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Oversight Committee Begins Examination of Government-wide Transition to Cloud Computing

WASHINGTON – The House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform is examining the benefits and challenges of a government-wide transition to cloud computing. As the initiative is taken up by federal agencies, the committee wants to ensure that adequate safeguards are established to ensure a smooth transition. The Obama Administration has indicated that transition of federal information technology (IT) systems to the cloud is one of its top priorities.

The Obama Administration created the Federal Cloud Computing Initiative (FCCI) in September 2009, with a goal of modernizing the Federal government's \$76 Billion information IT systems.

Several committees and working groups have been created to expedite the federal government's implementation of cloud computing services including the Cloud Computing Executive Steering Committee (CCESC), which is headed by Casey Coleman, the Chief Information Officer at the General Services Administration (GSA).

In an inquiry to Ms. Coleman regarding the government-wide transition to the cloud, House Oversight Committee Chairman Edolphus Towns (D-NY) and Government Management, Organization and Procurement Subcommittee Chairwoman Diane Watson (D-CA) wrote:

"While there are compelling arguments for the federal government to utilize cloud computing, the technology is still a relatively new concept. As such, there are a number of questions and concerns about the federal government's use of cloud computing. The Committee is examining these issues and intends to hold a hearing on the potential benefits and risks of moving federal IT into the cloud."

The committee chairs are concerned that there are no clear policies and procedures in place for cloud computing; that standards have not yet been developed for security, interoperability, or data portability; and that a finalized plan for the government-wide implementation of cloud computing is not readily available.

Last month, a Cloud Computing Initiative Vision and Strategy Document was made public but it was unclear whether this plan for the government-wide implementation of cloud computing was the finalized plan. The lawmakers are also asking for clarification on this matter.

A recent GSA Inspector General Semiannual Report to Congress highlighted significant schedule delays and cost overruns, frequent redesigns, and a prolonged time in development of GSA systems development projects.

In light of this report, Chairman Towns and Subcommittee Chairwoman Watson asked Ms. Coleman if any cost estimates, including projected spending and savings, were available for the FCCI and whether GSA has developed any plans to address the unique challenges of cloud computing procurement. They also asked for a list of which agencies currently use or plan to use cloud computing technologies and services and if any standards for security, interoperability and data portability have been drafted.

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Documents and Links

[Letter from Chairman Edolphus Towns and Subcommittee Chairwoman Watson to Ms. Casey Coleman](#)