

May 4, 2020

The Honorable Carolyn Maloney
Chairwoman
House Oversight and Reform
United States House of Representatives
2157 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jim Jordan
Ranking Member
House Oversight and Reform
United States House of Representatives
2105 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Support for Periodically Listing Updates to Management Act of 2020 (The PLUM Act)

Dear Chairwoman Maloney, Ranking Member Jordan, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the undersigned bipartisan group of civil society organizations, we write in strong support for the Periodically Listing Updates to Management Act of 2020 (PLUM Act), which would increase transparency and oversight of the most senior leaders of the Executive Branch.

The publication *United States Government Policy and Supporting Positions*, commonly called the *Plum Book*, is a congressional document published every four years that lists more than 9,000 political appointees.¹ It contains information on senior federal civil servants in the legislative and executive branches that may be subject to noncompetitive appointment (*e.g.*, agency heads and policy advisors). In other words, it contains positions that often have a close and confidential relationship with the agency head or other key officials — plum positions.

Appointments and vacancy information contained in the Plum Book rapidly go out of date as a consequence of the report's infrequent publication. The PLUM Act would modernize the Plum Book and publish online a current, continuously-updated directory of senior government leaders. It requires the Director of the U.S. Office of Personnel Management “to establish and maintain a public directory of the individuals occupying Government policy and supporting positions.”

The PLUM Act would resolve an important issue raised by the Government Accountability Office, which noted in a March 2019 report that “there is no single source of data on political appointees serving in the executive branch that is publicly available, comprehensive, and

¹ See “United States Government Policy and Supporting Positions” (2016)
<https://bookstore.gpo.gov/products/united-states-government-policy-and-supporting-positions-december-1-2016-plum-book-0>

timely.”² It would address GAO’s conclusion that such a source of “information would facilitate congressional oversight and hold leaders accountable.”

The continuously-updated repository of information about political appointees required under the PLUM Act would facilitate independent review and analysis related to political appointees. It would make it possible to understand which offices are filled and which offices have vacancies, how long those offices have been vacant, and how that information has changed over time. Publication may increase visibility for these job opportunities and encourage a wider pool of diverse candidates to pursue these positions.

We thank you for your support of the PLUM Act and encourage the committee to favorably report the legislation. We would welcome the opportunity to discuss this further. Please contact Daniel Schuman, Policy Director for Demand Progress at Daniel@DemandProgress.org or 240-237-3930.

Sincerely,

Campaign for Liberty
Cause of Action Institute
Center for Responsive Politics
Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington
Demand Progress
Federal Managers Association
Government Accountability Project
Government Information Watch
Issue One
Lincoln Network
National Federation of Federal Employees
National Security Counselors
Open the Government
Project on Government Oversight
Protect Democracy
Public Citizen
R Street Institute
Senior Executives Association
Alexander B. Howard, Digital Democracy Project, Demand Progress Education Fund

² “Government-wide Political Appointee Data and Some Ethics Oversight Procedures at Interior and SBA Could Be Improved,” Government Accountability Office, Report 19-249 (March 2019), <https://www.gao.gov/assets/700/697593.pdf>.