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March 11, 2021

The Honorable Jack Reed  
Chairman  
Senate Armed Services Committee  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable James Inhofe  
Ranking Member  
Senate Armed Services Committee  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Reed, Ranking Member Inhofe, and Members of the Committee:

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 – would like to express our strong support for many of the recommendations produced by the National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service and urge their passage into law.

The coronavirus pandemic has shed light onto many vulnerabilities within our nation's governing institutions. The Government Accountability Office (GAO) has consistently identified [strategic human capital management](#) as a High Risk List item inhibiting the government's ability to effectively deliver services to the American people and fend off national emergencies. In this year's High Risk List, 22 of 35 categories were underpinned by human capital management challenges. From a global pandemic to natural disasters or cyber security threats, the last year has made clear the capacity and capabilities of agencies across the federal government – indeed at all levels of government – are a national security concern.

Luckily, the National Commission on Military, National, and Public Service crafted practical recommendations to address many of our government's endemic human capital challenges.

There are several recommendations that SEA believes can have an immediate impact on our federal government's ability to respond to national security threats and secure access to the talent the government needs to succeed. The following National Commission recommendations – all which have pre-drafted legislative language - should be prioritized for inclusion in this year's National Defense Authorization Act:

- Expand national service programs targeting diverse populations – Recommendation 17A

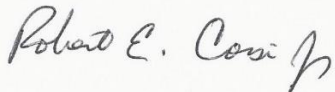
- Reduce hardship in provision of wraparound services – Recommendation 17B
- Remote participation in Peace Corps volunteer programs – Recommendation 20A
- Increase the use of term and temporary appointments – Recommendation 21F
- Expand use of direct-hire authority – Recommendation 22C
- Standardize and extend noncompetitive eligibility – Recommendation 23B
- Improve the Pathways Internship and Recent Graduate hiring programs – Recommendation 24A
- Pilot new hiring programs for critical skills – Recommendation 24B
- Implement technical correction for direct-hire authority for students and recent graduates – Recommendation 24D
- Streamline and expand fellowship and scholarship programs – Recommendation 24E
- Streamline federal healthcare professional hiring; credential portability – Recommendation 26

Many additional recommendations are very meritorious yet likely require additional Congressional inquiry, for example veterans' preference. This committee, continuing its history of bipartisan lawmaking in our national security interest, must not shy away from such issues that have been allowed to fester for far too long.

Taken together with the reports and recommendations from the National Security Commission on Artificial Intelligence and the Cyberspace Solarium Commission, it is clear that Congress must take steps now, this year in 2021, to improve the public service and strengthen capacity of the federal workforce and capability of the federal government to be a competitive employer. There is no time to wait.

SEA stands ready to assist in this shared effort, and appreciates your consideration of the association's perspective. Please contact Jason Briefel ([Jason.Briefel@seniorexecs.org](mailto:Jason.Briefel@seniorexecs.org); 202-971-3300) if the association can provide any further assistance.

Sincerely,



Robert E. Corsi, Jr.  
Interim President