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Fact Sheet for the Chairman, Subcommittee on Civil Service, Committee on Post Office and Civil Service, House of Representatives

June 1992

POLITICAL APPOINTEES

Number of Noncareer SES and Schedule C Employees in Federal Agencies

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General Government Division

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June 8, 1992

The Honorable Gerry Sikorski
Chairman, Subcommittee on Civil Service
Committee on Post Office and Civil Service
House of Representatives

Dear Mr. Chairman:

This fact sheet responds to your request that we update the information that we presented in October 19, 1989, testimony we gave before the Subcommittee on the numbers and placement of political appointees.[1] As agreed with the Subcommittee, we obtained and analyzed information on (1) the number of noncareer Senior Executive Service (SES) and Schedule C appointees at each agency and department and governmentwide; (2) the number of career SES members governmentwide; and (3) the number, placement, and employment trends of noncareer SES and Schedule C appointees at five selected departments and agencies--the Department of Education, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the Small Business Administration (SBA), and the U.S. Information Agency (USIA).

BACKGROUND

Political appointees include federal employees who serve under noncareer SES or Schedule C appointments. They are appointed by an administration to support and advocate the president's political goals and policies. Noncareer SES appointees receive noncompetitive appointments to SES positions that normally involve advocating, formulating, and directing the programs and policies of the administration. Schedule C appointees receive noncompetitive appointments to excepted service positions graded GS/GM-15 or below that involve determining policy or that require a close, confidential relationship with the agency head or other key officials of the agency. Career SES appointees are

[1] Political Appointees in Federal Agencies (GAO/T-GGD-90-4, Oct. 26, 1989).

individuals with civil service status who are appointed competitively to SES positions.

In 1989 we testified before your Subcommittee on the number and placement of political appointees governmentwide for the period from September 1979 to June 1989. We said that the number of such appointments follows a cyclical trend of increases and decreases over time. We said we expected that delays in designating individuals for political appointments in the early days of an administration would result in low numbers of appointees being in place in the months following a change in administration. Because most political appointees are likely to be in place by the end of an administration's first year, the number of noncareer SES and Schedule C appointees would likely reach a high point during the administration's second year. Finally, we noted that as the term of an administration nears its completion, we would expect political appointees to begin leaving their positions with their numbers decreasing sharply in the final months. The data we presented for five specific agencies generally followed the trend of the government as a whole.

OBJECTIVE, SCOPE, AND METHODOLOGY

Our objective was to obtain information on (1) the number of noncareer SES and Schedule C appointees at each agency and department and governmentwide; (2) the number of career SES members governmentwide; (3) the employment trends of noncareer SES and Schedule C appointees at Education, EPA, HUD, SBA, and USIA; and (4) the number and placement of political appointees within the major operating components of the five selected agencies and departments. We included in our governmentwide analyses all departments and agencies that the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) included in its governmentwide listings of Schedule C and noncareer SES appointees.[2] We selected the five specific departments and agencies on the basis of Subcommittee interest.

To accomplish our objective we obtained from OPM information on the total number of career SES, noncareer SES, and Schedule C employees governmentwide and at five selected agencies as of September 1989, 1990, and 1991. During our work OPM updated this information as of December 31, 1991. We included the updated information in appendixes I and II.

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[2]Schedule C employees at the Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) are not included in the OPM data. The MSPB reported to us that it had seven Schedule C employees as of March 31, 1992.

OPM also provided information on the number and location of noncareer SES and Schedule C employees at the five selected agencies. Its most current information for the noncareer SES employees was as of June 30, 1991. For the number and location of Schedule C employees, OPM's most current information was as of June 30, 1990. We did not independently verify the information provided by OPM.

We did our work in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards.

