

Summary: Alleged Improper Hiring at the National Park Service

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We investigated allegations that the National Park Service (NPS) improperly hired a senior political employee. We also examined whether the senior employee improperly received both an annual salary and retirement pay. Finally, we investigated allegations that the senior employee possibly violated the U.S. Department of the Interior's (DOI's) telework policy by failing to report to their official duty station and had done "little-to-no observable work." We did not substantiate the allegations.

We determined that the senior political employee was hired for the position in question in accordance with applicable regulations. Specifically, the senior employee retired from Federal service in 2015 and in 2018 came out of retirement and was appointed to a position in the NPS. In 2019, the senior political employee was reassigned under an authorized noncompetitive term appointment, in accordance with 5 C.F.R. § 316.302, to the position in question.

We also did not find evidence that the senior employee improperly received an annual salary and retirement pay, violated telework policy, or "performed little-to-no observable work." Specifically, the senior political employee's annual salary was reduced by the amount of a retirement annuity and by future cost-of-living increases. In addition, the senior employee's work location rendered both DOI and NPS telework policy inapplicable in this situation. Finally, no witnesses suggested that the senior employee failed to perform assigned duties. We were instead told that the senior employee routinely participated in meetings and visited work sites as needed.

The senior political employee left the DOI in 2021. This is the summary of an investigative report we issued to the Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks for any action deemed appropriate.

