

August 1998

Federal Management and  
Workforce Issues Issue  
Area

Active Assignments

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# Foreword

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This report was prepared primarily to inform Congressional members and key staff of ongoing assignments in the General Accounting Office's Federal Management and Workforce Issues issue area. This report contains assignments that were ongoing as of August 17, 1998, and presents a brief background statement and a list of key questions to be answered on each assignment. The report will be issued quarterly.

This report was compiled from information available in GAO's internal management information systems. Because the information was downloaded from computerized data bases intended for internal use, some information may appear in abbreviated form.

If you have questions or would like additional information about assignments listed, please contact Nye Stevens, Director, on (202) 512-8676; Michael Brostek, Associate Director, on (202) 512-9039; Chris Mihm, Associate Director, on (202) 512-3236; or Laurie Ekstrand, Associate Director, on (202) 512-2758.

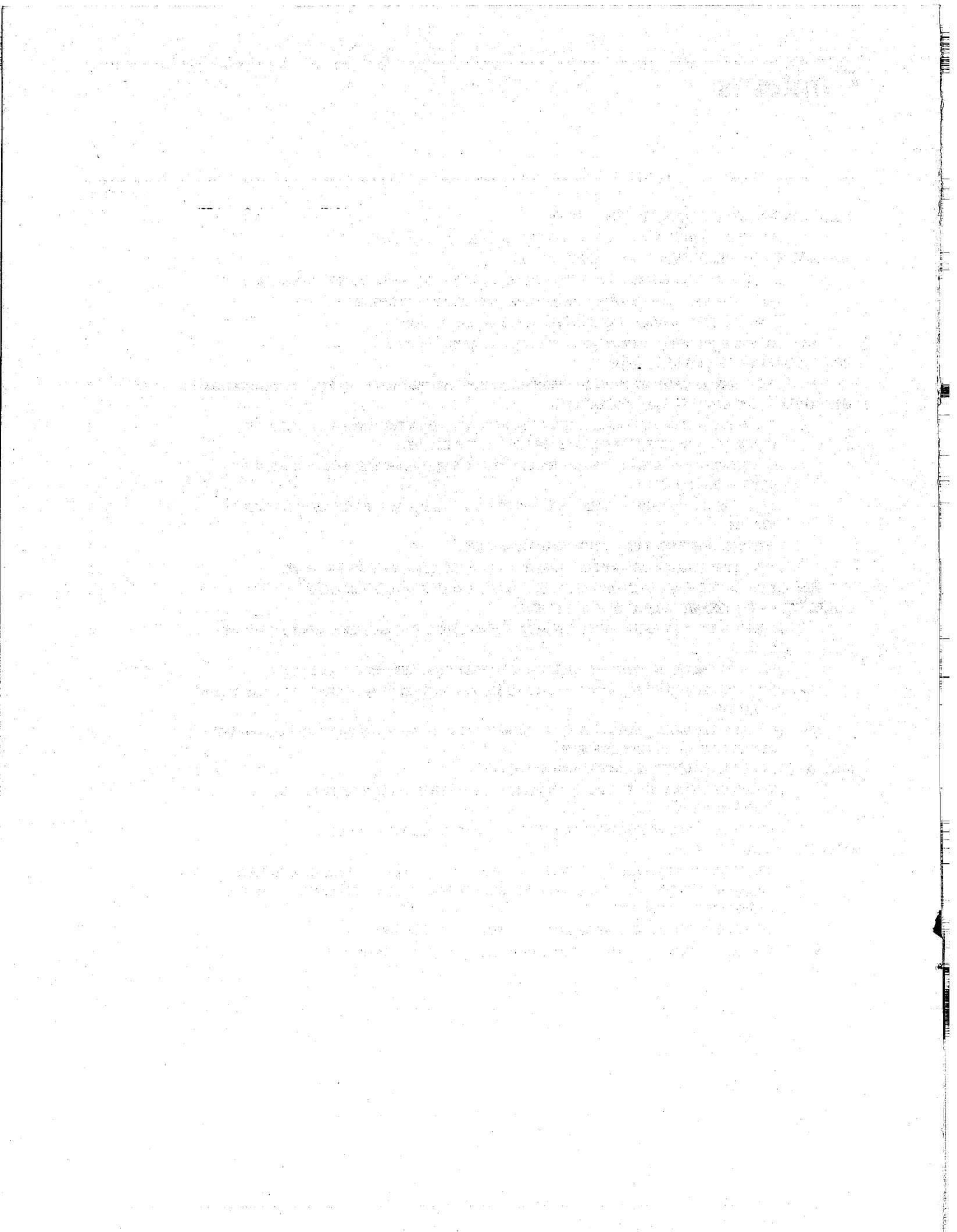


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## ***Federal Management and Workforce Issues***

