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Active Assignments

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Foreword

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 February 2, 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; or Chris Mihm, Associate Director, on (202) 512-3236.

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MANAGING A GOVERNMENT IN TRANSITION

TITLE: **STEPS SELECTED DOWNSIZED AGENCIES ARE TAKING TO MAINTAIN PERFORMANCE (410088)**

KEY QUESTIONS : (1) Where has downsizing occurred and what programs, employees, and critical occupations have been affected? (2) What steps are agencies taking to maintain or improve performance in view of downsizing? (3) What have been the results of efforts to maintain or improve performance? (4) What lessons have been learned with regard to maintaining and improving performance?

TITLE: **AGENCIES' IGS STATUS REPORT ON 23 QUESTIONABLE REEMPLOYED BUYOUT RECIPIENTS (410092)**

KEY QUESTIONS : (1) What actions did the IGs take concerning the 11 buyout recipients in apparent violation of the reemployment provisions? (2) What determinations did the IGs come to about the 12 cases that we could not ascertain due to inconsistent data?

TITLE: **COMPARISON OF FOUR DEPARTMENT'S ACTIVITIES TO RESTRUCTURE HUMAN RESOURCE OPERATIONS (410134)**

KEY QUESTIONS : (1) Are agencies restructuring/streamlining Human Resource (HR) operations? Why? (2) What activities do agencies have underway to streamline HR operations? (3) Have agencies followed recognized business practices to restructure their HR operations?

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: **GOAL SETTING AND PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT FOR FEDERAL CREDIT PROGRAMS (410058)**

KEY QUESTIONS : (1) What is the status of selected federal credit programs' efforts to develop and use mission-based performance goals and measures? (2) What challenges, if any, are these programs facing in implementing such goals and measures and what actions are being taken to address those challenges?

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: **STUDY OF POOR PERFORMING EXECUTIVES AT THE DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS (410090)**

KEY QUESTIONS : (1) What are VHA's exec. perform. mgmt. policies & do they align w/fed. gov policies? (2) What are VHA's exec. conduct policies & do they align w/fed. gov policies? (3) What actions did VHA take in FY 94-96 on exec. perform.? (4) What actions did VHA take on exec. misconduct? (5) How does the no. of VHA exec. pers. actions compare w/the rest of VA/fed. gov's?

TITLE: **KEY CONGRESSIONAL QUESTIONS FOR REVIEW OF RESULTS ACT PERFORMANCE PLANS (410193)**

KEY QUESTIONS : Under the Results Act, agencies are required to develop annual performance plans that include performance goals and indicators that will be used to measure performance, a summary of the necessary resources, and a discussion of how the performance information will be verified. The first of these annual plans is to cover fiscal year 1999. Each agency is to submit its plan to the Office of Management and Budget in the fall of 1997. The plans are to be sent to Congress soon after transmittal of the President's budget in February 1998 and made available to the public. We are to identify (1) questions Congress should ask to make performance plans useful in its decisionmaking processes and (2) criteria Congress can use to assess the quality of the plans.

TITLE: **REVIEW OF SEPTEMBER STRATEGIC PLANS SUBMITTED UNDER THE GOVERNMENT PERFORMANCE AND RESULTS ACT (410196)**

KEY QUESTIONS : The Government Performance and Results Act of 1993 (GPRA or the Results Act) requires agencies to formally submit a strategic plan to Congress on Sept. 30, 1997. The requesters asked GAO to brief them on the extent that agencies have made changes to those plans on the basis of our July and August reports on agencies' draft strategic plans. This job addresses the request for a summary report on the information presented in the briefings provided by program issue areas.

TITLE: **FEDERAL MANAGEMENT: MAJOR MANAGEMENT ISSUES (410252)**

REEVALUATING THE MERIT SYSTEM

TITLE: **REVIEW OF ALLEGED WRONGFUL PERSONNEL ACTIONS AT THE SMALL BUSINESS ADMINISTATION (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?

COLLECTING & DISSEMINATING INFORMATION

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: **REVIEW AND COMPARISON OF THE REGISTRATIONS OF FOREIGN LOBBYING UNDER THE NEW LOBBYING DISCLOSURE ACT, THE OLD LOBBYING ACT, AND THE FOREIGN AGENTS REGISTRATION ACT (410122)**

KEY QUESTIONS : The requester is interested in how the Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995 (LDA), which went into effect in 1996, affected registrations of lobbyists working on behalf of foreign clients. Previously, the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA), which has more stringent reporting standards, required lobbyists representing foreign clients to register with the Department of Justice (DOJ). LDA amended FARA by allowing lobbyists for foreign entities, e.g., Toyota, (but not foreign governments or foreign political parties which must still register under FARA) to register under LDA instead of under FARA. We will compare the number of registrations under FARA and the old lobbying law in 1995 with the number of registrations under FARA and the new lobbying law in 1996.

