

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

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February 25, 2025

Mr. Charles Ezell
Acting Director
Office of Personnel Management
1900 E St, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20415

Dear Mr. Ezell:

I write to share my concerns about the recently issued Office of Personnel Management (OPM) memorandum regarding the redesignation of agency Senior Executive Service (SES) Chief Information Officer (CIO) positions.¹ The memorandum is yet another attempt to use partisan political attacks to sideline and marginalize career professionals in the federal government under the guise of promoting government efficiency. I request that you rescind the memorandum and take a more thoughtful approach to filling agency CIO positions that evaluates agency leadership needs on a case-by-case basis and better leverages the talent of career IT leaders and experts.

The OPM memorandum issued on February 4, 2025, recommends that relevant agencies redesignate CIO positions as “general,” which would open the positions to individuals classified as career, noncareer, or limited appointees.²

I am concerned that CIO leadership is the latest victim of the Administration’s anti-Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility crusade and broader effort to replace career civil servants with individuals who are, first and foremost, loyal to the President and his political agenda. The Administration justifies the changes outlined in the memorandum by noting that CIOs have responsibility for “controversial political topics,” including “diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility.”³ The Administration is advancing other substantial changes to the SES that we are concerned with politicizing the cadre of advanced professionals who run some of the most technical and important missions in our government.

¹ Memorandum from Charles Ezell, Acting Director, U.S. Office of Personnel Management to Heads and Acting Heads of Departments and Agencies (Feb. 4, 2025) (online at www.opm.gov/media/juna3mhp/opm-memo-guidance-regarding-redesignating-ses-cio-positions-2-4-2025-final.pdf).

² Office of Personnel Management, *Guide to the Senior Executive Service* (Mar. 2017) (online at www.opm.gov/policy-data-oversight/senior-executive-service/reference-materials/guidesesservices.pdf).

³ Memorandum from Charles Ezell, Acting Director, U.S. Office of Personnel Management to Heads and Acting Heads of Departments and Agencies (Feb. 4, 2025) (online at www.opm.gov/media/juna3mhp/opm-memo-guidance-regarding-redesignating-ses-cio-positions-2-4-2025-final.pdf).

This redefinition of CIO responsibilities would be an unfortunate departure from the bipartisan work the Committee has done on federal IT. I authored the Federal Information Technology Acquisition Reform Act (FITARA) with former Republican Chairman Darrell Issa. The Committee has conducted dedicated and consistent oversight of implementation of that with nearly 20 FITARA Scorecard hearings and roundtables. That oversight effort has had the support of Republican Representatives Mark Meadows, Will Hurd, and Jody Hice. Together we have empowered strong and accountable federal CIOs.

This memorandum represents an unfortunate departure from this bipartisan record. As such, I request that you immediately revoke this memorandum and brief my staff on all plans regarding changes of policy regarding federal CIOs.

Better government technology management is an unalloyed good for the American people and repeated bipartisan action shows that this issue transcends party division. The DOGE operators currently wreaking havoc on government systems have shown the importance of dedicated, expert civil servants in IT positions.⁴

The vast majority of the over 30 federal CIOs are career SES positions.⁵ The job of the CIO requires long-term planning as many IT modernization projects serve as long term investments that lead to billions in cost avoidance, sometimes crossing congresses and administrations. CIOs should not consider political winds, but rather focus solely on robust engineering principles and effective technology choices Congress has worked with the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to ensure that CIOs have the budget authority to manage multi-year projects through working capital funds so that IT projects need not contend with inconsistent appropriations and continuing resolutions.⁶

I urge you to cease this attack on the civil service. I also request a briefing on future IT personnel classification plans from the Acting OPM director by March 11, 2025.

The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform is the principal oversight committee of the House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate “any matter” at “any time” under House Rule X. The Committee also has legislative jurisdiction over federal personnel and federal information systems.

⁴ *Unmasked: Musk’s Secret DOGE Good Squad—Who are All Under 26*, The Daily Beast (Feb. 3, 2025) (online at www.thedailybeast.com/the-doge-musketeers-the-secret-team-elon-wants-to-keep-in-the-shadows/); Letter from Ranking Member Gerald E. Connolly, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform and Ranking Member Shontel Brown, Subcommittee on Cybersecurity, Information Technology, and Government Innovation to Acting Director Charles Ezell, Office of Personnel Management (Feb 4, 2025) (online at <https://oversightdemocrats.house.gov/sites/evo-subsites/democrats-oversight.house.gov/files/evo-media-document/2025.02.04.%20GEC%20and%20Brown%20to%20OPM-Ezell-%20DOGE%20Emails.pdf>).

⁵ Officer of Personnel Management, *PLUM Reporting* (online at www.opm.gov/about-us/open-government/plum-reporting/plum-data/) (accessed Feb. 6, 2025).

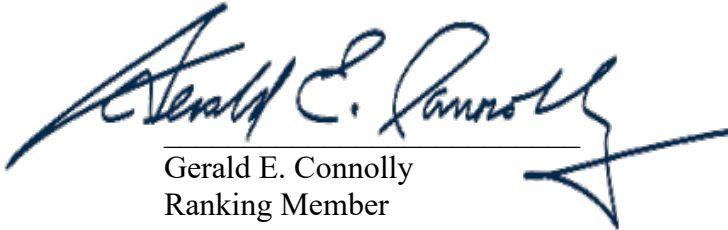
⁶ 1 Pub. L. No. 115-91 (2017)

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Full compliance with our requests is necessary, in part to determine whether legislative reforms are needed to ensure the continued security of our federal government systems and privacy of federal employees' sensitive personnel data. If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact Committee Democratic staff at (202) 225-5051. Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Gerald E. Connolly
Ranking Member

cc: The Honorable James Comer, Chairman