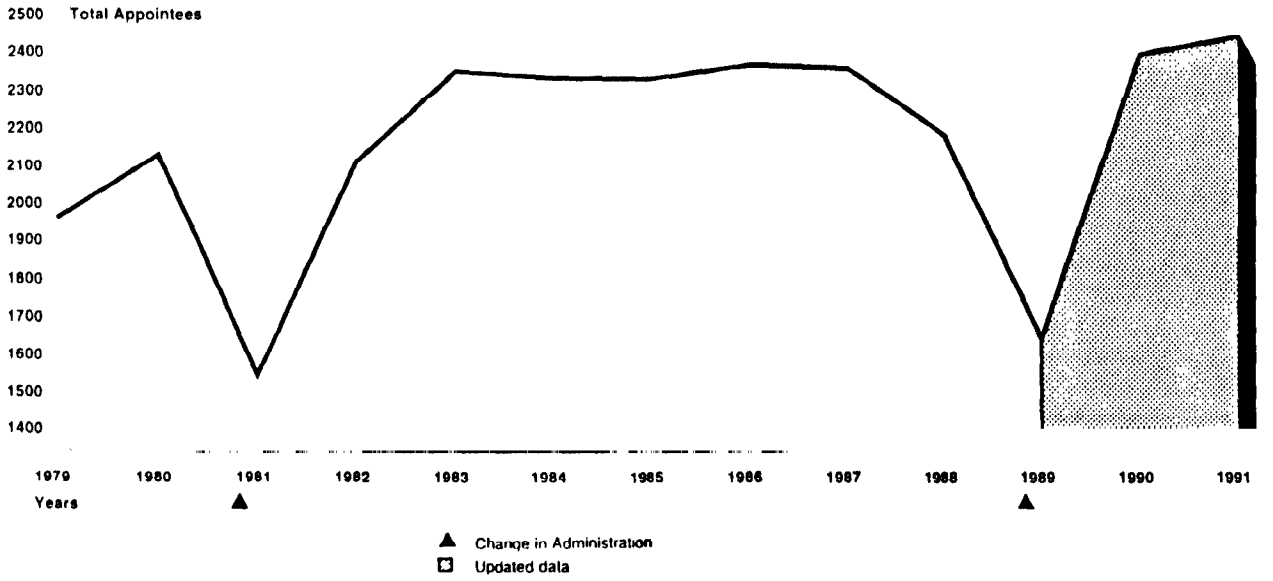
MORE RECENT DATA CONTINUE TO SHOW A CYCLICAL TREND

The updated data continue to show the cyclical trend for noncareer SES and Schedule C employment that we identified in our 1989 testimony. The figures that follow illustrate the trends for (1) noncareer SES and Schedule C appointees governmentwide, (2) career SES membership governmentwide, and (3) noncareer SES and Schedule C appointees at five selected executive agencies.

Noncareer SES and Schedule C Appointees Governmentwide

Figure 1 shows the total number of noncareer SES and Schedule C appointees governmentwide for the period September 1979 through September 1991. The shaded area presents the updated data since our earlier testimony.

Figure 1: Noncareer SES and Schedule C Appointees Governmentwide (Sept. 1979 - Sept. 1991)



Source: Office of Personnel Management.

These data show that the number of appointees governmentwide continued to follow the cyclical trend presented in our testimony. As illustrated in figure 1, the low points in the cycle occurred in September 1989, during the first year of the Bush Administration when the number of political appointees declined to 1,640, and in September 1981, during the first year of the Reagan Administration when 1,540 political appointees were on board.

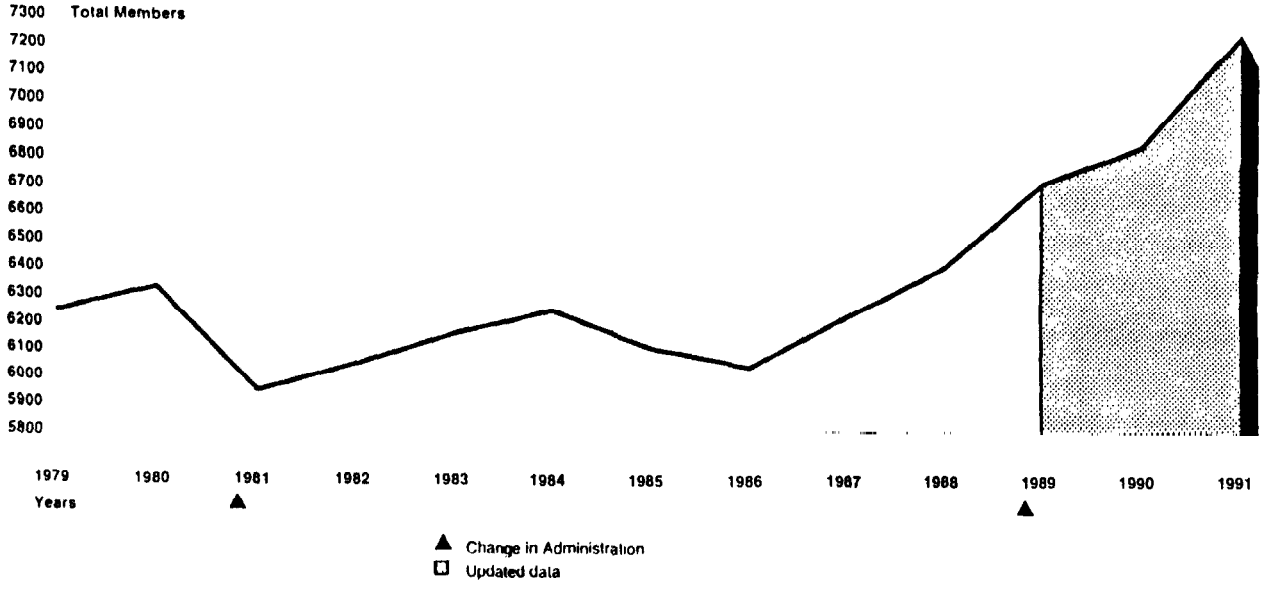
This trend can be accounted for by the expected delays by top administration officials in designating individuals for political appointments governmentwide in the early days of an administration which would result in low numbers of such appointees in place in the months immediately following a change in administrations. Also, as one would expect, the data show an increase in the number of political appointees during the first two years of the Bush Administration. In fact, from September 1989 to September 1991 the total number of political appointees

