

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

February 24, 1975

Dear Mr. Caplin:

I appreciate your recent letter commenting favorably upon my September 20, 1974, memorandum in support of the merit system under civil service. I also appreciate your suggestions for additional steps that might be taken to preserve the integrity of the merit system.

Throughout my career of public service, as a Member of Congress and as Vice President, I have thoroughly supported a strong merit system. As President, I have made clear my continued commitment to the merit system and I fully expect those charged with the responsibility of assuring the integrity of the merit system to live up to that responsibility.

As you are aware, the Civil Service Commission has uncovered evidence of abuses of the merit system in several agencies in recent years. After thorough investigation, these agencies were required to take prompt corrective action. In addition, disciplinary actions were initiated against individuals who were responsible for the abuses. I have made it plain to the heads of Federal agencies, and the Civil Service Commission that I expect them to assure full compliance with all personnel laws and regulations. Furthermore, I wholeheartedly support congressional efforts designed to keep the merit system free from partisan politics.

You suggested that, by executive order, I prohibit the members of the Civil Service Commission and its staff from making any referral of candidates for Federal positions except in accordance with established procedures under civil service rules. Although the referral of candidates is not prohibited by law or regulations, the Commissioners have recently adopted a new standard of conduct for themselves and all Commission employees in recognition of the possibility that personal referrals may be subject to misunderstanding.

That standard prohibits all officers and employees of the Commission from making referrals or recommendations of individuals for Federal employment that are not part of their official duties. I view favorably this voluntary action of the Civil Service Commissioners, as I know you will.

I appreciate the fine work the National Civil Service League has done over the years in its effort to protect the Federal merit system. Like you, I am determined, as I stated on September 20, 1974, to keep the Federal career service just that -- a career service in which men and women can be accepted in the first place on their ability and promoted on their merit.

Sincerely,

GERALD R. FORD

Mr. Mortimer M. Caplin
President
National Civil Service League
917 15th Street, NW.
Washington, D.C. 20005



National Civil Service League

EFFICIENCY-QUALITY-ECONOMY IN GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT
FOUNDED 1881

January 16, 1975

The President
The White House
Washington, D. C.

Dear Mr. President:

One of your first acts as President was issuance of a strong statement of your faith in the career service of the Federal government. For over 90 years, the National Civil Service League has fostered and defended merit systems at all levels of government. We applauded your timely directive and thank you for it. There can be no doubt that your statement is contributing greatly to restoring belief in the integrity of the civilian workforce.

The League believes, however, that there still remain two threats to the merit system: partisan influences and practices that continue to create suspicion and disillusionment. Therefore, the League recommends that you take two additional actions to dispel these threats. The League respectfully urges you to demonstrate your resolve to eliminate all implications that partisan practices will be permitted in career service appointments, assignments, promotions, and transfers.

1. For several years there has been increasing evidence of pervasive attempts to influence civil service appointments and other personnel actions through political clearances and endorsements. A public statement of your support for both Executive Branch and Congressional efforts to correct improper personnel action will have a two-fold effect.

First, it will indicate that you support thorough and definitive investigations of alleged violations and other circumventions of the civil service laws and regulations. Second, such a statement from you will help immeasurably to assure bipartisan cooperation in hearings and oversight reviews of personnel matters now under discussion in the Congress.

2. Of equal concern to the League are recent revelations that all three members of the Civil Service Commission have personally written letters of

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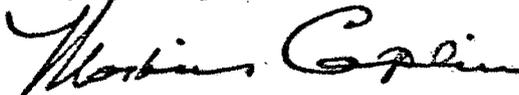
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referral and recommendation of job candidates to various federal officers and agencies. We recognize that this practice may not be without precedent, but it is clearly subject to misinterpretation. To remove all grounds for suspicion about motivation, the League believes that this practice is not consistent with the duties and responsibilities of either the Civil Service Commissioners themselves or of the principal staff officers of the Commission. Therefore, the League respectfully recommends that you, acting by Executive order under the authorities of the Civil Service Act, prohibit the members of the Civil Service Commission and its staff from making any referral of candidates for federal positions except in accordance with regular certification procedures prescribed by the civil service rules.

Consistent with the position taken in this letter, the League is also addressing letters to the Chairmen of the House and Senate Post Office and Civil Service Committees. In those letters, copies of which are attached, we endorse early hearings for a thorough bipartisan inquiry into the charges of political interference with administration of the merit system.

Respectfully,



Mortimer M. Caplin
President
National Civil Service League