



PARTNERSHIP FOR PUBLIC SERVICE

June 29, 2021

The Honorable Carolyn B. Maloney
Chairwoman
Committee on Oversight and Reform
U.S. House of Representatives
2157 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable James Comer
Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight and Reform
U.S. House of Representatives
2105 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairwoman Maloney and Ranking Member Comer:

The Partnership for Public Service strongly supports inclusion of H.R. 2043, the Periodically Listing Updates to Management Act (PLUM Act), on the agenda for the committee's business meeting today. This bill will bring increased transparency and accountability to the federal government by letting the American people know who is serving in a policy and management role as a political appointee or a senior career official.

The Partnership for Public Service, through our [Political Appointee Tracker](#), has worked to provide information on the status of over 700 key political positions requiring Senate confirmation. Our work has revealed the need for more complete and accurate real-time data about political appointments, consisting of over 4,000 presidential political appointees, of which over 1,200 require Senate confirmation.

While the traditional "Plum Book" issued every presidential election year is the most complete listing of political appointments, it is already outdated by the time that it is published. The current process for gathering the information in the Plum Book – a data call from the Office of Personnel Management every four years – provides only a snapshot in time and leads to many data errors, including missing terms, mislabeled appointment types, and incorrect or outdated titles and offices.

The inadequacies of this antiquated data call were on display again in 2020, with the Plum Book released to the public on-line on December 30 – months after presidential transition activities began – and again filled with errors and omissions. For example:

- The book lacks information on 10 offices and agencies such as the Office of the Director for National Intelligence and the Department of Agriculture Inspector General Office. This means that more than two dozen positions in these offices and agencies requiring Senate confirmation were not included in the book.
- Unlike prior editions, the 2020 Plum Book counted only filled, not vacant, positions in the Senior Executive Service totals. Compared to the 2016 Plum Book, this reduced the number of SES positions listed from 3,646 to 2,150.
- The appendix that provides a summary of the number of positions in each agency subject to noncompetitive appointment is missing at least seven agencies or offices that appear in

the Plum Book. For example, the summary of positions in the White House is missing, making the total positions in the Executive Office of the President appear to be smaller than in 2016.

- Because the current Plum Book is a snapshot of positions as of mid-summer 2020, it lacks information on any new positions created since that time. For example, it does not contain any information on the position of the National Cyber Director in the Executive Office of the President, which was created by a law signed on January 1, 2020.

The PLUM Act responds to a recommendation of the Government Accountability Office for Congress to consider requiring more comprehensive and timely information on political appointees. This legislation will ensure public access to information that is already available to those who can afford it through subscription to private vendors who research appointments. We also support your efforts to add language to the bill to provide summary level data based on the self-identified demographic information of individuals holding positions listed in the Plum Book – an important addition to the PLUM Act that will shed light on how well the government is doing in attracting and retaining a diverse workforce.

The Committee on Oversight and Reform has a strong record of bipartisan consensus on improving government transparency and modernizing the way government does business. We look forward to working with you and the other members of the committee to continue this legacy and bring the Plum Book into the 21st Century.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Max Stier', written in a cursive style.

Max Stier
President and CEO
Partnership for Public Service