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September 15, 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) – which represents the interests of career federal executives in the Senior Executive Service (SES), those in Senior Level (SL), Scientific and Professional (ST) and equivalent positions and other senior career federal leaders – I write with regard to the nomination of John Gibbs to serve as Director of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM).

In the association’s joint letter with NARFE to the committee last week, we raised a series of critical questions for Senators about this nomination, with the key question being “is Mr. Gibbs ready for this challenge?”¹ Upon SEA’s review of Mr. Gibbs’ record, experience, and written and oral testimony before this committee last week, it is clear that the answer to that question is no, and therefore SEA encourages Senators to **vote no** on this nomination.

In his written testimony to the committee, Mr. Gibbs asserts that “time-to-hire, retirement processing, and IT modernization” are “three of the most persistent challenges facing OPM today.” These are not OPM’s biggest challenges. As this committee is aware, the agency has not been without significant challenges in recent years. SEA made the case in a detailed study released this summer that a wholesale transformation of the governance of federal human capital management is necessary, and OPM is a key focal area of the study.²

OPM is a critical central government agency responsible for human capital polices affecting over 2 million active employees, and millions of additional beneficiaries and annuitants. The agency also plays a critical statutorily-defined role upholding the merit principles, and Mr. Gibbs prior comments regarding the merit system are deeply troubling and cannot be discounted nor ignored. Mr. Gibbs testified that he does not regret those comments, nor those espousing conspiracy theories, or anti-Semitic or anti-Islamic sentiment. He merely stated that “I regret that it has unfortunately become an issue.”

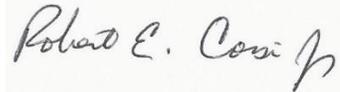
¹ SEA & NARFE, Joint Letter to HSGAC Regarding Nomination of John Gibbs for OPM Director, September 8, 2020, https://cdn.ymaws.com/seniorexecs.org/resource/resmgr/SEA-NARFE_letter_on_nominati.pdf.

² Transforming the Governance of Federal Human Capital Management, Senior Executives Association & the Center for Organizational Excellence, 2020, https://seniorexecs.org/page/HCM_Transform_Governance.

The role of OPM Director is critical to the success of the federal workforce and the federal government as an employer. The Committee and the Senate should reject the nomination of John Gibbs for OPM Director.

Thank you for your consideration of SEA's perspective. Please have your staff contact SEA Director of Policy and Outreach Jason Briefel (jason.briefel@seniorexecs.org; 202-971-3300) for further information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert E. Corsi, Jr." The signature is written in a cursive style and is placed on a light gray rectangular background.

Robert E. Corsi, Jr.
Interim President
Senior Executives Association