



AMERICANS FOR PROSPERITY

16 July 2018

Members of the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform,

On behalf of more than 3.2 million Americans for Prosperity activists in all 50 states, I urge you to support the Modern Employment Reform, Improvement, and Transformation (MERIT) Act. Reforming our nation's civil service system is long overdue, and this bill represents a crucial step following President Trump's executive order on the matter earlier this year.

As any manager knows, personnel is one of the most important factors in operational efficiency. Unfortunately, prior to the President's executive order, the federal government had not made significant improvements to its personnel management in nearly forty years. The system has become outdated, the bureaucracy suffers from perverse incentives, and the credibility of our entire civil service is regularly undermined by anecdotes that leave the American people wondering who the system really serves.

In a February 2015 report on the federal workforce, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) reported that removal of an incompetent or otherwise unacceptable federal employee takes an average of 243 days. The same report noted that in a given year, roughly only one in 500 federal employees will face dismissal. Recent labor turnover data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) show that about one in 80 private sector employees are dismissed each month.

Taxpayer-funded public sector employees should be held to the same professional standards as their private sector counterparts, if not higher. The disparity in dismissals illustrates not that the bureaucracy is nearly flawless, but that the current system of personnel management in government is failing. Indeed, the GAO recommended that the probationary period following an initial hiring, in which employees are not afforded the extensive protection against dismissal, should be extended in order to improve supervisors' ability to weed out bad actors and unqualified workers.

Federal agencies are best positioned to serve the American people when they have the right staff and that staff is held accountable. The Modern Employment Reform, Improvement, and Transformation (MERIT) Act makes it easier to prevent one wrong hiring decision from holding up an agency and wronging American taxpayers. We strongly urge you to support this legislation, and look forward to working with you improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our federal workforce.

Sincerely,

Brent Gardner
Chief Government Affairs Officer
Americans for Prosperity

Americans for Prosperity (AFP) exists to recruit, educate, and mobilize citizens in support of the policies and goals of a free society at the local, state, and federal level, helping every American live their dream – especially the least fortunate. AFP has more than 3.2 million activists across the nation, a local infrastructure that includes 36 state chapters, and has received financial support from more than 100,000 Americans in all 50 states. For more information, visit www.AmericansForProsperity.org.