

Rep. Danny K. Davis and Senator Daniel Akaka to Introduce Senior Executive Service Diversity Assurance Act

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Rep. Danny K. Davis (D-IL07) will introduce the Senior Executive Service Diversity Assurance Act on Thursday, June 4, 2009. Senator Daniel Akaka (D-HI) will simultaneously introduce the Senate companion bill. In the House Reps. Cummings, Norton, Johnson, Charles Gonzalez, and Clay are original cosponsors.

The lack of diversity in the SES has been a longstanding concern. Diversity is necessary because it can bring a wider variety of perspectives and approaches to policy development and implementation. Minorities and women need to be at the table contributing when strategic planning, problem solving and decision making is taking place.

At Davis' request the Government Accountability Office (GAO) investigated the status of minorities and women in the SES. GAO subsequently issued two reports - in 2001 and 2003. Both reports documented a poorly diversified SES. The reports revealed that while there will be a significant turnover in the SES in the years ahead due to retirements and attrition, it will not result in greater racial diversity. While there are numerous minorities in the pipeline ready to be promoted, to few are being given the opportunity to advance.

The legislation to be introduced on June 4, 2009 requires the Director of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to establish within OPM the Senior Executive Service Resource Office to improve the efficiency, effectiveness, and productivity of the SES through policy formulation and oversight; advance the professionalism of the SES; and ensure that, in seeking to achieve an SES reflective of the nation's diversity, recruitment is from qualified individuals from appropriate sources.

The Office would be required to make statistics concerning career reserved positions accessible to the public through the official public website of OPM.

The bill revises the career appointments recruiting process to require agency heads to ensure diversity of executive resources boards, and any subgroup or other evaluation panel related to the merit staffing process for career appointees, by including members of racial and ethnic minority groups, women, and individuals with disabilities. It requires the Director to promulgate necessary regulations and report to Congress on agency efforts to improve diversity in executive resources boards and of qualifications review boards, based on the collection of statistics concerning race, ethnicity, sex, and disability required by this Act.

The Act would require each agency, within one year after enactment of this Act, to submit to OPM a plan to enhance and maximize opportunities for the advancement and appointment of minorities, women, and individuals with disabilities in the agency to the SES. Requires the plans to: (1) address how the agency is identifying and eliminating barriers that impair the ability of such employees to obtain appointments and any actions the agency is taking to provide advancement opportunities; and (2) be updated at least biennially. Requires the Director to report to Congress on plans and updates.

Davis stated, "I am pleased to have as my partner Senator Daniel Akaka for the introduction of the Senior Executive Service Diversity Assurance Act in both the House and the Senate. The Act addresses the extremely important issue of diversity in the Senior Executive Service (SES). Diversity of gender, ethnicity, age and disability, as well as diversity of education, thinking, and experience are crucial if the federal workforce is to mirror the communities we live in and serve."

Davis noted, "Our introduction of the Senior Executive Service Diversity Assurance Act would not have been possible without the hard work of the African American Federal Executives Association, the National Association of Hispanic Federal Executives, the Asian American Government Executives Network, Federally Employed Women, Blacks in Government, and the Senior Executive Association. I applaud them for not only raising the lack of diversity in the SES as an issue but for devoting their time and energy to work to rectify it."

Senator Akaka stated, "Coming from a state rich with many cultures, I understand the importance of working together with people from diverse backgrounds and experiences. A diverse workforce can further innovative thinking and improve an agency's effectiveness. The federal workforce should be a model for diversity in the modern American workforce."

The Senator continued, "Over the next ten years, 90 percent of career SES will be eligible to retire. As many members of our Senior Executive Service become eligible to retire, we must put in place the practices needed to ensure that women, minorities, and persons with disabilities have an equal opportunity to succeed in entering the SES."

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