PROPOSED OPM RULE ON "SCHEDULE POLICY / CAREER"

SUMMARY

On April 23, 2025, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) published a proposed regulation "Improving Performance, Accountability and Responsiveness in the Civil Service" in the *Federal Register*. This proposed rule is the latest attempt by the Administration to gut civil service protections and would not just hurt civil servants, it would harm the American people.

This regulation would revive the first Trump Administration's "Schedule F" initiative under a new name: "Schedule Policy / Career." Most career civil servants are in what's known as the competitive or the excepted services and earn due process protections after they complete their probationary or trial periods of employment. That means that they can be fired for cause—for example, poor performance—but not for other, political reasons. But this new excepted service schedule, Schedule Policy/Career, lacks such protections and once "policy influencing" positions are moved into that schedule, the career employees in those positions would be fireable "at will." This would impact tens or even hundreds of thousands of federal workers in "policy-influencing" roles and give the Administration the ability to fire them based on political allegiance rather than merit.

The proposed rule undermines more than 140 years of civil service reform following the spoils system. It opens the door to politically motivated firings and tramples on employees' constitutional and statutory rights. This proposal destabilizes the career workforce, politicizes the day-to-day work of government, and erodes the very idea of a professional, independent civil service.

OPM's justifications for this proposal rely on cherry-picked survey data and sweeping generalizations about alleged political "resistance" within the career federal workforce, offering little concrete evidence of widespread misconduct or policy subversion. It assumes that accountability and performance management can only be achieved by dismantling civil service protections and merit system principles. This proposal would fundamentally damage the civil service's ability to deliver for the American people.

OPM has provided a 30-day comment window before the regulation can be finalized. **The deadline for comments is May 23**.

TOPLINES

- Not About Accountability: This proposed rule purports to "improve accountability," but is, in fact, a way to dismantle the independent career civil service in roles important to the American people. By reviving the controversial Trump-era "Schedule F" under the new name, "Schedule Policy/Career," the rule would remove due process protections granted by Congress for untold numbers of federal employees in what the Administration decides are "policy influencing" roles so that they serve at the pleasure of the President.
- Not About Performance: This proposal gives lip service to performance management, but rather than providing thoughtful reform, it weaponizes the classification of "policy-influencing" roles to make it easier to purge career staff. It's the latest attempt from this Administration to replace professionalism with ideological alignment.
- Massive Expansion of At-Will Employment: The proposed rule would dramatically expand the number of civil servants who serve at the pleasure of the President from approximately 4,000 political appointees to potentially hundreds of thousands of what had been career employees.
- Ideologically Driven Rulemaking: OPM makes sweeping claims about political "resistance" in the civil service based on cherry-picked anecdotes and selective surveys, using these to justify maximalist removal authority.

- Undermines Civil Service Integrity: This proposed rule would discourage career civil servants from providing their uncensored opinions and from fully applying their expertise for the benefit of the American people. This would erode public trust in neutral governance.
- Recruitment and Retention: This proposed rule would undermine the draw of mission-driven work in federal employment and make it harder for the federal government to recruit and retain talent.
- Undoing Prior Protections: The proposed rule would undo the Biden Administration's April 2024 civil service rule that was protective of longstanding employee rights and merit system principles.

In short, this rule is not about accountability or performance management—it's about control. If finalized, it would mark one of the most regressive shifts in federal workforce policy ever. It would harm the civil service's ability to deliver to the American people and, in turn, would harm the country.