

Preserving the Merit-Based Civil Service

*President Trump and Congressional Republicans are advancing policies that would undermine nearly 150 years of bipartisan laws to cultivate a federal civil service workforce that is professional, ethical, and accountable. **NARFE is asking members of Congress to co-sponsor the Saving the Civil Service Act (H.R. 492/ S. 134) and to oppose any legislation, including reconciliation legislation (H.R. 1), that eliminates the civil service rights and protections of current or future federal workers.***

NARFE Position

NARFE is dedicated to ensuring a nonpartisan, professional public service workforce to serve America. NARFE opposes proposals to reclassify current federal employees and deprive them of civil service protections without due process, and also opposes eliminating these civil service job protections from future civil servants.

Specifically, NARFE is strongly opposed to the President's executive actions and related [proposed rule](#) by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) that could politicize the federal workforce by moving 50,000 or more career federal employees into a new employment designation "Schedule Policy/Career."¹

NARFE is also deeply concerned by and is strongly opposed to Section 90004 in the House-passed One Big Beautiful Bill Act (H.R. 1) that would require new federal employees to pay an additional 5% of their salary to keep civil service job protections or otherwise would default new hires into at-will federal employment. NARFE calls on the Senate to remove Sec. 90004 from H.R. 1 as the chamber takes up the legislation.

Background on the Merit-Based Civil Service and the President's Proposed Schedule P/C

The nonpartisan, merit-based civil service provides continuity through changing administrations and ensures public servants' primary allegiance is to the Constitution and laws of the United States rather than the individual temporarily holding the office of President. Since the passage of the Pendleton Act of 1883, for nearly 150 years Congress has taken successive bipartisan actions to codify and strengthen the federal merit-based civil service system, with the most significant recent updates included in the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978, which modernized and codified the merit-based civil service.

Following executive direction from the president, OPM issued a proposed rule in April 2025 to eliminate merit-based civil service protections for 50,000 or more career federal employees by creating a new excepted service schedule, Schedule Policy/Career (P/C), formerly Schedule F. The rule would allow "policy-influencing" career civil service positions to be moved into Schedule P/C, but denied employees of statutory or procedural due process protections. The rule suggests employees will remain career federal workers who are hired on a nonpartisan basis, but they would serve at-will and

¹ In conjunction with pushing for congressional action, NARFE has also [filed suit](#) in the D.C. U.S. District Court to block the implementation of Schedule P/C.

excepted from adverse action procedures or appeals. NARFE is submitting written comments to OPM in opposition to the rule and encouraging it to be withdrawn.

A Massive Expansion of At-Will Employment Contrary to the Civil Service Reform Act

OPM's proposed Schedule P/C rule would lead to an unprecedented expansion of at-will employment within the federal government, from the approximately 4,000 current political appointees to potentially hundreds of thousands of career federal workers, many of whom are professionals, scientists, economists, lawyers, and analysts whose roles have long been shielded from political interference. This is not a targeted reform, but a massive and systemic reorganization of the federal workforce.

Undermining the Integrity of the Civil Service and Eroding Public Trust

By empowering civil servants to offer candid, apolitical advice, the current system fosters robust policymaking and regulatory compliance. Politicizing the federal workforce would erode that integrity by incentivizing ideological conformity over professionalism. Civil servants who fear reclassification and removal will become less likely to speak truth to power. They may decline to raise ethical concerns, bury inconvenient evidence, or withhold independent analysis. Over time, this erosion of honest counsel will not only degrade the quality of governance—it will also deepen public cynicism and reduce trust in government institutions to act impartially and in the public interest.

Threat to Continuity, Recruitment, Expertise, and Government Capacity

The reclassification and potential removal of large numbers of experienced federal employees would significantly degrade the government's institutional memory and capacity. Many of the roles targeted as "policy-influencing" require deep expertise—regulatory analysts, public health professionals, foreign affairs officers, environmental scientists, and financial examiners. Their knowledge is not easily replaced, especially in high-skill fields where recruitment pipelines are already strained.

Does Not Advance Performance-Based Accountability

The notion of "accountability" is misused to imply that long-standing due process protections for federal employees are a barrier to effective governance. In truth, these protections are essential to shielding public servants from politically motivated firings and ensuring that government decisions are made based on law, science, and expertise—not partisanship. OPM's proposed rule would shift to accountability based on political loyalty and lack of dissent.

Conclusion: Reaffirming the Value of an Independent Civil Service

Eliminating merit protections for career federal civil servants is not a modest reform. It is a fundamental restructuring of the American civil service system designed to consolidate executive power at the expense of institutional independence, professional integrity, and lawful governance. Congress created career federal employees within a merit-based civil service for a reason. That system ensures the government works for all Americans, not just those aligned with the political party in power. To ensure Congress has robust input onto the future of the civil service, NARFE calls on members to co-sponsor and support the Saving the Civil Service Act, H.R. 492/ S. 134.