



# *Guidance for the FY 2016 Presidential Rank Awards Program*

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## **THE PRESIDENTIAL RANK AWARDS PROGRAM**

The Presidential Rank Award was established by statute in 1978, and the statute requires the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to request nominations and administer the program for Presidential Rank Awards. The statute also requires agency heads to nominate senior executives and senior professionals across the Federal Government for Presidential Rank Awards. Two categories of rank awards are available: *Distinguished* rank to leaders who achieve sustained extraordinary accomplishments, and *Meritorious* rank to leaders for sustained accomplishments.

Beginning in 1980, Distinguished Executive and Meritorious Executive Presidential Rank Awards have been conferred to career members of the SES. Subsequently, in 2003, the ranks of Distinguished Senior Professional and Meritorious Senior Professional were also established and made available to confer to other senior career employees (i.e., Senior-Level and Scientific-Professional (SL/ST)) in a manner similar to that for career members of the SES.

Only one percent of SES and one percent of senior career employees may earn the respective Distinguished Rank Awards. Only five percent of SES and five percent of senior career employees may receive the respective Meritorious Rank Awards. The percentage of SES and senior career employees respectively who may receive each award is based on the Governmentwide number of career appointees in OPM-allocated respective SES and SL/ST positions as of September 30<sup>th</sup> of the previous fiscal year.

All agencies, including the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency (CIGIE), may nominate up to 9 percent of their respective career SES and SL/ST populations. Inspectors General should nominate executives separately from the parent agency through the CIGIE, as provided by section 14 of the Inspector General Reform Act of 2008.

## **STATUTORY BASIS FOR PRESIDENTIAL RANK AWARDS PROGRAM**

OPM's statutory basis for administering the Presidential Rank Awards Program is found in:

- *Title 5, Sec. 4507. Awarding of ranks in the Senior Executive Service; and*
- *Title 5, Sec. 4507a. Awarding of ranks to other senior career employees*

## **NOMINATION DEADLINE**

Nominees must meet the eligibility requirements by the nomination deadline of Monday, April 4, 2016.

## **NOMINATING SENIOR EXECUTIVES (SES) FOR A PRESIDENTIAL RANK AWARD**

### **SES Eligibility Requirements**

Nominees must meet the following eligibility criteria by the nomination deadline:

- Hold a career appointment in the SES;
- Be an employee of the nominating agency; and
- Have at least three years of career or career-type Federal civilian service at the SES level; service does not have to be continuous. Qualifying service may include appointments in the SES, Senior Foreign Service, FBI/DEA SES, Defense Intelligence SES, and other SES-equivalent systems. Service under other than career-type appointments (e.g., noncareer,

limited, indefinite) or in Senior Level or Scientific-Professional or equivalent positions is not qualifying.

Presidential Rank Awards recognize extraordinary achievements by career executives in Federal service. These awards provide an excellent opportunity to recognize the top individuals who have made significant and lasting contributions to their agency and the Federal government. In addition to delivering meaningful results, nominees must demonstrate the highest level of leadership competencies including leading change and leading people. Extraordinary executive leaders model these critical abilities by taking on some of the most difficult organizational challenges as well as developing a strong and diverse workforce for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Nominees should exhibit regularly the ability to develop a strong team, collaborate across the Agency and government, create an environment of high engagement and dedication to mission above self. In keeping with the President's Executive Order (EO 13714), a PRA nomination could, for example, highlight the individuals' success in leading inter-agency initiatives and collaborating on government-wide efforts.

Strong performance ratings are important but not sufficient to demonstrate that the executive is deserving of a PRA. Not all executive positions are of equal difficulty or require extraordinary effort to succeed. Agencies are encouraged to nominate executives who are willing to take risks and persevere under difficult circumstances, who use innovative approaches when "status quo" would be easier, and have a legacy of building stronger teams and organizations than when they took on the role. Agencies are encouraged to draw on all segments of their executive workforce to identify this select group.

When considering potential nominees, agencies should exercise due diligence in reviewing both the background of nominees (including any issues relating to personal and professional conduct) as well as the programs and organizational components for which the nominees have any responsibility to ensure the appropriateness of the nominees for receiving Presidential recognition.