governmentwide increased to 2,435--its highest since we began collecting trend data in 1979. Annual data as of September show that the previous peak number of appointees, 2,361, occurred during the sixth year of the Reagan Administration (September 1986).

Career SES Membership Has Increased

The data we obtained on career SES membership governmentwide from September 1979 to September 1991 are shown in figure 2. The shaded area updates the information presented in our testimony.

Figure 2: Career SES Membership Governmentwide (Sept. 1979-Sept. 1991)



Source: Office of Personnel Management.

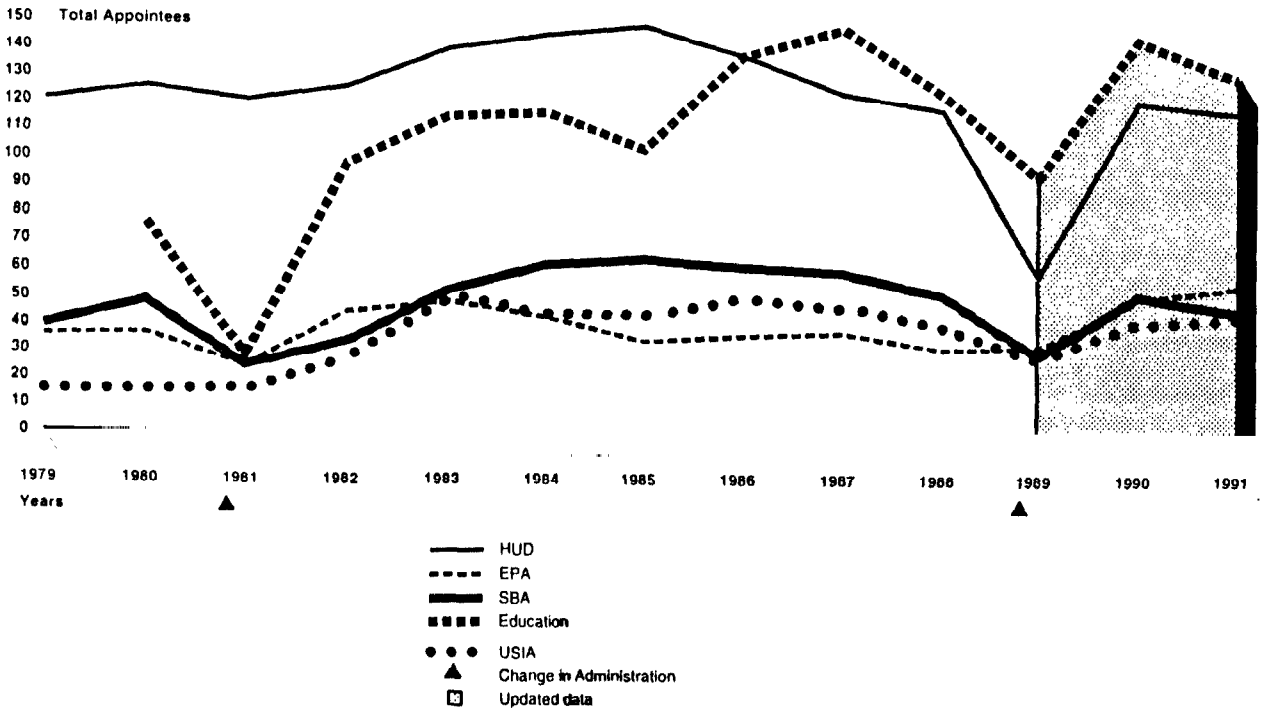
As figure 2 shows, the career SES membership governmentwide continued to increase, rising from 6,703 in September 1989 to 7,219 in September 1991.

