for the Department of Defense, yet the entire government will benefit by their broad adoption which would ensure consistency across agencies.

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

Sincerely,



Bill Valdez
President
Senior Executives Association

CC: NDAA Conferees