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### **MANAGING A GOVERNMENT IN TRANSITION**

**TITLE: PROFILES OF SUCCESSFUL FEDERAL PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS (410184)**

**KEY QUESTIONS :** The requester asked GAO to review and profile innovative federal public-private partnerships (P3s) as they pertain to real estate and facilities, and to answer the following questions: (1) Among the innovative P3s we profile, what types are most prevalent? (2) What were the rationales for entering the partnership for both the public and private sector entities? (3) What contractual arrangements were used to execute the partnership? (4) Were major barriers encountered, if so, what strategies were used to overcome those barriers? (5) What results were reported?

### **MANAGING FOR RESULTS AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

**TITLE: REVIEW OF OPM'S CENTRAL PERSONNEL DATA FILE (CPDF) RELIABILITY AND DATA ACCURACY (410071)**

**KEY QUESTIONS :** (1) Is the CPDF system documented as recommended by established standards? Does the system process data as OPM intended? (2) What does OPM do to ensure that CPDF data is complete and accurate? (3) How satisfied are users of CPDF data with information OPM provides on any limitations of the data? Do users of CPDF data independently check its accuracy?

**TITLE: REVIEW OF EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT INITIATIVES AT GPRA PILOTS (410082)**

**KEY QUESTIONS :** (1) What are the lessons learned by, and the related experiences of, GPRA pilots that have made efforts to address the issue of linking employee performance management (PM) to organizational goals?

**TITLE: ANNUAL PERFORMANCE PLAN CONGRESSIONAL GUIDE VERSION 2 (410311)**

**KEY QUESTIONS :** Agencies will be revising their FY1999 performance plans and preparing their FY2000 plans this fall. We issued guides for congressional decisionmakers and evaluators to use to assess the plans. Because agency performance plans were not yet available, they did not contain any examples from plans to illustrate key issues. We plan to develop the next guide for annual performance plans to reflect congressional and agency experiences with the first round of performance plans. We will identify practices and examples from the plans to illustrate ways to improve the usefulness of performance plans.

**TITLE: GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE AND RESULTS ACT CAPPING REPORT (410315)**

**KEY QUESTIONS :** GPRA requires the 24 CFO agencies to develop performance plans starting with fiscal year 1999. GAO divisions are evaluating the respective agencies' plans. We will analyze and summarize the major issues resulting from the divisions' evaluations in a capping report. (1) To what extent do the agencies' performance plans provide a clear picture of intended performance? (2) How well do the plans discuss the strategies and resources agencies will use to achieve intended performance? (3) To what extent do the plans provide confidence that their performance information will be credible?

### **REEVALUATING THE MERIT SYSTEM**

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## ***Federal Management and Workforce Issues***

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**TITLE: REVIEW OF ALLEGED WRONGFUL PERSONNEL ACTIONS AT THE SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION (410226)**

**KEY QUESTIONS :** The requester asked that we examine selected Small Business Administration (SBA) personnel activities in response to allegations of possible wrongdoing. (1) How many District Directors did SBA hire since January 1993? (2) What was the disposition of the SBA regional employees following the 1994 reorganization? (3) What shifting of SBA employees occurred from headquarters and district offices to the regions following the 1994 reorganization? (4) How many details occurred from SBA to other federal agencies; was Congressional reporting required and complied with? (5) What was SBA's salary setting and increase practices for political appointees? (6) What was SBA's salary setting and increase practices for Ramspeck Act appointees?

### **IMPROVING PAY AND BENEFIT PROGRAMS**

**TITLE: COMPARISON OF WAGE LOSS COMPENSATION BENEFITS UNDER THE FEDERAL EMPLOYEES' COMPENSATION ACT WITH ESTIMATED PRE-INJURY TAKE-HOME PAY (410199)**

**KEY QUESTIONS :** The requester asked that GAO determine if some Federal Employees' Compensation Act (FECA) beneficiaries received more FECA benefits than estimated preinjury take-home pay. Workers' compensation experts generally agree that if compensation benefits approximate or exceed injured workers' preinjury take home pay, disincentives for returning to work may be created. How do current FECA benefits compare to the estimated current value of injured workers' preinjury take-home pay for beneficiaries on the long-term roll that we studied? For these beneficiaries, what are their ages, ages when injured, and occupations? For selected occupations, what would "typical" career patterns look like, had workers not been injured?