Employment Trends at Five Agencies

Figure 3 shows the total number of noncareer SES and Schedule C appointees in each of the five selected agencies annually as of

September for the years 1979 to 1991. The shaded area presents the updated data.

Figure 3: Noncareer SES and Schedule C Appointees in Five Executive Agencies (Sept. 1979 - Sept. 1991)



Note: Department of Education statistics begin in 1980.

Source: Office of Personnel Management.

As shown in figure 3, the updated data for the five agencies reflect the trend of the government as shown in figure 1. In 1989 the number of Schedule C and noncareer SES appointees decreased following the change in administrations. This parallels the governmentwide trend and follows the tendency to delay designating political appointees in the early days of an administration.

Also in line with the general trend, it is not surprising to see a significant increase in the number of appointees during the period from September 1989 to September 1991. During this 2-year period HUD reported the largest increase in appointees. The number of noncareer SES and Schedule C appointees at HUD rose from 57 in 1989 to 115 in 1991--an increase of 102 percent. The number of appointees at EPA increased 71 percent from September 1989 to September 1991. SBA, USIA, and Education experienced smaller increases of 57, 52, and 39 percent, respectively, during the same period.

NUMBER AND PLACEMENT OF NONCAREER SES AND SCHEDULE C APPOINTEES

We also obtained information on (1) the total number of noncareer SES and Schedule C appointees at each federal agency or department and (2) the organizational location of appointees at the five selected agencies.

Appendix I provides the most current information available, as of December 31, 1991, on the number of noncareer SES and Schedule C appointees by federal agency. Appendix II provides information on the agencies with the highest total number of appointees as of the same date. We found that 13 of the 72 agencies governmentwide with noncareer SES or Schedule C employees accounted for 1,722, or 71 percent, of the total number of appointees as of December 31, 1991. The Department of Commerce had the highest total number of appointees (204)--52 noncareer SES members and 152 Schedule C employees.

We also identified the organizational location of noncareer SES employees as of June 30, 1991, and Schedule C appointees as of June 30, 1990, at the five selected agencies. As one would expect the appointees were dispersed throughout the organizations. Generally, the largest concentrations of noncareer SES appointees were located within the Office of the Secretary/Administrator/Director of the respective agencies. Appendixes III and IV list the organizational location of these appointees.

AGENCY COMMENTS

OPM reviewed a draft of this fact sheet. OPM agreed with the facts presented and observed that generally larger departments, such as the Department of Commerce, have larger numbers of political appointees.

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As arranged with the Subcommittee, unless you publicly release its contents earlier, we plan no further distribution of this fact sheet until 30 days from the date of this letter. At that time we will send copies of this fact sheet to OPM and other interested parties and make copies available to others upon request.

Major contributors to this fact sheet are listed in appendix V. Please contact me at (202) 275-5074 if you or your staff have any questions concerning the fact sheet.

Sincerely yours,

Bernard L. Ungar

Bernard L. Ungar
Director, Federal Human Resource
Management Issues

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ABBREVIATIONS

EPA	Environmental Protection Agency
HUD	Housing and Urban Development
MSPB	Merit Systems Protection Board
OPM	Office of Personnel Management
SES	Senior Executive Service
SBA	Small Business Administration
USIA	U.S. Information Agency

NUMBER OF NONCAREER SES AND SCHEDULE C APPOINTEES BY AGENCY AS OF DECEMBER 31, 1991

Agency	Noncareer SES	Schedule C	Total
Action	1	5	6
Administrative Conference of the U.S.	0	2	2
Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts	0	0	0
Advisory Council on Historic Preservation	0	0	0
African Development Foundation	0	0	0
Agency for International Development	0	24	24
Alaska Natural Gas Transportation System	1	0	1
Department of Agriculture	49	131	180
Appalachian Regional Commission	0	0	0
Architectural Transportation Barriers Compliance Board	0	0	0
Arctic Research Commission	0	0	0
Barry Goldwater Scholarship and Excellence in Education Foundation	1	0	1
Board for International Broadcasting	0	0	0
Department of Commerce	52	152	204
Commission on Civil Rights	2	6	8
Commission of Fine Arts	0	0	0
Commodity Futures Trading Commission	3	8	11

