

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

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March 24, 2016

The Honorable Gene L. Dodaro
Comptroller General of the United States
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Dodaro:

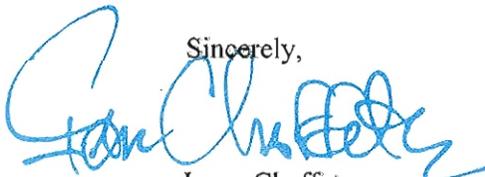
Social Security Numbers (SSN) are key pieces of personally identifying information that can potentially be used to perpetrate identity theft. The potential for misuse of SSNs has raised questions about how the federal government obtains, uses, and protects SSNs it obtains.

In May 2007, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) required all federal agencies to review their use of SSNs in agency systems and programs in order to identify opportunities to reduce such use.¹ Agencies were required to establish a plan, within 120 days of the memo, to eliminate the unnecessary collection and use of SSNs within eighteen months. They were also required to participate in government-wide efforts to explore alternatives to the use of SSNs as a personal identifier for federal employees and in the administration of federal programs. Given this clear direction from OMB, the Committee is interested in learning what actions agencies have taken to reduce the use of SSNs government-wide, what actions OMB has taken to ensure agencies have adhered to its directive, and what progress has been made in reducing the use of SSNs across the federal government.

Accordingly, we request that GAO conduct a review to assess the status of the federal government's effort to reduce its reliance on SSNs, including: (1) the extent to which agencies have developed and executed plans to eliminate their use and display of SSNs, and (2) what actions have been taken by OMB to ensure that agencies have eliminated their unnecessary use of SSNs.

Please contact Sean Brebbia of my staff at (202) 225-5074 to discuss the specific objectives and timing of this review. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Jason Chaffetz
Chairman

cc: The Honorable Elijah E. Cummings, Ranking Member

¹ Office of Mgmt. and Budget, Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies, *Safeguarding Against and Responding to the Breach of Personally Identifiable Information* (May 22, 2007), available at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/omb/memoranda/fy2007/m07-16.pdf> (last visited Jan. 20, 2016).