



the voice of career federal executives since 1980

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November 29, 2012

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

The Senior Executives Association (SEA) represents the interests of career federal executives in the Senior Executive Service (SES), and those in Senior Level (SL), Scientific and Professional (ST), and equivalent positions. On behalf of career federal executives, we write to urge you to work together with these senior leaders throughout the federal government to implement your vision of developing an effective and efficient civil workforce that is prepared to meet the challenges of the 21st century. This vision should not be lost during negotiations regarding the “fiscal cliff” with congressional leaders.

Career Senior Executives - tasked with ensuring agencies and programs run effectively, agencies' missions are met, and programs stay within budget - understand and are dedicated to the mission to identify and make expedient cuts. Within the past few years agency budgets have been reduced drastically while federal employees have had their salaries frozen and benefits threatened. Senior Executives understand that all Americans, including federal employees, must do their part to address the growing deficit. However, in many budget and cost cutting discussions, particularly those in Congress and the media, federal employees have been a primary target.

As Senior Executives attempt to direct programs and personnel while “doing more with less” and achieving measureable results, the fear is that the continuous cuts to discretionary spending will leave agencies so short-changed that they will no longer be able to meet their missions or provide the level of services that Americans expect and deserve. Proposals to freeze federal salaries or cut the federal workforce (which, on their face, appear to be easy decisions given the current anti-government employee climate) fail to take into account the larger picture of how they negatively affect government operations and potentially raise costs in the long run.

The Office of Personnel Management's 2012 Employee Viewpoint Survey (EVS), which was just released, provides evidence that federal employees are beginning to exhibit negative impacts of recent attacks against the workforce. The global satisfaction index, which measures a combination of employees' satisfaction with their job, their pay, and their organization, plus their willingness to recommend their organization as a good place to work, dropped to 63%, its lowest level since 2008 and a 3% drop from 2011. Between 2011 and 2012, global satisfaction scores declined across a significant majority of federal agencies, and employee satisfaction with pay dropped to 59%, its lowest level since the survey began in 2004.

Senior Executives oversee a broad range of federal programs and personnel. They will be the first to tell you that the government is only as strong as its workforce. Private businesses and citizens rely upon government services every day. If agencies do not have the staffing capacity to run programs, agencies cannot meet their missions.

SEA hears from its members that the continuous focus on reducing federal employee pay and benefits has lowered employee morale throughout their agencies. The EVS data bear out this fact. Not only will this lead to recruitment and retention problems, but the reality is that further cuts to federal employee pay and benefits will not significantly reduce the deficit.

Making strategic decisions, especially when the pressure is on to make large cuts, is neither easy nor expedient. We encourage you not to use federal employees as the quick way out of the budget deficit, only to have the unintended consequence of a later increase in spending that will arise because of a loss of talent.

We look forward to working with you and your Administration on federal workforce issues to ensure an effective federal government and workforce for the 21st century.

Sincerely,



CAROL A. BONOSARO
President



WILLIAM L. BRANSFORD
General Counsel