# Senate Panel Advances OPM Director Nominee Despite Questions About Her Leadership

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**ELATED**

Members of a Senate panel voted mostly along party lines Wednesday to advance President Trump’s nominee to lead the Office of Personnel Management, despite lingering questions about her leadership and a plan to merge the agency with the General Services Administration.

The Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee approved the nomination of Dale Cabaniss by voice vote. Democratic Sens. Gary Peters, Mich.; Tom Carper, Del.; Maggie Hassan, N.H.; and Jacky Rosen, Nev., opposed the nomination, while Sen. Krysten Sinema, D-Ariz., broke ranks to support Cabaniss.

During her [confirmation hearing](https://www.govexec.com/management/2019/05/opm-nominee-defends-tenure-labor-authority-commits-working-lawmakers-gsa-merger/156822/) last week, Democrats pressed Cabaniss about her tenure as chairwoman of the Federal Labor Relations Authority, which [*Government Executive*](https://www.govexec.com/management/2019/04/trumps-pick-lead-opm-has-unusual-management-record-job/156341/) found was marked by low morale, a staff exodus and a significant drop in productivity. Cabaniss defended her leadership, arguing that she made “unpopular” decisions needed to reform the agency and make it more “fair.”

“It was a time of change when I arrived; there were a lot of deficiencies in HR and procurement and acquisition issues, and employees were not treated equally,” Cabaniss said last week. “There were a lot of changes in policies and guidance, not only to be consistent with [President George W. Bush’s] management agenda, but to make sure everyone is treated fairly. I understand it was not popular, but they were things we needed to do to be stewards of taxpayer dollars and to make sure merit principles were followed.”

Senators also demanded that, if confirmed, Cabaniss be transparent with lawmakers about the Trump administration’s proposal to merge OPM with GSA. For nearly a year, officials stonewalled Democratic requests for additional information about the plan, including any underlying analysis to justify it. Acting OPM Director Margaret Weichert announced Tuesday that she provided a two-page “case for change” to congressional staffers and that she would submit [proposed legislation](https://www.govexec.com/management/2019/05/opm-chief-propose-legislation-merger-with-gsa-by-week-end/157000/) to Congress “hopefully by Friday” to authorize the merger.

Cabaniss told senators last week that she would work with them on the legislation, although she did not commit to sharing all analysis underpinning the proposal.

“As a private citizen, what I know [about the proposal] is based on the president’s management agenda and the [fiscal 2020] budget request,” she said. “I’m not sure about using cost-benefit analyses as a term of art. When agencies came to us [when I was a Senate staffer] to restructure certain offices and do realignments, I don’t think I ever saw a cost-benefit analysis. But I agree absolutely from standing on the other side that you need all the information.”

The nomination now heads to the Senate floor for final consideration, which could occur in the coming weeks.