

To: Jackson, Ryan[jackson.ryan@epa.gov]
From: POLITICO Pro Energy Whiteboard
Sent: Mon 7/24/2017 7:53:04 PM
Subject: Senate Democrats ask Interior IG to probe career staff reshuffle

By Esther Whieldon

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Senate Energy and Natural Resources ranking Democrat [Maria Cantwell](#) and seven of her colleagues today asked the Interior Department's inspector general to investigate the agency's recent reassignment of a number of senior executive staff.

Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke in June reassigned about 50 senior executive employees, including Joel Clement, who was moved from a managerial position involving climate change issues to a job collecting royalties from oil and gas companies.

Moving senior executives from the positions in which they may best use their expertise to jobs "where their talents are wasted would constitute a serious act of mismanagement, a gross waste of public funds, and an abuse of authority," the senators said in the [letter](#) to Deputy Inspector General Mary Kendall.

The senators acknowledged that Zinke is allowed to shuffle senior executives around. But they argued the law requires for reassignments to be made to best accomplish the agency's mission, promote program continuity and to provide for an executive system that is free from improper political interference.

"Any suggestion that the department is reassigning SES employees to force them to resign, to silence their voices or to punish them for the conscientious performance of their public duties is extremely troubling and calls for the closest examination," the letter said.

The letter was also signed by Senate Finance ranking member [Ron Wyden](#) and Sens. [Mazie Hirono](#) (D-Hawaii), [Martin Heinrich](#) (D-N.M.), [Bernie Sanders](#) (I-Vt.), [Tammy Duckworth](#) (D-Ill.), [Debbie Stabenow](#) (D-Mich.) and [Al Franken](#) (D-Minn.)

WHAT'S NEXT: It remains to be seen whether the IG will launch an investigation.

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