

**Comments on the October 7, 2016 draft ombudsman recommendation,
submitted by Scott Deyo, formerly Chair of the Coalition of Federal Ombudsmen
(COFO)**

Deyo revised recommendation #14:

14. An independent entity within the Executive Branch should be created by legislation or executive order, and funded, to serve as a central resource to establish and uphold the standards, quality, professionalism, integrity, and effectiveness of federal ombudsman programs and professionals through the development of standards, education, training, policies, evaluation, technical reviews, shared services, and interagency collaboration.

[and consider the elements from the COFO profile below]

October Recommendations:

14. An independent entity within the Executive Branch should be created by legislation or executive order to address integrity and effectiveness issues and increase the professionalism of federal ombuds by developing policies, technical standards, and standards for evaluation.

From COFO Profile, Part II, page 231.

Q: Our Research Team heard numerous requests for an expansion of the COFO role. What else could a professional association or “center” do if it was a designated, staffed, and funded federal entity—or if in some other way such an entity could receive federal funding?

A: COFO’s role could be much bigger and have a greater impact on improving the federal government. This is not an exhaustive list, but some members have offered that a professional “center” could:

- Serve as a government-wide resource to address certain issues of common concern that transcend organizational boundaries, for example identifying exemplary behavior and unacceptable behavior;
- Continually identify, review, and discuss opportunities for new ombudsman programs with agency leaders;
- Develop, maintain, and implement standards for upholding the quality and effectiveness of federal ombudsmen. This could include a required central review on all proposals for new ombudsman programs within the federal government to ensure that the proposal meets generally accepted ombudsman standards;
- Develop, over time, a credible professional system for credentialing federal ombudsman programs;
- Provide ombudsman support for issues that exceed the capability or jurisdiction of an individual agency or entity. For example, ombuds could provide temporary assistance to small agencies without the ability to fund full time ombuds, or serve as a central hub to fund an interagency contract vehicle;

- Develop policies that will help foster and maintain a highly skilled and well-trained corps of federal ombudsmen;
- Establish in the U.S. Treasury a revolving fund entitled something like the “Coalition of Federal Ombudsman Fund” or enter into an arrangement with a department or agency to use an existing revolving fund. Any amounts in the fund could remain available to the “center” until expended, without any fiscal year limitation;
- Maintain internet and intranet websites to maximize information-sharing and collaboration for all federal ombudsmen and other conflict management professionals in government;
- Provide a platform for shared services and independent counsel for all federal ombudsmen; and
- Provide for an office of professional responsibility or other alternatives such as □ protocols, to address any complaints that may arise against federal ombudsmen.