**TITLE: A COMPARISON: STATE RETIREMENT PROGRAMS AND FEDERAL RETIREMENT PROGRAMS FOR GENERAL EMPLOYEES (410257)**

**KEY QUESTIONS :** GAO has completed a series of reports on private sector retirement programs. State retirement programs offer an additional comparison group for policymakers to consider. This report will answer three questions: (1) How many retirement programs for state general employees are designed similar to CSRS or FERS? (2) What changes, if any, have been made to the designs of state retirement programs since they were established and why? What changes, if any, do state officials currently anticipate? What are the reasons that states have or have not considered changing to a defined contribution only program? (3) How do eligibility, benefits, contributions, and funding features of state retirement programs compare with those of CSRS and FERS?



## ***Federal Management and Workforce Issues***

**TITLE: STUDY OF RAILROAD RETIREMENT PORTABILITY TO THE FEDERAL EMPLOYEES RETIREMENT SYSTEM (410259)**

**KEY QUESTIONS :** As requested, GAO is studying the portability of retirement benefits earned under the Railroad Retirement Acts to the Federal Employees' Retirement System (FERS). This assignment will (1) describe the types of retirement plan features that affect portability, (2) document which railroad retirement program features enhance or limit the program's portability, (3) identify potential changes to the railroad retirement program that would enhance portability in that program and describe the cost implications of those changes and (4) identify the key changes to FERS that would enhance the railroad retirement program's portability to FERS and describe the cost and management implications of the changes for civilian retirement.

**TITLE: FEDERAL RETIREMENT EDUCATION AND COUNSELING (410261)**

**KEY QUESTIONS :** The retirement education and counseling that civilian employees of the federal government receive during their careers may greatly affect the transition to and quality of their retirement. OPM has the authority and agencies are responsible for providing these services to CSRS and FERS employees. There is little known about OPM and agency practices. This assignment will provide information on (1) OPM and agency roles and responsibilities for retirement education and counseling, (2) the practices agencies follow in providing these services, (3) expert views as to the recommended elements of a retirement education and counseling program, and (4) examples of agency activities that exemplify the recommended elements and could provide examples that other agencies might follow.

**TITLE: ACTUARIAL AND BUDGETARY COST TRENDS AND PROJECTIONS FOR CSRS AND FERS (410262)**

**KEY QUESTIONS :** Historical summary information on CSRS and FERS actuarial and budgetary cost trends and projections is not readily available and could help policymakers better understand the nature and direction of these costs and the factors that contribute to changes in costs. Also, information provided annually to Congress on program costs is technical and not easily understood. Thus, the study questions are (1) how are CSRS/FERS pension costs reported to Congress and how do OPM recordkeeping systems compare to other large pension systems, (2) what are the actuarial and budgetary trends in CSRS/FERS pension costs and what accounts for changes in OPM cost estimates and (3) what program oversight issues are raised by the pension cost trends that may warrant further congressional and OPM attention ?

**TITLE: RESTRUCTURING'S EFFECT ON THE FEDERAL WORKFORCE'S COMPOSITION AND PAY (410320)**

**KEY QUESTIONS :** During government restructuring, the total federal payroll has increased while the number of federal employees has decreased. (1) Why has the federal payroll increased while the number of federal employees has decreased during restructuring? (2) How and to the extent possible why, have the grade levels and occupations changed in DOD and non-DOD agencies during restructuring? (3) Has the number and amount of awards, allowances, premium pay, and other factors affecting pay changed during restructuring? (4) What has been the effect of restructuring on the number of supervisors and their span-of-control?

### **COLLECTING & DISSEMINATING INFORMATION**

## ***Federal Management and Workforce Issues***

**TITLE: DIFFERENCES IN DEFINITIONS FOR REPORTING UNDER THE LOBBYING DISCLOSURE ACT OF 1995 (LDA) (410094)**

**KEY QUESTIONS :** (1) What are the differences in lobbying-related definitions between those in the Internal Revenue Code (IRC) and those in the LDA? (2) What impact does the registrant's election of these different definitions have on filing and reporting (a) under the LDA? (b) under the IRC?