An agency may nominate a reemployed annuitant who meets all eligibility requirements. Also, an Executive Schedule employee who was appointed by the President with Senate Confirmation (PAS), without a break in service from a career SES appointment, and who chose to remain eligible for rank awards under 5 U.S.C. § 3392(c), may be nominated although 5 U.S.C. § 4509 otherwise precludes a PAS Executive Schedule employee from receiving the award. A part-time or intermittent executive may be nominated but the agency must be prepared to pay the full award. It should not be prorated.

Agencies are responsible for verifying and certifying that any professional credentials held by the nominee and required by the nominee's position are valid and current (a certification block is included on the nomination form). Verification of credentials will not be addressed as part of the background check conducted by OPM.

Agencies may consider a broad range of factors in exercising discretion to nominate executives for this award, including: budgetary limits; policy considerations; Congressional concerns; and any public affairs or suitability implications. Agencies will also need to decide whether an award to any proposed nominee would be in the best interests of the agency and the Administration.

A nominee who meets the eligibility requirements but leaves the SES before being selected as a recipient may still receive the honor, and the award amount must be based on the last rate of basic pay received as a career member of the SES. The same applies to a nominee who dies after OPM has received the nomination.

A nominee who transfers to another agency during the PRA process remains eligible for the award. The nominating agency and gaining agency will be contacted during the vetting process. If the individual is selected for the award, the nominating agency is responsible for paying costs associated with the award (i.e., vetting and award).

An individual who has received either rank award (i.e., Distinguished or Meritorious) may be nominated for the other award in succeeding years; however, an individual may not receive the same rank award more than once in any five-year period.

Year Award Received	Year Eligible to Receive the Same Award
2009	2014
2010	2015
2011	2016

### SES Nomination Criteria

The law provides the rank of Distinguished Executive is awarded for “sustained extraordinary accomplishment,” and the rank of Meritorious Executive for “sustained accomplishment.” Presidential Rank Awards are reserved for career senior executives who have a record of achievement that is recognized throughout the agency and/or is acknowledged on a national or international level. In reaching the pinnacle of achievement, rank award recipients are also required to have demonstrated strong leadership abilities, inspired their employees, and earned the respect of those they serve. Nomination criteria should focus more clearly on achievement of results and the effectiveness of the means by which those results are achieved. The nomination criteria are as follows:

**1. Program Results:** The executive has an exceptional record of achieving major program goals and exceeding customer expectations by marshaling internal and external resources to attain high-quality outcomes that are technically sound and cost-effective, and that yield rewards commensurate with the level of risk.

**2. Executive Leadership:** The executive possesses a sound strategic overview of the public sector environment and has shown creativity, adaptability, and resilience in aligning program efforts with the organization’s vision, mission, and goals, and in partnering with stakeholders inside and outside the organization. The executive has also demonstrated the ability to lead people effectively by fostering employee development, cooperation and teamwork, and making optimal use of human, financial and information resources.

### SES Nomination Limits

All agencies, including the CIGIE, may nominate up to a total of 9 percent of their career SES populations for collective Distinguished and Meritorious awards, but are not subject to any prescribed ratio of Distinguished to Meritorious nominations. Agencies should keep in mind, however, the statute permits only one percent of the Governmentwide career SES population to receive the Distinguished Rank award, and five percent to receive the Meritorious Rank award. Agencies with fewer than 12 SES members may nominate one SES member.

## **NOMINATING SENIOR CAREER EMPLOYEES (SL/ST) FOR A PRESIDENTIAL RANK AWARD**

### **Senior Career Employees (SL/ST) Eligibility Requirements**

Nominees must meet the following eligibility requirements by the nomination deadline:

- Hold a career OPM-allocated Senior-Level (SL) or Scientific-Professional (ST) position;
- Be an employee of the nominating agency on the nomination deadline; and
- Have at least three years of career or career-type Federal civilian service above GS-15. Service does not have to be continuous. Qualifying service does not include appointments that are time-limited or to positions that are exempted from the competitive service because of their confidential or policy-making character.

Presidential Rank Awards recognize extraordinary achievements by career executives in Federal service. These awards provide an excellent opportunity to recognize the top individuals who have made significant and lasting contributions to their agency and the Federal government.

