



UNITED STATES OFFICE OF PERSONNEL MANAGEMENT
Washington, DC 20415

The Director

Friday, October 16, 2009

MEMORANDUM FOR: Chief Human Capital Officers

FROM: John Berry, Director

Subject: Diversity in the Senior Executive Service

The very first merit system principle provides that “recruitment [of civil service employees] should be from qualified individuals from appropriate sources in an endeavor to achieve a workforce from all segments of society.” 5 U.S.C. 2301(b)(1). Over the next six to eight years it is anticipated that some 40 percent of our Senior Executive Service (SES) members will retire from Federal service. Given this anticipated wave of retirements, this is an opportune time to remind Federal agencies of their obligation to do their part to promote the goal of diversity in the ranks of the senior executive service.

Our current SES population does not yet reflect the diversity of our Nation or even of the rest of our Federal workforce. I encourage you, therefore, to cast the net broadly when recruiting for new senior executives. A crucial part of each agency’s overall recruitment strategy should be to consult with organizations that can assist in reaching candidates of all backgrounds for SES positions. These include, among others, organizations that can help agencies conduct outreach in communities that may not as yet have been reached effectively through traditional recruitment strategies.

Obviously, we must also ensure that every candidate for the SES is judged by the same criteria and afforded equal opportunity to compete. And every agency should redouble its efforts to ensure that its SES selection process remains transparent and inclusive.

For example, agencies should consider the critical role played by Executive Resource Boards in choosing from the best candidates available for a particular position. I encourage you to consider the full spectrum of strengths and competencies that your senior executives and other senior-level employees could bring to the task when making appointments to your ERBs. Agency ERBs should, to the extent practicable, reflect the rich diversity of talents, experience, and backgrounds of our Nation.

In addition, as you may know, OPM has committed to establishing a new Senior Executive Service Office to serve as a resource on these matters. Duties of the consolidated office will include outreach to stakeholders such as executive resource managers throughout the Federal Government. This will include providing executive resource forums for agency executive specialists and leading workshops and roundtables on leadership development topics. Additional activities of the office will include the management of the Qualifications Review Board.

Our talented, hardworking Federal workforce is already a source of strength to our Nation. We can become even stronger by ensuring the senior levels of our Government reflect what has made us great – our diversity.