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## **SEA Statement on Trump Administration's Continued Actions to Further Politicize the Senior Executive Service**

WASHINGTON, DC – Today, Marcus Hill, President of the Senior Executives Association (SEA)—representing the interests of over 8,000 career federal executives in the Senior Executive Service (SES), Senior Level (SL), Scientific and Professional (ST) and equivalent positions and other senior career federal leaders, - released the following statement reacting to the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) issuance of [Guidance on Career Reserved SES Positions and Agency Redesignation Requests](#):

**“The SEA supports actions that would strengthen accountability among the government’s career executives and assist them with effectively performing their congressionally designed and intended SES roles. SEA stands ready to work with the Trump Administration in responsibly achieving this priority. However, just as SEA took exception to elements of the Restoring Accountability for Career Senior Executives Executive Memorandum, we do the same with OPM’s implementing guidance cited above. This document infers career federal executives cannot be trusted to fulfill their responsibilities related to assisting incoming administrations with effectively implementing their agendas. This simply is not true. Historically, the vast majority of SES and other Federal executives have honorably and faithfully served bipartisan presidential administrations. In sum, these experienced career professionals have and continue to execute their responsibilities to the best of their abilities regardless of who resides in office. They do so consistent with the oath each of them took to support the Constitution.”**

**“OPM’s latest guidance on the SES is inconsistent with the law governing the SES, by insisting that policy-related positions be reserved for general billets that can only be filled by an administration’s political appointees. OPM’s suggestion that career executives are mere technicians is inconsistent with reality and the law. These executive level leaders have achieved their positions based on demonstrated competence, character and capability in their fields of expertise. They bring and demonstrate those attributes, making significant contributions to political appointees’ efforts to shape and implement policy. Again, in those rare cases SES and other career leaders do not achieve acceptable performance expectations, SEA agrees that those individuals should be held accountable – decades of research has demonstrated that there are far better approaches to performance management that will lead to far more effective results than an across-the-board reclassification like that outlined in OPM’s guidance.”**

**“Positions are classified at the SES level in the federal government if they meet certain criteria, including whether an executive engages in the following:**

- directs the work of an organizational unit;

- is held accountable for the success of one or more specific programs or projects;
- monitors progress toward organizational goals and periodically evaluates and makes appropriate adjustments to such goals;
- supervises the work of employees (other than personal assistants); or
- otherwise exercises important policy-making, policy-determining, or other executive functions.”

“The Civil Service Reform Act of 1978 further stipulates several criteria governing the administration of the SES as a third personnel service within the civil service.

- 5 U.S.C. 3131(7) – protect senior executives from arbitrary or capricious actions;
- 5 U.S.C. 3131(8) – provide for program continuity and policy advocacy in the management of public programs;
- 5 U.S.C. 3131(9) – maintain a merit personnel system free of prohibited personnel practices;
- 5 U.S.C. 3131(13) – provide for an executive system which is guided by the public interest and free from improper political interference.”

“Congress included these provisions in the law because it wanted ‘to ensure that the executive management of the Government of the United States is responsive to the needs, policies, and goals of the Nation and otherwise is of the highest quality’ (5 U.S.C. 3131) as well as to ensure protection from arbitrary political actions. The Administration’s SES actions do not reflect plans to balance executive responsiveness with executive quality. SEA remains ready to offer its perspective and experience to Trump administration officials to make effective changes to achieve a modernized, merit-based civil service system which best serves the American People.”

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*The Senior Executives Association (SEA) is a professional association representing Senior Executive Service members and other career Federal leaders. 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.*

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