Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 7, 2005

The President
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing to express our opposition to the Administration's proposal to eliminate a century of civil service rules for all federal employees. We believe this plan is misguided and premature and should be reconsidered.

According to news accounts, the Administration will propose extending personnel flexibilities granted to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and Department of Defense (DOD) to the rest of the federal government. These flexibilities allow agencies to curtail collective bargaining and appeal rights and institute a new pay system that gives great discretion to managers to set salaries and raises.

At this point, there is no justification for allowing other agencies to exercise these personnel flexibilities. DHS and DOD received special treatment in 2002 and 2003, respectively, because of their important role in safeguarding the nation's security. Specifically, with regard to DHS, Congress provided the flexibilities in recognition of the unique challenge that the Department faced in combining over 20 agencies from different parts of the government.

Because the flexibilities granted to DHS and DOD have not been implemented yet, it is far too early to consider extending these flexibilities to the rest of the federal government. Indeed, DHS issued its final regulations only last week, and the personnel changes will not be implemented until FY 2009. DOD has yet to issue any proposed regulations. Only after these personnel flexibilities are fully implemented at both departments will Congress be in a position to evaluate their effectiveness and the merits of extending them to other departments.

Although we support the concept of making the federal government work as effectively and efficiently as possible, we should not consider eliminating a century of important civil service protections without first seeing how DHS and DOD implement their new flexibilities. For this reason, we respectfully request that the Administration reconsider any proposal to extend such personnel flexibilities to the entire federal government.

Sincerely,

Henry A. Waxman
Ranking Minority Member
Committee on Government
Reform and
Agency Organization

Steny H. Hoyer
Democratic Whip

Danny K. Davis
Ranking Minority Member
Subcommittee on Civil Service
Committee on Government
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