

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

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October 14, 2016

The Honorable John Roth
Inspector General
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
245 Murray Drive SW, Building 410
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Mr. Roth:

Today, your office released an audit of the U.S. Secret Service titled, “USSS Faces Challenges Protecting Case Management Systems and Data.”¹ USSS stores large amounts of sensitive and personally-identifying information for a wide range of individuals, ranging from everyday Americans to our nation’s leaders. The audit found, among other things, “USSS systems and data will remain vulnerable to unauthorized access and disclosure.”² The failure to protect this information places those individuals’ privacy and our national security at risk.

The audit is additional evidence of a pattern of incidents wherein USSS mishandles or otherwise fails to protect the sensitive information it stores. On June 8, 2015, the Committee met with representatives from USSS and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to receive a briefing on disciplinary action for USSS personnel who wrongfully accessed and distributed personally identifiable information (PII) in March of 2015. During this meeting, Committee staff learned that DHS Undersecretary Chip Fulghum made the decision to mitigate disciplinary action for 27 employees. This included holding proposed suspensions in abeyance for five years, pending good behavior. A USSS official informed Committee staff that holding discipline in abeyance was unprecedented. When asked by Committee staff why he chose to mitigate discipline, Undersecretary Fulghum stated that during his review, a number of USSS employees had shared other instances of improper access and distribution of PII. Fulghum, therefore, believed some of those who accessed my file were under the impression it was acceptable to do so. The instances referenced by Undersecretary Fulghum were not reviewed for discipline or referred to your office.

¹ Office of Inspector Gen., Dep’t of Homeland Sec., *USSS Faces Challenges Protecting Sensitive Case Management Systems and Data* (Oct. 14, 2016) (OIG-17-01).

² *Id.*

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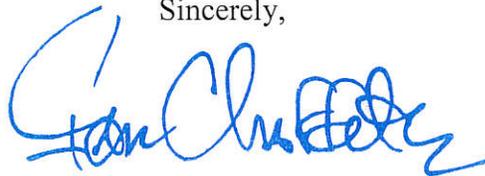
The discipline assigned here is not adequate to deter similar behavior in the future. The additional violations uncovered by DHS may indicate a systemic problem. Your recent audit shows an environment where weakly-protected IT systems enable USSS employees to access and share sensitive information.

The Committee requests that you perform additional follow-up work on this topic, and specifically review the mishandling of PII at USSS, and more broadly, how often this type of misconduct occurs at the agency, and the root cause of this behavior.

The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform is the principal oversight committee of the House of Representatives and may at "any time" investigate "any matter" as set forth in House Rule X.

Please contact Rachel Weaver at (202) 225-5074 with any questions about this request. Thank for your assistance in this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jason Chaffetz", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Jason Chaffetz
Chairman

cc: The Honorable Elijah E. Cummings, Ranking Member