

SEA: New Report Highlights Importance of Career Executives for Government Continuity

WASHINGTON, DC – Today, Marcus Hill, President of the Senior Executives Association (SEA)—representing the interests of over 10,000 career federal executives in the Senior Executive Service (SES), Senior Level (SL), Scientific and Professional (ST) and equivalent positions—released the following statement in response to a new report from the Center for Presidential Transition, [Persistently Vacant - Critical federal leadership positions go unfilled for years](#):

“Unfilled positions that are normally the province of political appointees are often ably carried out on an acting basis by dedicated career Senior Executives, as Congress designed and intended. The men and women of the career Senior Executive Service are the federal government’s top leaders selected on the basis of merit.”

“Whether appointed roles are unfilled due to a lag in the nomination by an Administration, delayed action by the Senate, or gaps given a second term or presidential transition scenario, career federal executives have proven that they are ready and able to step up and into agency leadership positions. Career senior executives provide stability in administration and enable presidents to faithfully execute the law. They also provide important institutional memory and expertise on how best to implement priorities for new appointees of any administration”

“The Senior Executives Association (SEA) endorses the call to action in this report for the Senate to reevaluate and address the issues concerning ongoing vacancies for appointed positions.

“SEA has advocated for several reforms that speak directly to this report and its recommendations as part of our Joint SES Policy Agenda [cite]. Congress could also review the merits of shifting more management-focused roles, such as leadership for operational offices within agencies, from appointees to career executives who can provide long-term focus and implementation expertise. Finally, support should be strengthened for appointees who are confirmed – they should be provided with robust onboarding to enable success and required to have performance plans to ensure accountability.”

Background

- Top career leaders in the federal government are members of the elite [Senior Executive Service](#) (SES), a cadre of 10,000 intended to provide continuity of government operations and a link between political leadership and the career federal workforce.
- In 2018 SEA, the Partnership for Public Service, and the Volcker Alliance released a [Joint SES Policy Agenda](#) which includes a number of recommended reforms to strengthen career and political leadership.
- Among these reforms include a call to Reduce the Number of Political Appointees overall, including those requiring Senate confirmation.

- SEA has also called for limiting the number of appointee roles for key management positions and designating more of such positions as Career Reserved to maintain continuity.

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The Senior Executives Association (SEA) is a professional association representing Senior Executive Service (SES) 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. For more information, visit www.seniorexecs.org.