Agency	Noncareer SES	Schedule C	Total
Committee for Purchase from the Blind and Other Severely Handicapped	0	0	0
Consumer Product Safety Commission	3	7	10
Council of Economic Advisors	0	4	4
Council on Environmental Quality	0	3	3
Office of the Secretary of Defense	48	103	151
Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board	0	0	0
Department of Air Force	10	15	25
Department of Army	7	12	19
Department of Navy	8	8	16
Department of Education	21	116	137
Department of Energy	38	107	145
Environmental Protection Agency	18	33	51
Equal Employment Opportunity Commission	2	8	10
Executive Office of the President	10	0	10
Export-Import Bank of the U.S.	0	10	10
Farm Credit Administration	0	5	5
Federal Communications Commission	5	3	8
Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation	0	5	5
Federal Emergency Management Agency	14	12	26
Federal Judicial Center	0	0	0
Federal Labor Relations Authority	0	3	3
Federal Maritime Commission	1	9	10
Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service	1	0	1

Agency	Noncareer SES	Schedule C	Total
Federal Mine Safety and Health Review Commission	1	7	8
Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board	0	0	0
Federal Trade Commission	4	5	9
General Services Administration	21	30	51
Government Printing Office	0	3	3
H.S. Truman Scholarship Foundation	1	0	1
Department of Health and Human Services	67	89	156
Department of Housing and Urban Development	26	83	109
Interagency Council on the Homeless	0	0	0
Inter-American Foundation	0	0	0
Department of the Interior	38	54	92
International Development Cooperation Agency	11	0	11
Interstate Commerce Commission	3	9	12
Japan-U.S. Friendship Commission	0	0	0
Department of Justice	58	64	122
Department of Labor	14	91	105
Merit Systems Protection Board	3	0[a]	3
National Aeronautics and Space Administration	3	2	5
National Archives and Records Administration	1	2	3
National Capital Planning Commission	0	0	0

Agency	Noncareer SES	Schedule C	Total
National Commission on Libraries and Information Science	1	0	1
National Credit Union Administration	0	4	4
National Endowment for the Arts	2	5	7
National Endowment for the Humanities	3	2	5
National Labor Relations Board	4	2	6
National Mediation Board	0	3	3
National Science Foundation	0	0	0
National Transportation Safety Board	1	8	9
Nuclear Regulatory Commission	0	0	0
Occupational Safety and Health Review Commission	2	4	6
Office of Administration for the Executive Office of the President	0	0	0
Office of the Federal Inspector	0	0	0
Office of Government Ethics	0	1	1
Office of Management and Budget	6	21	27
Office of National Drug Control Policy	3	36	39
Office of Personnel Management	8	17	25
Office of Science and Technology Policy	0	4	4
Office of the Special Counsel	0	0	0
Overseas Private Investment Corporation	0	0	0
Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation	0	6	6

Agency	Noncareer SES	Schedule C	Total
President's Commission on Executive Exchange	0	0	0
President's Commission on White House Fellows	0	3	3
President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities	1	0	1
Railroad Retirement Board	0	0	0
Securities and Exchange Commission	4	16	20
Selective Service System	1	2	3
Small Business Administration	16	26	42
Department of State	33	97	130
Tax Court of the U.S.	0	37	37
Department of Transportation	37	57	94
Department of the Treasury	22	75	97
U.S. Arms Control and Disarmament Agency	6	13	19
U.S. Information Agency	10	30	40
U.S. International Cultural and Trade Center Commission	0	0	0
U.S. International Trade Commission	0	16	16
U.S. Trade Representative	0	9	9
Department of Veterans Affairs	5	1	6
Total	711	1,725	2,436

[a]Excludes seven Schedule C appointees the MSPB employed as of March 31, 1992. MSPB does not report Schedule C employees to OPM.

Source: Office of Personnel Management

AGENCIES WITH THE HIGHEST TOTAL NUMBER OF NONCAREER SES AND SCHEDULE C APPOINTEES AS OF DECEMBER 31, 1991

Agency	Noncareer SES	Schedule C	Total
Department of Commerce	52	152	204
Department of Agriculture	49	131	180
Department of Health and Human Services	67	89	156
Office of the Secretary of Defense	48	103	151
Department of Energy	38	107	145
Department of Education	21	116	137
Department of State	33	97	130
Department of Justice	58	64	122
Department of Housing and Urban Development	26	83	109
Department of Labor	14	91	105
Department of the Treasury	22	75	97
Department of Transportation	37	57	94
Department of the Interior	38	54	92
Total	503	1,219	1,722
Governmentwide total	711	1,725	2,436
Total as percent of governmentwide total	71%	71%	71%

Note: The natural cut-off occurred between the 13th and 14th agencies. The Environmental Protection Agency, with 51 total appointees, was the 14th agency with the next highest number of appointees.

