

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

MAJORITY (202) 225-5074
MINORITY (202) 225-5051

<http://oversight.house.gov>

October 13, 2017

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:

The federal government and the states exchange large amounts of data, including sensitive data such as personally identifiable information, to implement key federal programs. Each federal agency that exchanges data with the states has agency-specific regulations, guidelines, or other requirements to protect and secure that sensitive information. Federal agencies also perform audits and other assessments of state information technology to ensure those systems comply with the agency's own regulations.

Some state chief information officers (CIOs) believe inconsistent federal requirements for information security and privacy, and the associated compliance audits, create an undue burden. State CIOs contend they are unable to improve and reform state information technology systems because of duplicative federal requirements,¹ some of which are at odds with best practices.² Multiple assessments conducted by federal agencies using different methodologies are resource-intensive, wasteful of both federal and state resources, and produce inconsistent results.

Accordingly, we request GAO conduct a study to examine the extent and impact federal information security and privacy requirements, and related audits, have on state programs. Specifically, we request GAO:

1. Assess the extent to which federal information security and privacy requirements imposed on states are consistent with each other and best practices, and to the extent the requirements are not consistent, assess whether inconsistencies are necessary to achieve the intended goals of the security requirements.

¹ *Cybersecurity Regulation Harmonization*: Hearing Before S. Comm. on Homeland Sec. and Gov't. Affairs 115th Cong. (June 21, 2017) (statement of James "Bo" Reese CIO for the State of Okla.).

² *Id.*

The Honorable Gene L. Dodaro

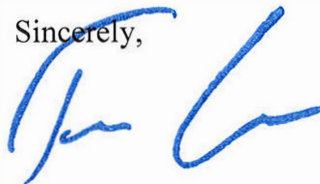
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2. Assess the efficiency and effectiveness of the audit and assessment processes and procedures used by federal agencies to enforce and oversee information security requirements on states, including the cost effectiveness of auditing programs and opportunities to improve efficiency.
3. Obtain information from selected state government stakeholders documenting their challenges with, and the impact of, federal assessment efforts on state programs, including the costs associated with regulatory compliance and auditing, frequency of federal audits, and effect of inconsistent regulatory compliance on state information technology reform efforts.

Please contact Kelsey Wall of the Committee staff at (202) 225-5074 with any questions about this request. Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Trey Gowdy', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Trey Gowdy