



**Commerce Secretary Nominee says he wants to fill NWS positions.  
The Hiring Freeze may give him the Authority to do so.**

(January 24, 2017) One of President Trump's first orders of business is a freeze on hiring federal employees. The memorandum to heads of executive agencies on the hiring freeze, signed yesterday, states, "No vacant positions may be filled" – which appears to prohibit internal selections – but it also includes, "this memorandum does not prohibit making reallocations to meet the highest priority needs and to ensure that essential services are not interrupted," which would appear to authorize reassignment (which would have to be within grade).

Additionally, there is language that would allow the new Secretary of Commerce, once confirmed, to fill NWS operational positions:

"The head of any executive department or agency may exempt from the hiring freeze any positions that it deems necessary to meet national security or public safety responsibilities. In addition, the Director of the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) may grant exemptions from this freeze where those exemptions are otherwise necessary."

In a follow-up question after his confirmation hearing last week, Commerce Secretary Nominee Wilbur Ross was asked about the hiring freeze by Senator Bill Nelson, the Ranking Democrat on the Commerce Committee. Senator Nelson asked, "Will you commit to addressing the employment vacancies and exempting National Weather Service public safety employees from any hiring delay or freeze?"

Mr. Ross responded: "If confirmed, I will do my best to quickly fill all essential positions at the National Weather Service."

The Office of Management and Budget and Office of Personnel Management have been directed to come up with "a long-term plan to reduce the size of the Federal Government's workforce through attrition," within 90 days, and the hiring freeze will expire upon implementation of that plan.

-NWSEO-

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National Weather Service employees.  
No one works harder for National Weather Service employees than  
National Weather Service employees.  
We are NWSEO.**