



April 12, 2016

The Honorable Harold Rogers
2406 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Nita Lowey
2365 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Rogers, Ranking Member Lowey, and Members of the Committee:

The Senior Executives Association (SEA) represents the interests of career federal executives in the Senior Executive Service (SES), and those in Senior Level (SL), Scientific and Professional (ST), and equivalent positions. On behalf of SEA's members, including those serving at the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), I write to **urge your support for Congressman Farr's amendment on VA SES performance awards to the FY17 MilConVA appropriations legislation.**

This amendment would more appropriately define what would disqualify a VA Senior Executive from being eligible to earn a performance award, rather than the draconian policy of completely banning all performance awards for all Senior Executives at the VA.

An across-the-board, one-size-fits-all approach to SES awards undermines the SES pay-for-performance system, which was modeled after the private sector and implemented by the Bush Administration in 2004. The VA Secretary already has ultimate authority to raise, lower, or concur with an SES performance award, and limiting the ability of the Secretary to reward the VA's best executives will be detrimental to the agency's mission delivery. Furthermore, a universal ban would only serve to increase the already taxing difficulty the VA is currently facing when it comes to attracting and retaining talented Senior Executives. Ending the pay-for-performance system entirely—which is what this provision would essentially do for VA Senior Executives— would have a harmful effect on employee morale and agency performance.

SEA understands the need for accountability at the VA, and for all government employees. We completely support holding individuals accountable for wrong-doing if they are found to have occurred following an impartial investigation that provides for due process. Yet accountability also entails rewarding employees for good work, and the original provision in this legislation would make it impossible for the Secretary to reward his best Senior Executives.

SEA urges your support of the Farr amendment for SES performance awards.

Sincerely,

JASON BRIEFEL
Interim President

CC: Members of the House Committee on Appropriations