# Questions Remain on OPM, MSPB Leadership

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The leadership of two key agencies for federal employees remains uncertain at a time when Congress is about to take up legislation important to federal employees.

Dale Cabaniss, the former chairwoman of the FLRA, has been nominated to head OPM, which has had only acting leaders for all but about six months of the last four years. The current acting director is Margaret Weichert, deputy director for management at OMB.

Cabaniss has not yet had a confirmation hearing; when she does, a primary topic will be the administration’s proposal to shift OPM’s retirement, insurance and personnel services functions to the GSA while shifting its background investigations unit to DoD and turning the policy-making functions into a new office under OMB. That has raised concerns among federal employee organizations and some in Congress about the potential for politicizing the civil service.

Now almost a year since the administration first advocated that reorganization, questions remain regarding how much of it would be within the White House’s discretion and how much would require approval of Congress. The White House budget proposal seeks $50 million for the GSA transfer aspect but Democratic leaders in the House on civil service issues have asked appropriators to deny that request at least until the implications are more fully explored.

Meanwhile, the White House has not yet named a third nominee for the MSPB governing board, which currently is empty and has been without a quorum to decide employee appeals since January 2017. More than 2,000 cases now are awaiting a decision and the MSPB recently asked Congress for a budgetary boost above the White House’s recommendation for it to deal with that backlog and a projected increase in cases from recent changes in law. Two nominees have cleared the committee level but a third withdrew and Senate Republican leaders are holding up final votes in order to fill all three seats at the same time.