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SEA Statement on Administration's Proposed Reorganization of the Office of Personnel Management

WASHINGTON, DC – Today, Bill Valdez, President of the Senior Executives Association (SEA) – the professional association responsible for representing, convening, and cultivating members of the Senior Executive Service (SES) and senior career leaders across the federal government – released the following statement in response to the release of the Administration's proposed reorganization of the Office of Personnel Management.

"The Senior Executives Association (SEA) affirms the importance of maintaining an apolitical, merit based civil service. SEA values the historical and present-day significance of preventing the politicization of the civil service and the role the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) plays as a guardian of that principle. It is for that reason SEA has sent the enclosed letter and statement to the House Subcommittee on Government Operations leadership as well as House Committee on Oversight and Reform leadership," said Valdez.

"There is no denying that in recent years OPM has been flawed and, with the loss of revenue from the move of the National Background Investigation Bureau to the Department of Defense, it is financial in crisis and requires a thoughtful reorganization. This reorganization must not diminish the critical role OPM plays to protect and preserve our non-partisan, merit based civil service system. The Administration's reorganization proposal, however, fails to offer a plan for the protection of this critical role. Instead – whether intentionally or not – the Administration's proposal leaves OPM with no independence and no authority to correct political interference with the civil service."

"As noted in the attached documents, there is a longstanding historical precedent for an independent OPM. Efforts to develop an efficient and effective civil service should not undermine institutions, such as OPM, that were established to protect our non-partisan, merit based system and that have served our Nation well since 1883."

"Additionally, the Administration cannot assume it has the authority to do so. OPM was established as an independent agency by Congress and cannot be reformed without legislative action. Characterizing OPM as an agency whose functions can simply be merged or transferred to another agency fundamentally misunderstands the legislative history that established OPM and Congress' important role when setting policy that impacts the U.S. civil service."

"The Administration's proposal is highly concerning because it ignores the core reason why OPM exists and unintentionally weakens OPM's ability to protect the non-partisan, merit based civil service system our Nation requires. We urge Congress to pursue proper and complete oversight, which we believe will result in a stronger and more effective OPM, not its dissolution. SEA is prepared to support productive change that maintains the statutory independence of OPM as it stands guard over the merit based system Congress created to ensure the politically unbiased delivery of services to the American people."

Valdez concluded, **"There is more than the presence of an agency at stake here. What is at risk is the death of an ideal- the ideal that all Americans deserve equal access to public services no matter their political affiliation. This is the ideal that makes our government the envy of the world and should be protected at all costs."**

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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. For more information, visit www.seniorexecs.org.