Source: Office of Personnel Management

ORGANIZATIONAL LOCATION OF NONCAREER SES EMPLOYEES AT FIVE AGENCIES AS OF JUNE 30, 1991

Department of Education	Noncareer SES
Office of the Secretary	6
Office of the Deputy Secretary	1
Office of Management	2
Office of Legislation and Congressional Affairs	1
Office of Civil Rights	1
Office of Elementary and Secondary Education	1
Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Language Affairs	1
Office of Postsecondary Education	3
Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services	2
Office of Vocational and Adult Education	1
Office of Educational Research and Improvement	1
Total	**20**
Environmental Protection Agency	
Office of the Administrator	5
Office of Communications and Public Affairs	1
Office of Administration and Resources Management	1
Office of Enforcement and Compliance Monitoring	1
Office of Solid Waste and Emergency Responses	1
Regional Offices	9
Total	**18**

Department of Housing and Urban Development	
Office of the Secretary	5
Office of the General Counsel	2
Office of Public Affairs	1
Office of Administration	2
Office of Legislation and Congressional Relations	1
Office of Policy Development and Research	2
Office of Housing	3
Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity	1
Office of Community Planning and Development	2
Regional Offices	8
Total	27
Small Business Administration	
Office of the Administrator	3
Office of Congressional and Legislative Affairs	1
Office of Women's Business Ownership	1
Regional Offices	10
Total	15
U.S. Information Agency	
Office of the Director	4
Office of Research	1
Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs	3
Voice of America	2
Television and Film Service	1
Office of General Counsel and Congressional Liaison	2
Total	13

ORGANIZATIONAL LOCATION OF SCHEDULE C EMPLOYEES
AT FIVE AGENCIES AS OF JUNE 30, 1990

Department of Education	Schedule C
Office of the Secretary	14
Office of the Deputy Secretary	1
Office of Intergovernmental and Interagency Affairs	15
Office of Management	8
Office of Planning, Budget and Evaluation	4
Office of the General Counsel	1
Office of Civil Rights	6
Office of Public Affairs	1
Office of Legislation and Congressional Affairs	8
Office of Postsecondary Education	10
Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services	4
Office of Educational Research and Improvement	7
Office of Elementary and Secondary Education	6
Office of Bilingual Education and Minority Language Affairs	3
Office of Vocational and Adult Education	7
Regional Offices	15
Issues Analysis Staff	1
Total	111
Environmental Protection Agency	
Office of the Administrator	7
Office of Communications and Public Affairs	4
Office of Congressional and Legislative Affairs	5

Office of Regional Operations and State/Local Relations	2
Office of Administration and Resources Management	5
Office of Enforcement and Compliance Monitoring	1
Office of International Activities	1
Office of Water	3
Office of Pesticides and Toxic Substances	1
Regional Offices	1
Office of Communications and Intergovernmental Relations	1
Total	**31**
Department of Housing and Urban Development	
Office of the Secretary	5
Office of the Deputy Secretary	6
Office of Public Affairs	5
Office of Administration	9
Office of Community Planning and Development	3
Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity	1
Office of Housing	16
Office of Public and Indian Housing	9
Office of Legislation and Congressional Relations	11
Office of Policy Development and Research	7
Government National Mortgage Association	1
Regional Offices	15
Total	**88**

Small Business Administration	
Office of the Administrator	8
Office of Finance, Investment, and Procurement	1
Office of Financial Assistance	1
Office of Business Development	4
Office of Special Programs	2
Office of International Trade	1
Office of Public Communications	2
Regional Offices	8
Total	**27**
U.S. Information Agency	
Office of the Director	3
Private Sector Committees	1
Office of Congressional Liaison	1
Office of Public Liaison	1
Office of Research	1
Voice of America	2
Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs	3
Office of Citizen Exchanges	1
Office of International Visitors	1
Bureau of Management	1
Bureau of Programs	7
Commissioner General, Seville Exposition	2
New York Foreign Press Center	2
Office of Program Coordination and Development	1
U.S. Soviet Exchange Initiative	1
Total	**28**

Source: Office of Personnel Management

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