When considering potential nominees, agencies should exercise due diligence in reviewing both the background of nominees (including any issues relating to personal and professional conduct) as well as the programs and organizational components for which the nominees have any responsibility to ensure the appropriateness of the nominees for receiving Presidential recognition.

Agencies may nominate a reemployed annuitant who holds a career appointment to an OPM-allocated SL or ST position and meets all eligibility requirements. Agencies may also nominate a part-time or intermittent employee, but in keeping with the prestige of the award, be prepared to pay the full (not pro-rated) percentage of the recipient's annual basic salary. Agencies may consider a broad range of factors in exercising discretion to nominate SLs and STs for this award, including: budgetary limits; policy considerations; Congressional concerns; and any public affairs or suitability implications. Agencies will also need to decide whether an award to any proposed nominee would be in the best interests of the agency and the Administration.

Agencies are responsible for verifying and certifying that any professional credentials held by the nominee and required by the nominee's position are valid and current (a certification block is included on the nomination form). Verification of credentials will not be addressed as part of the background check conducted by OPM

A nominee who meets the eligibility requirements, but leaves the SL or ST position before being selected as a recipient, is eligible to receive the award, and the award amount must be based on the last rate of basic pay received as a career SL or ST. The same applies to a nominee who dies after OPM has received the nomination.

A nominee who transfers to another agency during the PRA process remains eligible for the award. The nominating agency and gaining agency will be contacted during the vetting process. If the individual is selected for the award, the nominating agency is responsible for paying costs associated with the award (i.e., vetting and award).

An individual who has received either rank award (i.e., Distinguished or Meritorious) may be nominated for the other award in succeeding years; however, an individual may not receive the same rank award more than once in any five-year period.

<b>Year Award Received</b>	<b>Year Eligible to Receive the Same Award</b>
2009	2014
2010	2015
2011	2016

### **Senior Career Employee (SL/ST) Nomination Criteria**

The law provides that the rank of Distinguished Senior Professional is awarded for “sustained extraordinary accomplishment,” and the rank of Meritorious Senior Professional for “sustained accomplishment.” Presidential Rank Awards are reserved for senior career employees who have a sustained record of professional, technical, and/or scientific achievement that is recognized throughout the agency and is acknowledged on a national or international level. In reaching the pinnacle of achievement, rank award recipients will also have inspired their colleagues and earned their stakeholders’ respect. The nomination criteria for Senior Career Employees are as follows:

- 1. Program Results:** The senior professional has an exceptional record of achieving major program goals and exceeding customer expectations by marshaling internal and external resources as necessary to attain high-quality outcomes that are technically or scientifically sound and cost-effective, and that yield rewards commensurate with the level of risk.
- 2. Stature in Professional Field:** The senior professional is consistently recognized nationally or internationally as a leader or authority in a field or discipline. He or she has influenced others in or beyond the field or discipline; is regularly sought as an advisor and consultant on scientific, technical, or professional programs and problems of fundamental interest and extraordinary difficulty which extend well beyond his or her field or discipline; and has received major honors or awards or published works that have had a major impact in the field or discipline.

### **Senior Career Employees Nomination Limits**

All agencies, including the CIGIE, may nominate up to a total of 9 percent of their career SL/ST populations for collective Distinguished and Meritorious awards, but are not subject to any prescribed ratio of Distinguished to Meritorious nominations. Agencies should keep in mind, however, the statute only permits one percent of the Governmentwide career SL/ST population to receive the Distinguished Rank award, and five percent to receive the Meritorious Rank award. Agencies with fewer than 12 senior career employees may nominate one senior professional.

### **ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS AND NOMINATION CRITERIA FOR AGENCIES EXEMPT FROM THE SES**

Several agencies have senior career executives who meet the SES definition at 5 U.S.C. 3132(a)(2), but their positions are placed in the Senior-Level (SL) system because the agency is exempt from SES coverage. These agencies receive Senior-Level (SL) space allocations from OPM for these appointees. These agencies include, but are not limited to:

- Export-Import Bank of the United States
- Federal Election Commission

- Federal Financial Institutions Examination Council
- National Security Council
- Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation
- U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council

These agencies should use the nomination criteria established for members of the Senior Executive Service when nominating their career senior executives for rank awards but indicate on the template the Agency is applying the SES nomination criteria for the nominees. Similarly, these agencies should use the nomination criteria established for senior career employees when nominating employees in the Senior-Level system who do not meet the statutory SES definition.

