

# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

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<http://oversight.house.gov>

October 19, 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:

We write to request that the U.S. Government Accountability Office examine potential improvements in federal retirement processing at the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). Since March of this year, OPM has reported a steady decline in the percentage of cases processed in 60 days or less, reaching a low point of 64 percent for the month of September 2016.<sup>1</sup> For those cases not processed in 60 days or less, the average processing time in September was 100 days.<sup>2</sup>

While OPM continues to study how best to modernize retirement processing, it is critical that OPM ensure the current paper processing system is efficiently meeting the needs of retiring federal workers. OPM must also work with its partner agencies to ensure accurate and efficient processing. The Committee obtained processing data from OPM that shows a particularly high rate of error at the Social Security Administration, the Department of Veterans Affairs, the Department of the Interior, and the Department of Agriculture that merits GAO's attention.<sup>3</sup>

Our federal workforce deserves a transition to retirement that is efficient, timely, and uncomplicated. Toward that end, the Committee requests GAO study the steps that both OPM and the human resources offices at various agencies can take to ensure the timely processing of a retirement claim. Specifically, the study should address the following questions:

1. Is guidance from OPM to agencies clear on how information should be saved in an employee's file so that it may be quickly accessed during the retirement claims process?

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<sup>1</sup> Office of Personnel Management Monthly Retirement Report for October, *CSRS/FERS New Claims, Processed, and Inventory* (2016).

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

<sup>3</sup> Office of Personnel Management Monthly Retirement Report for October, *Percentage of CSRS/FERS New Claims w/ Errors by Agency* (2016).

2. Are agencies following that guidance to ensure the necessary information is available for OPM to process the retirement paperwork?
3. What causes certain agencies to have high rates of error in retirement processing?
4. What more can OPM, federal agencies, federal employees, and Congress do to decrease the amount of time spent processing a retirement claim?

We appreciate GAO's assistance with this effort. If you have any questions concerning this request, please contact Kevin Ortiz of the Majority staff at (202) 225-5074 or Lena Chang of the Minority staff at (202) 225-5051. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Jason Chaffetz  
Chairman



Elijah E. Cummings  
Ranking Member



Mark Meadows  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Government Operations



Gerald E. Connolly  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Government Operations