Senior Executive Service Reform Act of 2012

Rep. Jim Moran

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Approximately 64 percent of the nearly 7,100 Senior Executives will be eligible to retire by 2016. According to OPM, the number of candidates to fill the pipeline to replace retiring Senior Executives is not filling up as fast agencies need it to be. ***The Senior Executive Service Reform Act of 2012 will improve the SES to continue to attract, retain, develop and reward our nation's most talented civil servants*** by reforms to: career management, SES compensation, the SES hiring process, and increasing diversity within the SES.

Why do we need to reform the Senior Executive Service?

SES has become less attractive to senior GS 14 and GS 15 employees, primarily due to:

1) **Work/Life Balance** – Senior Executives take on more duties and work longer hours, yet receive no compensatory time, no locality pay, and no guaranteed annual pay raise, all of which GS employees receive.

2) **Pay Compression** – Senior Executives do not receive automatic, across-the-board pay raises, like their GS counterparts, nor are they eligible for overtime or locality pay. The resulting pay overlap between SES and upper-level GS 14 and 15 employees reduces the financial incentive for GS employees to apply for the SES.

3) **Change of Geographic Relocation** –The SES was meant to be a corps of leaders who would periodically move within and across agencies and sectors to gain an enterprise-wide perspective. Today, however, the risk of geographic reassignment is seen as a deterrent to joining the SES.

What does the legislation do?

Improve SES Career Management:

- ***Codify an SES Resource Office within OPM to improve efficiency, effectiveness, productivity and professionalism of the SES***, preventing a future administration from eliminating it.

- ***Increase the transparency of SES rating systems*** by requiring agencies to provide Senior Executives with their rating level and an explanation for the rating level within 30 days of giving the rating.

- ***Strengthen agencies' Candidate Development Programs (CDPs).*** Only 11 percent of career SES members, as of March 2011, graduated from a CDP. The bill requires agencies to align CDPs to succession planning, improving the rotational experience and assigning mentors to CDP participants.

- ***Improve agency Onboarding Programs*** by requiring each agency, in consultation with OPM, to establish an Onboarding program for newly appointed career and non-career Senior Executives.

Improve SES compensation:

- ***Provide a pay increase, equal the annual average GS pay raise, for SES personnel who receive at least a "fully successful" performance rating*** to fix the 2004 Bush Administration reforms that created significant pay overlap between lower-level Senior Executives and upper-level GS 14 and 15 employees.

- ***Include SES performance awards and bonuses in their high-3 annuity calculations*** to help alleviate the pay compression.

Reform the SES Hiring Process:

- ***Ensure applicants have sufficient time to apply for vacancies*** by specifying a time period for job listings. The bill also eliminates the Executive Core Qualification narratives for the initial stage of the application and instead allows applicants to submit a cover letter, resume, and answer brief questions.

Increase Diversity within the SES:

- ***Promote diversity within the SES*** by requiring each agency to submit to OPM a plan, updated every 2 years, to maximize opportunities for the appointment of minorities, women and individuals with disabilities to the SES.

Support for this legislation

Cosponsors: Rep. Gerry Connolly (D-VA), Rep. Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), Delegate Eleanor Holmes Norton. The bill is supported by the Senior Executives Association and the Partnership for Public Service.