



September 8, 2020

The Honorable Ron Johnson, Chairman
The Honorable Gary Peters, Ranking Member
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Johnson, Ranking Member Peters, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Senior Executives Association (SEA) and National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association (NARFE), we write with regards to the committee's consideration of the nomination of John Gibbs to serve as Director of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). As the Committee debates Mr. Gibbs' nomination, we respectfully request that you keep the following in mind.

In the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978, Congress envisioned that the role of OPM Director and OPM as a central agency would be critical to the success and cultivation of the federal workforce. As this committee well knows, OPM faces significant challenges meeting its critical human capital management and merit system protection missions. These challenges have been exacerbated in recent years by a lack of a steady, qualified, Senate-confirmed OPM leader and the pernicious trend of conflating the role of OPM Director with that of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Deputy Director for Management (DDM). With this nomination hearing, you have an opportunity to address these challenges.

As the committee considers this nomination, it is critical the committee hear how Mr. Gibbs will prioritize and advance OPM's human capital management mission, especially in an environment of scarce resources and many competing priorities. Several key areas the committee should also inquire about include:

- Plans for the continued, successful management of the Federal Employees Health Benefits (FEHB) program, which serves more than 8 million Americans.
- Plans for addressing challenges facing the Retirement Services division, which serves nearly 3 million Americans and remains in the dark ages with paper-based retirement applications.
- Any plans Mr. Gibbs has to move forward with the Administration's proposed merger of OPM with the General Services Administration, despite Congress' action to delay any merger, in part or in whole, until a study of OPM operations is complete.
- Mr. Gibbs' views on OPM's role in upholding merit system principles.
- How, as Director, Mr. Gibbs will engage the federal community, including associations and unions representing employees and retirees.
- Mr. Gibbs' view of the roles, responsibilities and objectives of political appointees, including his views on OPM leadership's actions to place dozens of political appointees in historically career positions or in new roles at the agency within the last year.

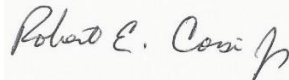
OPM and the federal workforce are at a critical inflection point. As the committee with jurisdiction over both, you must ask both yourselves and Mr. Gibbs the following: Will the federal government be an employer of last resort or of first choice? OPM's systems and processes are in dire need of modernization, and NARFE and SEA fully support efforts to improve the ability of OPM to carry out its mission and fulfill its responsibilities. [Rebuilding OPM's capacity](#) to address current and future human capital management challenges will be critical for our national security and the success of federal agencies to meet their missions far into the future. Is Mr. Gibbs ready for this challenge?

We thank you for your attention to our views. Should you or your staff prefer to discuss further, please contact Jason Briefel, SEA Director of Policy and Outreach, and Jessica Klement, NARFE Staff Vice President for Policy and Programs, at Jason.Briefel@seniorexecs.org and jklement@narfe.org, respectfully.

Sincerely,



Ken Thomas
National President
NARFE



Robert E. Corsi, Jr.
Interim President
SEA