## **PREPARING NOMINATION PACKAGES**

Agencies should send OPM a cover letter signed by the agency head and an alphabetical list of nominees for each award category (SES and Senior Career Employee) – with the required number of nomination folders, as specified below – for each nominee. Agencies should include the last four digits of the social security number for each nominee on the alphabetical lists, and include in the cover letter the name, telephone number, and email address of the agency’s Presidential Rank Awards Program Coordinator.

Agencies should prepare nomination folders to accompany the cover letter and alphabetical list of nominees per the following guidelines.

### **Nomination Folders**

Agencies should send each nomination in standard letter-size folders, with tabs (second or third cut are preferable). Agencies should provide eight (8) identical folders for each Distinguished nominee and five (5) identical folders for each Meritorious nominee, secured together using elastic bands.

Agencies should specify whether nominations are for the SES rank award or the Senior Professional rank award. Each folder must include the following:

#### **1. Label on the Folder Tab**

NAME OF NOMINEE (First, Middle Initial, Last)

AGENCY NAME

DISTINGUISHED SES or SP 2016 -or- MERITORIOUS SES or SP 2016

- 2. Presidential Rank Awards Program Nomination Template.** Agencies must complete the appropriate attached nomination template for each nominee. All boxes must be checked that apply to the nominee’s current employment status. Agencies are required to verify on the template any professional credentials applicable to the nominee’s position. Agencies must also ensure the nominee’s immediate supervisor and the agency head each provide their signature in the appropriate signature blocks on the nomination template. If the agency head prefers signing only the cover letter, the agency should indicate as such (e.g., “/s/ cover ltr”).

- 3. Biographical and Career Summary.** Agencies must summarize in bullet format each nominee’s accomplishments, as an SES member or SL/ST employee, which serve as the basis for nomination for a Rank Award. Agencies must also briefly list each nominee’s career highlights, and other biographical information, including significant honors, awards, etc. *Agencies may use no more than one page of text, and information may only be presented using no smaller than an 11-point font and at least 0.8 inch margins.*

- 4. Justification Statement.** Agencies must concisely describe each nominee’s career achievements for each of the Presidential Rank Award criteria, as described above, in the same order as the order in which the criteria are listed. *Agencies may use no more than three pages of text, and information may only be presented using no smaller than an 11-point font and at least 0.8 inch margins.*

Agencies should not include SF-50 or equivalent personnel forms in the nominee’s folders. Additionally, agencies should not staple or paper-clip any of the pages in the folder. **OPM will return folders that do not meet the specified format.**

## **Suggestions**

Since Review Board members are former and current leaders across the private and public sectors, they will not know the intricacies of each nominee’s program responsibilities or even the general context of Federal Government work. Statements must be clear, organized, and well-written to make it easier for your nominee’s achievements to receive the consideration they deserve. We have found that it helps if agencies take the following actions:

- Organize the justification statements in the same order as the PRA criteria, and number the pages of the justification statement (i.e., 1, 2 and 3);
- Ensure examples are specific and supported. Provide information on results achieved (e.g., actions taken, impact on stakeholders, staffing levels, budget amounts, cost-savings – specifying the source of such information, organization size, results, etc.). Include information about customer and employee feedback, as appropriate; and
- Use commonly-understood terms. Avoid acronyms, abbreviations, and jargon-laden terms.

## **THE REVIEW PROCESS – EVALUATING AGENCY NOMINATIONS**

### **OPM Review**

OPM verifies that each nominee meets the eligibility requirements. OPM also reviews each nomination package for completeness. A complete package must include:

- A cover letter with a list of nominees signed by the agency head.
- A Presidential Rank Awards Program Authorization For Release of Information
- A Presidential Rank Awards Program Self-Certification – Code of Conduct
- An Express Billing form **with supporting billing documentation**
- **Eight (8)** identical folders for each Distinguished nomination and **five (5)** identical folders for each Meritorious nomination and should only contain:
  - A PRA nomination template.
  - A one-page Biographical and Career Summary.
  - A justification statement three pages or less addressing the award criteria.

