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OPM Proposes Rule to Strengthen Accountability in Senior Executive Service

Washington, D.C. – The U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) today announced a proposed rule to reform the Senior Executive Service (SES) performance appraisal system, aligning with President Trump’s [Presidential Memorandum](#) *Restoring Accountability for Career Senior Executives* to restore a high-performance, high-accountability culture among career senior executives. The proposed rule allows agencies to use a forced distribution of performance ratings, eliminates DEI evaluation criteria, and aims to create a system where SES performance evaluations provide an accurate measure of their performance.

“The American people deserve a federal government led by executives who are held to the highest standards,” **Acting Director Chuck Ezell said.** “This proposed rule restores accountability, rewards true excellence, and ensures senior leaders deliver real results. OPM is proud to take this important step to strengthen performance among the highest levels of the federal workforce.”

The SES are corps of top-level federal executives who provide leadership and oversee government operations. By statute, they “exercise important policy-making, policy-determining or other executive functions.” *See* 5 U.S.C. § 3132(a)(2)(E).

For many years, governmentwide SES ratings data has consistently shown that virtually all SES (over 96%) receive top ratings despite documented performance failures. That does not pass the common sense test. Allowing agencies to implement a forced distribution will “permit the accurate evaluation of [their] performance,” “provide for systematic appraisals” of SES

performance; and “encourage excellence” in SES performance, as required by 5 U.S.C. § 4312(a).

In addition, under the proposed rule, Senior Executives will no longer be evaluated based on whether they promote DEI in the federal workplace, and members of performance review boards will no longer be appointed based on DEI criteria.

The [proposed rule](#) is open for public comment through the Federal Register until May 31. Click here for OPM’s [fact sheet](#) on the proposed rule.

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