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MSPB Issues Recommendations for Improving Adherence to MSPs

The mission of the U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) is to protect the Merit System Principles (MSPs) and promote an effective Federal workforce free of Prohibited Personnel Practices (PPPs). The nine MSPs serve as standards governing the management of the executive branch workforce, while the PPPs summarize 13 actions that employees with the authority to make personnel decisions must not take.

MSPB's latest report, [*The Merit System Principles: Guiding the Fair and Effective Management of the Federal Workforce*](#), provides:

- Insights into how well Federal agencies are perceived by employees to be adhering to the MSPs;
- An evaluation regarding the extent and effectiveness of agency education on the MSPs;
- Recommendations to improve MSP education and adherence; and
- Guidance and resources to facilitate greater understanding of the MSPs.

Results of MSPB surveys show that Federal employees believe there is room for improvement in how well their agencies are supporting the MSPs. That is not surprising, as MSPB found that agencies provide varying, and often insufficient, education on the MSPs. For example, approximately 20% of agency questionnaire respondents said that nonsupervisory employees and political appointees received **no** systematic training on the MSPs. Because political appointees exercise substantial authority over personnel policies and decisions, it is critical that they understand their legal and ethical obligations under the MSPs. If employees misunderstand their rights and responsibilities under the MSPs, they may fail to speak up or seek redress when

appropriate to do so, or view agency decisions and practices as improper, even when they are both legal and proper.

As noted by MSPB Chairman Susan Tsui Grundmann, “With a change of administrations coming, all Federal employees—from Presidential appointees to front-line employees—should know and respect the Merit System Principles. This report serves as a guide to help Federal agencies and employees learn about, and support, the values that are the foundation of the Federal civil service.”

The report contains several features to help policymakers, Federal agencies, and Federal employees learn about the MSPs, including:

- An explanation of the purpose and intent of each MSP;
- Findings and recommendations from MSPB research on the implementation of each MSP;
- Illustrations from case law on how an MSP may be violated or enforced; and
- Information on the agencies that oversee and enforce the MSPs and related laws.

The U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board (MSPB) is a bipartisan, independent, quasi-judicial agency whose mission is to protect the Merit System Principles and promote an effective Federal workforce free of Prohibited Personnel Practices. To request a printed copy of this report, e-mail studies@mspb.gov; call (202) 254-4517; or write to Merit Systems Protection Board, Office of Policy and Evaluation, 1615 M Street, NW, Washington, DC 20419. MSPB studies are also available on the web at www.mspb.gov/studies.