Information contained in the Executive and Schedule C System (ESCS) database is used to verify eligibility and record scores from the Review Board deliberations.

### **How Review Boards Work**

OPM administers the Presidential Rank Award Review Boards, which are composed of panels of former and current leaders across the private and public sectors. Each Board has three members who individually evaluate and rate the accomplishments described in the justification statement. Each member makes an independent judgment on the cases presented. The nominee’s score is the sum of each board member’s ratings. Distinguished nominees who do not score high enough to be



recommended for approval are referred to a Meritorious Review Board, if eligible. There is no appeal of review board determinations.

The Review Boards for the Distinguished Rank and the Meritorious Rank will meet in Washington, DC. On-site evaluations (investigation inquiries) are conducted on Distinguished and Meritorious nominees, which are recommended as finalists by the Review Board. Agencies will bear the cost of these inquiries.

### **On-site Evaluations (Investigation Inquiry Process), Cost and Self-Certifications**

All Distinguished and Meritorious finalists recommended by the Review Boards for approval are subject to on-site evaluations conducted by OPM's Federal Investigative Services (FIS) in coordination with the PRA Program Coordinators at each agency. During these on-site evaluations, OPM/FIS will review relevant records and conduct interviews with appropriate persons about the nominees' performance and professional accomplishments. A review of the finalists Federal Tax Transcript and a criminal records check will also be completed as part of the evaluation. Agencies will bear the evaluation costs. For FY 2016, the total estimated cost will be \$1,015 per nominee.

When submitting nominations, each agency is required to obligate funds sufficient to cover the total potential evaluation costs for their nominees and provide an InterAgency Agreement (IAA) in the form of the 7600 A/B or Express Billing Form (see below). The IAA is an agreement between the Requesting Agency (agency submitting PRA nominations) and Servicing Agency (OPM/FIS) specifying the work to be performed, amount obligated, and invoicing details.

**Forms 7600 A/B:** The 7600 forms represent a formal IAA document designated by the U.S. Department of Treasury. Total obligations exceeding \$3,000 require Forms 7600 A/B.

**Express Billing Form (EBF):** The EBF may be submitted as an IAA in lieu of the 7600 A/B for obligations of \$3,000 or less. The EBF will be considered an obligation and authorization for services. All required fields must be completed, even for purchase card transactions, as the information is required to record the transactions in OPM's financial system.

The IAA must also include the following attachments:

- List of Nominees
- Supplemental Data for Government Purchase Card Payments, if applicable
- Any additional forms required by the Requesting Agency, if applicable

The IAA submitted with the nomination packet must be completed in its entirety, except for the Servicing Agency signatures. The PRA Program Coordinator will distribute the IAAs to OPM/FIS at the close of the nomination period. OPM/FIS will provide an executed copy of the IAA to the Requesting Agency after review. Payment is due when the evaluations are complete. At that time, OPM/FIS will initiate an IPAC or charge the Government Purchase Card authorized for payment. OPM/FIS will invoice the Requesting Agency only for costs associated with the number of nominees that undergo on-site evaluations. If the Requesting Agency withdraws a nominee after their evaluation has begun, the Requesting Agency will be assessed a pro-rated fee commensurate with the work completed for that nominee prior to the withdrawal. If the total amount due is less than the amount obligated, notification will be sent to the Requesting Agency regarding de-obligating funds.

### **Instructions for completing the 7600 A/B**

#### **7600A**

- Header: Enter Requesting Agency (RA) IAA number in the GT&C number field. (Amendment/Mod # should be left blank.)
- Block 1: Enter RA Name and address. Include highest level department/agency and division.

