



# United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY  
Washington, DC 20240

DEC 04 2017

The Honorable Elijah Cummings  
Ranking Member, Committee on Oversight  
and Government Reform  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Cummings:

Thank you for your letter dated October 6, 2017, regarding the reassignment of Senior Executive Service (SES) members within the Department of the Interior (Department). Secretary Zinke asked that I respond to you on his behalf.

The SES was established by Title IV of the Civil Service Reform Act (CSRA) of 1978 (P.L. 95-454, October 13, 1978). The CSRA envisioned a mobile corps of highly competent, seasoned senior executives with broad and diverse experiences, along with exceptional leadership and managerial expertise. The members of the SES are responsible for upholding the highest standards for individual and organizational performance. Each member of the SES corps joins voluntarily with an understanding of the roles and responsibilities they are inheriting, including reassignment.

Congress' original vision of a mobile SES cadre was reaffirmed on December 15, 2015, when President Obama issued an Executive order on strengthening the SES.<sup>1</sup> As part of this order, agencies were required to develop plans to increase the number of SES members who should be rotated. Rotations include reassignments, transfers between agencies, and details of at least 120 days. An annual Government-wide goal of 15 percent of the SES members being rotated was established beginning in fiscal year (FY) 2017. Under the Obama administration, 140 reassignment actions of career SES members occurred. This number would have increased significantly to meet the 15 percent annual Government-wide rotation target they had set.

On June 15, 2017, 33 members of the Department's career SES or 15 percent of the SES cadre received proposed or formal notices of reassignment. All laws and regulations regarding SES reassignments were followed. As the Department's Chief Human Capital Officer, I, along with the Deputy Solicitor for General Law (both career members of the SES), reviewed all reassignments to ensure that SES members were being reassigned properly. To ensure equitable treatment, I emailed the proposed or formal notice of reassignment to the impacted SES members.

Ten members of the SES received proposed notices of reassignments. These notices were distributed to SES members where a geographic reassignment would occur, necessitating that the SES member relocate. The affected SES members were given an opportunity to provide their

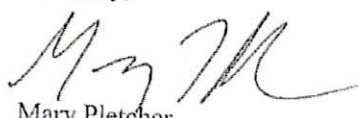
<sup>1</sup> See <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2015/12/15/executive-order-strengthening-senior-executive-service>

preferences regarding the reassignment. These preferences were considered by the Department's Executive Resources Board prior to a final decision and formal notice of reassignment. Six of the ten reassignments involving a geographic reassignment were effectuated. Twenty-three members of the SES received formal notices of reassignments for a non-geographic reassignment where a geographic move was not required. Although not legally required, the SES members were provided an opportunity to raise any concerns about the reassignments. Nineteen of the twenty-three reassignments involving a non-geographic reassignment were effectuated.

I have enclosed a recent memorandum from the Deputy Secretary to all SES members and documents related to the June 2017 reassignments.

Thank you for your interest in the SES cadre at the Department. If you have any questions, please contact Mr. Micah Chambers, Deputy Director, Office of Congressional and Legislative Affairs, at [REDACTED]

Sincerely,



Mary Pletcher  
Deputy Assistant Secretary for Human  
Capital and Diversity  
Chief Human Capital Officer

Enclosures