

# GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-22-105504](#), a report to congressional requesters

## Why GAO Did This Study

On October 21, 2020, the President issued E.O. 13957, *Creating Schedule F in the Excepted Service*, which created a new category of federal positions. The stated intent was to expedite the hiring and removal of “employees in confidential, policy-determining, policy-making, or policy-advocating positions.” The incoming administration revoked the E.O. on January 22, 2021.

GAO was asked to review the implementation of Schedule F. This report describes (1) agencies' implementation of E.O. 13957 prior to its revocation in January 2021; and (2) selected stakeholders' perspectives on the implications of a Schedule F category of federal positions.

GAO interviewed officials from OPM and selected agencies identified as having submitted a response to OPM related to Schedule F or having conducted preliminary analysis to identify Schedule F positions. GAO also interviewed other agencies that oversee federal workforce issues, and reviewed OPM Schedule F-related guidance. GAO reviewed agency requests to place positions into Schedule F, as well as documents containing preliminary analysis from other selected agencies.

GAO also interviewed 14 stakeholders, including former agency officials with relevant experience, and others from academia, federal labor unions, and nonprofit organizations for their views on the implications of Schedule F.

View [GAO-22-105504](#). For more information, contact Alissa H. Czyz at (202) 512-6806 or [czyza@gao.gov](mailto:czyza@gao.gov).

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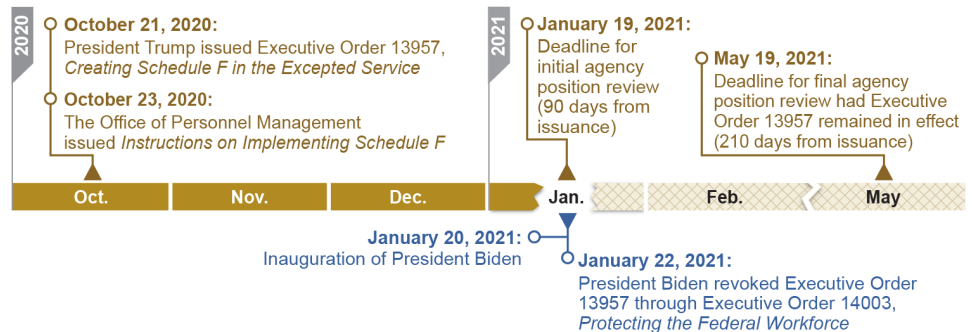
## CIVIL SERVICE

# Agency Responses and Perspectives on Former Executive Order to Create a New Schedule F Category of Federal Positions

## What GAO Found

Executive Order 13957 (E.O.), which was issued in October 2020, required federal agencies to conduct a preliminary review to determine which of their workforces' positions met criteria for placement into a newly created Schedule F category of federal positions (see figure). These positions would have had a streamlined hiring process. In addition, certain due process rights, such as notice of removal and the right to appeal removals to the Merit Systems Protection Board, would be unavailable to individuals in these positions.

Figure: Executive Order 13957 Key Dates



Source: GAO analysis of Executive Order 13957, *Creating Schedule F in the Excepted Service* (October 21, 2020), and Executive Order 14003, *Protecting the Federal Workforce* (January 22, 2021). | [GAO-22-105504](#)

GAO found no agencies had placed positions into Schedule F by the time of the E.O.'s revocation on January 22, 2021. Two agencies submitted written requests to the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) to place positions into Schedule F. OPM approved the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) request to place 136 positions into Schedule F. According to GAO analysis, this affected 415 employees, or 68 percent of OMB's workforce at the time. OMB officials said agency leadership halted the implementation of Schedule F on January 20, 2021. The U.S. International Boundary and Water Commission requested approval to place five positions (out of its total workforce of 234 at the time) into Schedule F. However, the E.O. was revoked before OPM completed its review.

Thirteen other agencies communicated with OPM leadership before the E.O. was revoked to describe their implementation status. Seven agencies reported that they needed additional time to finalize their analysis. Six reported that they would not request positions be placed into Schedule F for various reasons.

Future administrations could seek to re-establish Schedule F, or a category of federal positions with similar attributes, according to several stakeholders GAO interviewed. Some stakeholders said this is, in part, because Schedule F could be used to expedite hiring of federal employees committed to advancing the President's policy agenda, and removing those who were not. Several stakeholders stated that agencies would need to consider important tradeoffs when using Schedule F. These included possible effects to recruiting, retaining experienced staff, and risks such as employees in Schedule F positions being subject to removal for partisan political reasons.