- Block 9: Enter the total for the agreement (\$1,015 x number of nominees)
- Block 10a: Enter RA Authority, including Title and Citation if other than Economy Act
- Block 23: Enter RA Official, contact information, and obtain signature

### 7600B

- Header: Enter RA IAA number in the GT&C number field. (Amendment/Order/Mod # should be left blank.)
- Block 24: Enter RA Name and address. Include highest level department/agency and division.
- Block 28:
  - Enter the RA Agency Location Code (ALC)
  - Enter the RA Treasury Account Symbol (TAS) **in the component format**
    - AID = Agency Identifier - 3 characters, including leading zeroes
    - BPOA/EPOA = Beginning/Ending Period of Availability - (4 characters each)  
**or** A = Availability Type - (1 character)
    - MAIN = Fund Account - 4 characters, including leading zeroes
    - SUB = Sub-Fund Account - 3 characters, defaults to “000” if not otherwise designated
  - Enter the RA Object Class Code (optional)
  - Enter the RA Business Partner Number (BPN)
  - Enter any additional accounting information required to appear on the invoice. If the full accounting information is not visible in the space provided, enter “see block 35”
  - Enter the RA Funding Expiration Date (the last date an obligation can occur) or leave blank for No-Year funds
  - Enter the RA Funding Cancellation Date (5 years following the expiration date) or leave blank for No-Year funds
  - Enter total number of nominees under “Quantity”. The form will automatically calculate the total amount obligated.
- Block 30: Enter the total amount obligated from block 28.
- Block 31: If payment is by Government Purchase Card, add “Government Purchase Card Supplemental Data” to the list of Other Attachments
- Block 32: Select payment method. Options available for the PRA program include:
  - Servicing Agency Initiated IPAC, or
  - Credit Card (Government Purchase Card only)
- Block 35: If full accounting information was not visible in the space provided for block 28, enter the full information here.
- Block 37: Enter RA Official, contact information, and obtain signature
- Block 38: Enter RA Official, contact information, and obtain signature
- Blocks 39-40: Enter RA Official, contact information, and obtain signature (optional)

Additional instructions issued by the U.S. Department of Treasury regarding the 7600 forms is available at: <http://www.fms.treas.gov/finstandard/forms.html>. For questions related to the IAA, 7600, or billing process, please contact the OPM/FIS contact shown in block 38.

For all other questions related to the PRA program, please contact the OPM contact shown in block 40.

## **Self-Certifications – Code of Conduct and Federal Income Tax Disclosure**

PRA Finalists are subject to various records checks including disclosure of Federal Income Taxes and are required to complete the necessary documents pertaining to unfavorable personal or professional conduct and Federal income tax. Finalists should immediately report any tax issues experienced during the reporting periods. Tax issues may include but not limited to failure to timely file tax return, failure to timely pay tax, failure to timely pay taxes after issuance of notice, Federal tax liens, levy, etc. Failure to complete these forms will result in an immediate withdrawal of the finalist for further consideration of the award. IRS transcripts (Form 4506-T) will be used to validate tax filing status.

### **Agency Head Final Review and Certification (“Eyes Only” Process)**

After Review Boards complete their evaluations and OPM receives the results of the inquiry process, OPM will consolidate the board scores and prepare a ranked list, and the Director of OPM will establish the minimum scores determining finalists in each rank award category, in compliance with statutory limitations. The OPM Director will provide agency heads or their designees another opportunity to certify the final nominees are not involved in any situations that adversely impact their nomination or would cause embarrassment to the agency or the Administration after the awards are announced. Situations that could cause a withdrawal of the nomination might include being the subject of an unfavorable finding in an investigation, conflict of interest, EEO complaint, or adverse legal action. Please note that the mere filing of an EEO complaint involving an individual, absent an actual administrative finding of discrimination, does not make the individual “the subject of an unfavorable finding” and does not automatically disqualify the individual from being nominated although agencies may consider the circumstances and the resulting impact of a nomination of the individual in such a situation. Additionally, agencies may not disqualify an individual from nomination because they filed an EEO complaint or engaged in any other EEO activity protected by law.

### **Withdrawing a Nomination**

An agency head may withdraw a nomination at any time before the President makes a decision on the awards.

