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## United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON  
HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6250

February 12, 2010

MICHAEL L. ALEXANDER, STAFF DIRECTOR  
BRANDON T. MILBORN, MINORITY STAFF DIRECTOR AND CHIEF COUNSEL

The Honorable Gene Dodaro  
Acting Comptroller General  
U.S. Government Accountability Office  
441 G Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Dodaro:

The federal government invested nearly \$71 billion on major information technology (IT) projects in fiscal year 2009; despite the long-standing challenges agencies face in implementing and overseeing these projects. For example, the Internal Revenue Service has struggled for more than 20 years to modernize technology for processing tax returns, spending over \$4 billion and finally halting development on that system in June 2009. Further, the Federal Bureau of Investigation has spent millions of dollars over the past decade attempting to develop a system for tracking criminal cases with limited success. Additionally, the Department of Homeland Security invested \$52 million toward a financial system that failed and is now undergoing the process of starting over with a new project that is estimated to potentially cost between \$450 million and \$1 billion. Finally, the Census Bureau's effort to automate the decennial census is another example of an information technology project that failed due to management mistakes and lack of sufficient planning.

To address such problems, various laws have been enacted to improve the management of information technology. In particular, the Clinger-Cohen Act of 1996 required agency heads to designate Chief Information Officers (CIOs) to lead reforms, better manage, and achieve real measurable improvements with technology. At my request, GAO issued reports in 2004 and 2005 that evaluated the role and responsibilities of agency CIOs. These reports described the composition of federal CIOs and their respective authorities in overseeing information and technology management areas. Specifically, the reports outlined 12 areas that were either required by statute or critical to effective information and technology management.

In 2011, it will be 15 years since the enactment of Clinger-Cohen and more than six years since GAO completed work on this topic; however, challenges in implementing and overseeing major information technology investments still persist. Specifically, the position of CIOs is not equally respected across the federal government and according to a recent survey, CIOs still lack adequate resources to achieve technology efficiencies and improve organizational performance. For example, CIOs are faced with the challenge of obtaining buy in from top level executives in governing IT projects to ensure that these projects remain on track and the risk of failure is appropriately mitigated. These challenges may be due, in part, to the limited authority and involvement CIOs have in overseeing these projects.

I am interested in learning about proposed legislative improvements to the statutory framework for CIOs to enhance their ability to oversee major information technology investments. Thus, I respectfully ask GAO to conduct a review that would include updating its previous reports on federal CIOs, assessing the statutory framework for CIO roles and responsibilities, and evaluating potential modifications that could further enhance the authority and effectiveness of CIOs. Furthermore, I would like this study to outline key lessons learned over the past fifteen years, since the enactment of Clinger-Cohen, which can be shared among federal CIOs to help address information and technology management challenges.

Thank you for your assistance. For further discussion regarding this request, please contact :

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Susan M. Collins".

Susan M. Collins  
Ranking Member