**TITLE: STUDY OF THE QUALITY ADJUSTMENTS MADE TO THE CONSUMER PRICE INDEX (410197)**

**KEY QUESTIONS :** Over \$1 trillion annually of federal receipts & spending is linked to the Consumer Price Index (CPI). In 1996, an advisory commission said that the CPI overstated the cost of living, mostly because of quality change bias. It criticized the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) for not adequately adjusting for quality changes. This bias occurs when price increases related to improvements in goods and services are erroneously recorded as inflation-related price increases in the CPI. (1) What are BLS' policies and procedures for collecting price data for the CPI? (2) What are BLS' policies and procedures for substituting goods and services? (3) What were BLS' procedures and methods for making quality adjustments to the CPI? (4) What are BLS' plans to improve the way it makes adjustments?

**TITLE: TECHNOLOGY AND PERFORMANCE AUDIT AND MANAGEMENT REVIEW OF THE FEDERAL ELECTION COMMISSION (410203)**

**KEY QUESTIONS :** The Treasury, Postal Service, & Independent Agencies Appropriation bill for fiscal year 1998 provided for transferring \$750,000 from the Federal Election Commission (FEC) to GAO "for the sole purpose of entering into a contract with the private sector for a management review, & technology & performance audit" of the FEC. GAO was instructed to consult closely with the requesters on the parameters of the audit. What are the major performance, management, & technological challenges facing the FEC & how effective has the FEC been in addressing them? Does the selected contractor have the background & technical skills necessary to conduct such a study? Are the contractor deliverables responsive to the scope of the contract?

**TITLE: HRA:30 PRELIMINARY OBSERVATION ON THE RESULTS TO DATE OF THE DRESS REHEARSAL AND THE CENSUS BUREAU'S READINESS FOR 2000 (410353)**

**KEY QUESTIONS :** The census dress rehearsal, currently underway at three sites, is the last remaining field test before the decennial census is administered. When we last testified before Congress in March 1998, we noted that, although the Bureau had made progress in addressing some of the problems occurred during the 1990 Census, key activities face continuing challenges. We were asked to review how key census taking activities performed during the dress rehearsal and the implications for the Bureau's readiness for 2000.

### **IMPROVING FEDERAL REGULATORY MANAGEMENT**

## **Federal Management and Workforce Issues**

**TITLE: REVIEW OF INTERIM RULES, DIRECT FINAL RULES, AND OTHER RULES WITHOUT A NOTICE OF PROPOSED RULEMAKING (410221)**

- KEY QUESTIONS :** During our review of regulatory actions in current jobs, we found that some significant rules were promulgated without going through the proposed rule stage, often as interim final rules. Because some statutory requirements (e.g., for regulatory flexibility analyses) are triggered by a notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM), use of these other procedures merits closer examination. In this job, we will attempt to (1) identify the extent to which agencies published final regulatory actions without an NPRM during 1997, (2) describe the circumstances under which agencies can and did publish final rules without an NPRM, and (3) determine what potential implications or consequences are associated with publishing final regulatory actions without an NPRM.

**TITLE: REVIEW OF AGENCIES' STATUTORY DISCRETION FOR SELECTED REGULATIONS (410254)**

- KEY QUESTIONS :** GAO was asked to do a follow up to two reports on regulatory concerns raised by 15 selected companies (GAO/GGD-97-2 and GGD-97-26R). GAO was asked to determine, for the company concerns in the noted reports that the agencies said were statutorily mandated, (1) which regulations were the subject of each of the concerns, (2) the statutory basis for each of the regulations, and (3) the extent to which these regulations were mandated by the underlying statutes. Where possible, we will also determine whether the statutory language would have allowed the agency to use a different regulatory approach that might have been less burdensome than the approach the agency selected.

### **OTHER ISSUE AREA WORK - FMW**

**TITLE: IS THE FEDERAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE ACT APPLICABLE TO WEEKLY MEETINGS BEING HOSTED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, AND IF SO, IS THE DEPARTMENT IN COMPLIANCE WITH THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE ACT (410201)**

- KEY QUESTIONS :** The requester has asked GAO to examine the applicability of the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) to weekly meetings held by officials of the Department of Education (DOEd) with education-related lobbyists. (1) Are DOEd meetings with education-related lobbyists subject to FACA? (2) Are the meetings in violation of prohibitions against federal officials lobbying Members of Congress? (3) What costs are DOEd incurring for these meetings?