- To withdraw a nomination before the agency head’s final certification, an agency must send OPM a letter signed by the agency head or his/her designee, informing OPM of the agency head’s decision to withdraw the nomination. Agencies should state the nominee’s name and the award for which he/she was nominated. No additional information or reason is required.
- To withdraw a nomination at the time of the agency head’s final certification, agencies must draw a line through the nominee’s name on the list, and have the agency head initial the withdrawal and sign the list. Subsequently, agencies must return the list to OPM along with a cover letter requesting withdrawal of the nomination.
- The withdrawal of a nomination following the agency head’s final certification should rarely occur but may be necessary in extraordinary circumstances. To withdraw a nomination, agencies are further requested to call the OPM Presidential Rank Awards Program Manager at (202) 606-8046, and immediately follow the telephone call with a letter signed by the agency head or designee asking that the nomination be withdrawn. Agencies should state the nominee’s name and the award for which the nominee was recommended.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE PRESIDENT**

After agency heads certify finalists, the OPM Director sends the names of the reconfirmed, recommended finalists to the President to make final decisions before the end of September. Nominees cannot be added or removed from the list once the President has made a final decision.

OPM will notify the agency head and other appropriate agency contacts as soon as the White House informs us of the President's decision. Following notification by OPM, agencies will be authorized to inform award recipients of their selection and to distribute rank award checks. No internal ceremonies or public announcements will be authorized until further notification by OPM. Public announcement of the award winners is reserved for the President, and OPM will advise agencies if publicity is authorized.

## **PROCESSING AND PAYING THE AWARDS**

Each agency pays for their executives' rank awards, and should consider and plan for awards as part of executive compensation each year. The amount of the award should be based on the last rate of basic pay received as a career member of the SES or SL/ST. Each agency should anticipate the need to pay winners, and budget accordingly.

An individual who transfers to another agency during the PRA process remains eligible for the award. The nominating agency and gaining agency will be contacted during the vetting process. If the individual is selected for the award, the nominating agency is responsible for paying costs associated with the award (i.e., vetting and award).

OPM will issue guidance on Presidential Rank Awards and Aggregate Compensation in the SES, which provides information about payment of the awards. The memo will advise each agency to take the precaution of having rank award checks drawn and ready for the SES appointees and senior career employees on the list provided by OPM to each agency head for final certification by the agency head prior to forwarding to the President; this will allow agencies to pay awards with same fiscal year funds.

To accurately capture award payments, agencies must use the appropriate Nature of Action Codes (NOAC) for Rank Awards as described in the Guide to Processing Personnel Actions, available online at <http://www.opm.gov/feddata/gppa/Gppa29.pdf>.

Distinguished Rank Award recipients receive 35 percent of their rate of basic pay; Meritorious Rank Award recipients receive 20 percent of their rate of basic pay. The award is paid as a lump-sum payment, and the payment is subject to the applicable annual aggregate limitation on pay under 5 U.S.C. § 5307. Specifically, section 5307(d) permits agencies with certified performance appraisal systems for members of the SES and SL/ST employees to apply a higher annual aggregate limitation on pay for those employees. The higher aggregate limitation on pay is equivalent to the total annual compensation payable to the Vice President under 3 U.S.C. § 104. Agencies without certified performance appraisal systems for their SES members or senior professionals must apply an annual aggregate limitation on pay, equivalent to the rate for level I of the Executive Schedule. Any portion of a rank award that would cause aggregate compensation in a calendar year to exceed the applicable aggregate limitation on pay is rolled over for payment at the beginning of the following calendar year.

The lump-sum award payment that is paid in the following calendar year is in addition to basic pay. The lump-sum payment is not subject to retirement, health benefits, or life insurance deductions. It is not included in the "high three" average pay computation for retirement benefits or in basic pay for Thrift Savings Plan computation. However, the payment is subject to income tax withholding and also

FICA tax withholding if the executive is in the Federal Employees Retirement System (FERS) or subject to Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS) Offset.

## **RECOGNIZING AWARD RECIPIENTS**

Each award recipient receives a framed certificate signed by the President. The Distinguished certificate features a gold emblem; the Meritorious certificate features a silver emblem. Each winner receives a Rank Award pin – gold for the Distinguished winners and silver for the Meritorious winners.

Upon notification by OPM, agencies should immediately inform award recipients of their selection; however, agencies shall not make any public announcement or hold any ceremonies in honor of the award winners. OPM will advise agencies if publicity is authorized. When possible, the President or Vice President may hold a recognition ceremony for the Distinguished and Meritorious Executives and Senior Professionals. We will advise you of any recognition ceremony scheduled by the White House. Additionally, the Senior Executives Association (SEA) holds an annual banquet recognizing Distinguished Rank Award winners. SEA will contact winners for this event.