Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

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June 21, 2016

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

Dear Mr. Dodaro:

We are writing to request that the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) continue to assist the Committee with our oversight of the over $80 billion the federal government annually spends on information technology (IT) and agencies' implementation of the Federal Information Technology Acquisition Reform Act (FITARA).[1]

In February 2015, GAO added "Improving the Management of IT Acquisitions and Operations" to its biannual High Risk list.[2] GAO found the government spent billions on failed and poorly performing IT investments. In order to resolve the IT Acquisition high risk designation, GAO has said that "expeditious" FITARA implementation is critical to IT acquisition reform.[3] Consequently, the Committee has spent considerable time overseeing the federal government's IT spending and implementation of FITARA. The Committee has held several hearings to assess agencies' FITARA implementation efforts and released two FITARA scorecards measuring performance.

There are several key aspects of FITARA that are critical to improving IT management and acquisition, including data center consolidation and enhanced authorities for agency Chief Information Officers (CIOs). FITARA enhances existing CIO authorities by ensuring the CIO has a significant role in the budgeting, execution, management, and governance processes related to IT management and acquisition. For example, by law the agency CIO shall: (1) approve the agency's IT budget request; (2) certify that IT investments are implementing incremental development; and (3) approve the appointment of any other employee with the title of CIO or who functions as a CIO within the agency. The CIO must also approve all major IT contracts and reprogramming of IT program funds.[4] In June 2015, OMB released FITARA Guidance establishing a Common Baseline for IT management that includes a description of roles and responsibilities for agency CIOs.[5]

[1] National Defense Authorization Act FY 2015, Pub. L. No. 113-291, Title VIII, Subtitle D (Dec. 19, 2014).
[2] 2015 GAO High Risk Report, GAO-15-290 (Feb. 2015).
[3] 2015 GAO High Risk Report at "What Remains to be Done" available at http://www.gao.gov/highrisk/improving_management_it_acquisitions_operations/why_did_study#t=2
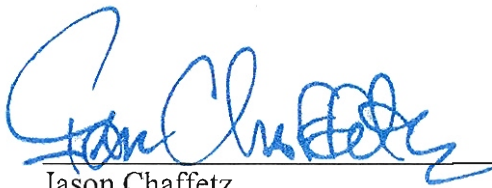[4] National Defense Authorization Act FY 2015, Pub. L. No. 113-291, Title VIII, Subtitle D (Dec. 19, 2014).
[5] Office of Mgmt. and Budget (OMB), Management and Oversight of Information Technology, Memorandum M-15-14 (June 10, 2015).

In order to assess agencies' FITARA implementation efforts and inform the Committee's FITARA Scorecard, the Committee requests that GAO:

1. Determine the extent to which agencies have implemented enhanced CIO authorities under FITARA and OMB Guidance;

   a. Identify key challenges that federal CIOs face in exercising their authority to carry out federal law and OMB Guidance; and

   b. Determine whether agency CIOs report to the Secretary or Deputy Secretary in all 24 CFO Act agencies and make recommendations for the appropriate reporting relationship to facilitate implementations of CIO authorities under FITARA;

2. Evaluate the extent to which selected federal agencies' IT budget practices are consistent with requirements under FITARA and OMB Guidance and how agencies define IT and the impact of these practices on IT investment transparency;

3. Evaluate agencies' process for CIO approval of IT contracts and how agencies define IT and the impact of these practices on IT investment transparency;

4. Evaluate agencies' use of incremental development and the process for CIOs to certify incremental development for IT investments to ensure these practices are consistent with requirements under FITARA and OMB Guidance; and

5. Evaluate agencies' continuing efforts to consolidate data centers and specifically agencies' progress in meeting OMB's data center optimization metrics and targets, including server utilization rates.

. Please contact Julie Dunne or Troy Stock of the Majority staff with any questions about this request. Thank you for your attention to this matter.
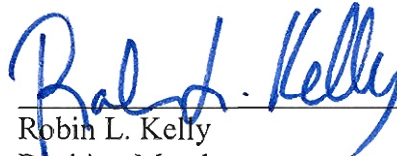
Sincerely,

Jason Chaffetz
Chairman

Will Hurd
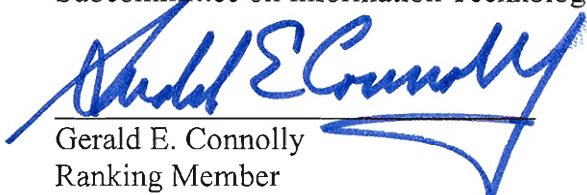Chairman
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Mark Meadows
Chairman
Subcommittee on Government Operations

Elijah E. Cummings
Ranking Member

Robin L. Kelly
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Information Technology

Gerald E. Connolly
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Subcommittee on Government Operations