**TITLE: HRA:30 CENSUS MANAGEMENT OF UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION (410299)**

- KEY QUESTIONS :** In our June 1994 testimony (GAO/T-GGD/AIMD-94-171), we identified a number of problems with the Census Bureau's budget and accounting systems, including the management of unliquidated obligations for unemployment compensation. These problems prevented the Bureau from accurately accounting for its unemployment insurance (UI) expenses for the 1990 Census. Because of these financial management problems, the requester is concerned about the Bureau's management of UI for the 2000 decennial census. The requester asked that we (1) describe the Bureau's current and past authority to pay UI; (2) obtain UI budget and cost estimates for the dress rehearsal and 2000 decennial census; and (3) review the Bureau's actions taken to improve its financial management of UI funds.

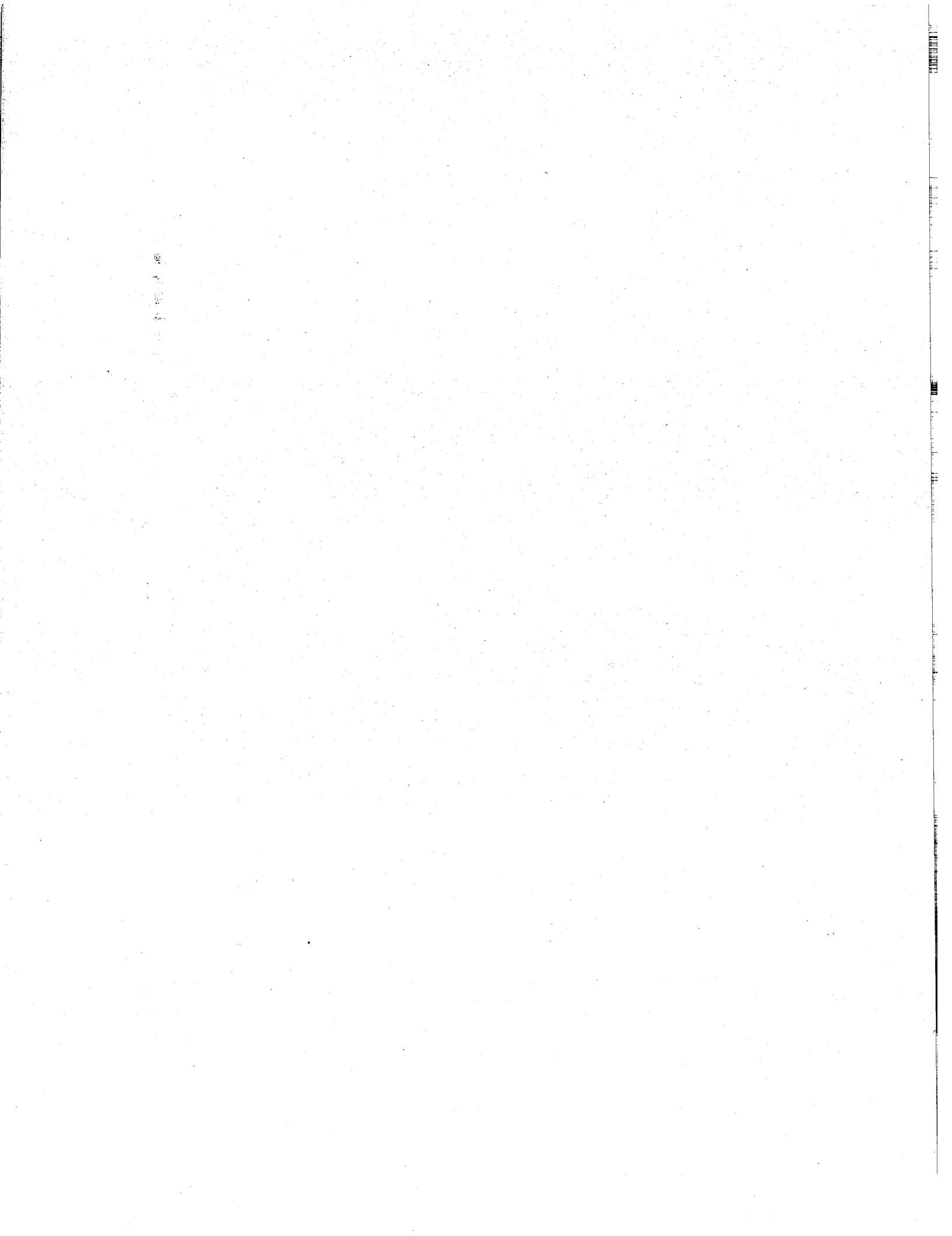
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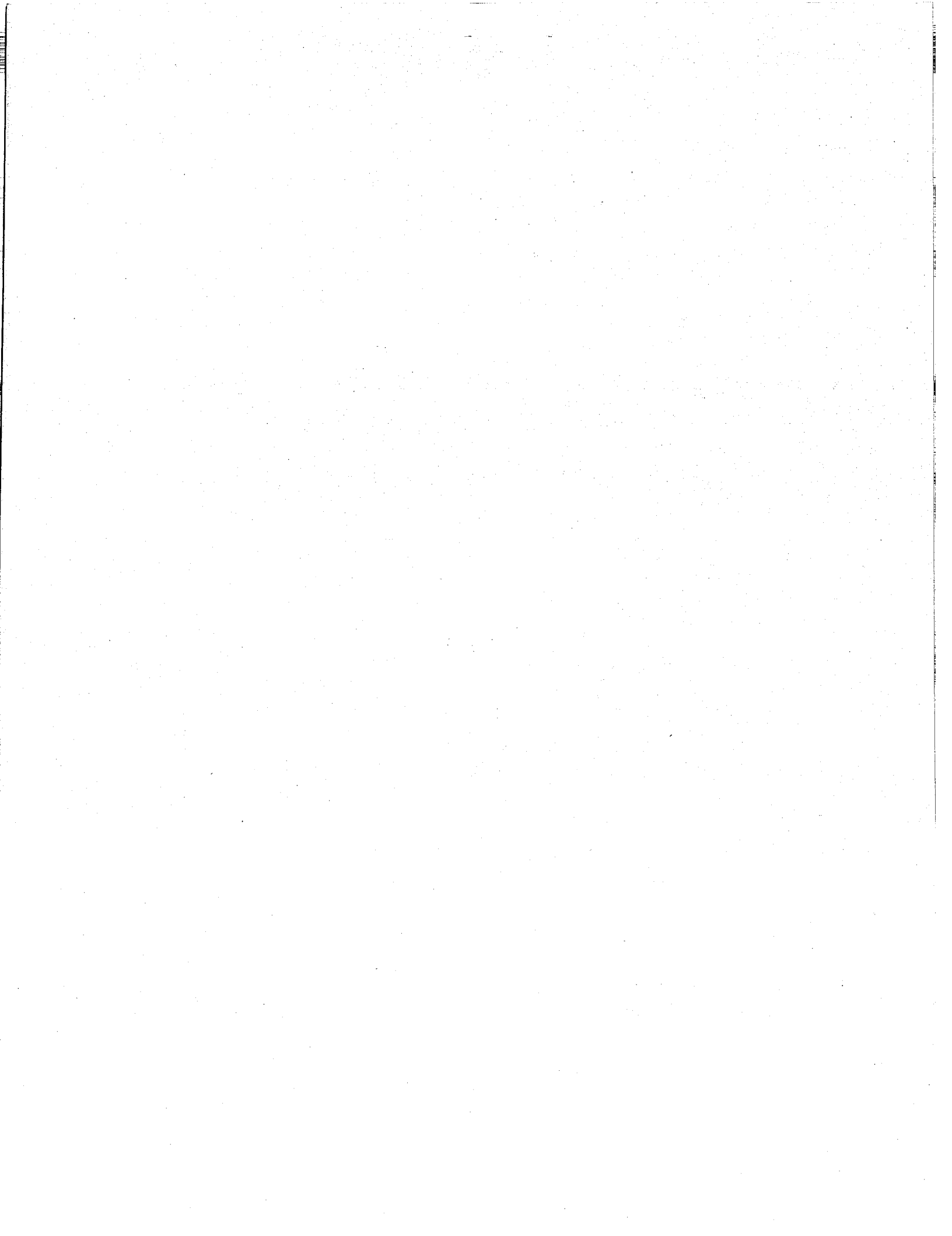
## ***Federal Management and Workforce Issues***

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**TITLE: FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION REGIONAL OFFICE RESTRUCTURING PROPOSAL (410349)**

**KEY QUESTIONS :** Several members of Congress have asked GAO to examine a Federal Trade Commission (FTC) regional restructuring plan, specifically focusing on the closure of the Denver and Boston regional offices. (1) What was FTC's rationale for proposing the regional restructuring plan, and what factors did it consider in making the restructuring decision? (2) What other factors, if any, do FTC's internal and external stakeholders suggest that FTC could have considered, and why did FTC not consider these factors? (3) What short- and long-term impact do FTC headquarters' officials and FTC internal and external stakeholders anticipate as a result of FTC's proposed restructuring plan?





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