TITLE: **OFFICIAL TIME USED FOR UNION ACTIVITIES GOVERNMENTWIDE (410166)**

KEY QUESTIONS : The objective of this work was to develop reported and estimated data on the following areas, as provided by selected federal organizations: amount of official time used by employees for union activities; number of employees who used official time; number of employees who spent all of their time on union activities; and the dollar value of the time, the travel, and the office space and related items used for union activities. However, there is no requirement that agencies collect reported data or make estimates of the amount of official time used or of the dollar value of other support provided for union activities.

TITLE: **COMPARISON OF LOBBYIST REGISTRATIONS IN 1995 AND 1996 (410182)**

KEY QUESTIONS : In 1995, Congress passed the The Lobbying Disclosure Act of 1995 (LDA), which superseded the Federal Regulation of Lobbying Act of 1946. The LDA broadened the definitions of lobbying-related terms. The effect of these broader definitions was the expected increase in the disclosure of the number of individuals identified on lobbyists. The LDA also adopted a new standard for registration: individuals who spend less than 20 percent of their time lobbying on behalf of a client are no longer required to be registered. The requester wants to know (1) how many individuals and organizations registered under the new lobbying law that were not registered under the old lobbying law and, (2) how many were registered under the old law that are not registered under the new law.

TITLE: **MANAGEMENT AUDIT OF SELECTED GPO PROCEDURES AND OPERATIONAL PROCESS (410219)**

KEY QUESTIONS : Public Law 105-55 provides that the Government Printing Office (GPO) make available up to $1.5 million to GAO for a management audit of selected GPO procedures and operational processes. The Conference Report (105-254) states that GAO should rely on outside contractors and produce a report with recommendations by April 30, 1998. The areas to be covered are: (1) the sales program and its inventory management, (2) the printing procurement program, (3) in-plant production, (4) personnel, and (5) the budgeting, accounting, and financial reporting systems. The audit must also include an evaluation of the observations and recommendations made as a result of GPO's consolidated financial statement audit for fiscal year 1995.

TITLE: **HRA:30 STATUS AND IMPLICATIONS OF KEY DRESS REHEARSAL ACTIVITIES (410220)**

KEY QUESTIONS : As the Census Bureau continues its implementation of the 2000 Dress Rehearsal (scheduled for April 1998 at three sites), we have identified a number of weaknesses in key activities critical to a successful census. The requester has asked for periodic status reports on these activities while there is still time to remedy any deficiencies. In this, the first of these census "status reports," we will review the following: (1) What is the current status of key dress rehearsal activities including address list development, outreach/promotion, workforce (recruiting, hiring, training, retention, pay), and ICM/non-response follow-up? (2) What were local officials' experiences with these activities?

TITLE: **FEDERAL POLICIES AFFECTING IMMIGRATION STATISTICS (966703)**

KEY QUESTIONS : Concern has been raised about inadequate, incomplete, and unreliable demographic immigration statistics. We agreed to determine (1) the existing policies and the current implementation of the policies for producing immigration statistics (organizations; budgets and staffing; priorities; and the standards and activities to ensure quality, direction of effort, and coordination); (2) how these policies are set and which agencies are responsible for setting them; and (3) whether these policies and their implementation affect independence, the capacity to produce quality statistics, or the efficiency (coordination) of efforts to produce immigration statistics.

IMPROVING FEDERAL REGULATORY MANAGEMENT

TITLE: **UNFUNDED MANDATES REFORM ACT OF 1995 (410112)**

KEY QUESTIONS : The requesters have asked GAO to review agencies' implementation of Title II of the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act of 1995 (UMRA) which requires agencies to take actions to ensure 'Regulatory Accountability and Reform.' (1) Have agencies issued economically significant rules that they did not consider subject to sections 202 and 205 of UMRA? Can we determine whether any of these rules should have been considered mandates? (2) Did agencies' written statements meet UMRA requirements? (3) What processes do agencies have to consult with state, local, and tribal governments? (4) Has OMB established the required UMRA pilot programs? (5) Have any courts decided any cases against agencies for noncompliance with UMRA?

TITLE: **SMALL BUSINESS REGULATORY ENFORCEMENT FAIRNESS ACT (SBREFA) COMPLIANCE (410158)**

KEY QUESTIONS : The Small Business Regulatory Enforcement Fairness Act (SBREFA, effective 6/29/96) was designed to increase opportunities for small entities to participate in the regulatory process. The requesters are interested in EPA/OSHA's compliance with procedures for gathering comments and whether changes in SBREFA are needed. Did EPA/OSHA apply SBREFA advocacy review panel provisions to all significant rules proposed between 6/29/96 & 6/29/97 that may have a significant economic impact on a substantial number of small entities; if not, why? Did agencies make or plan to make changes to proposed rules as the result of recommendations by EPA/OSHA advocacy review panels? Have SBREFA panel members and selected small entity representatives who commented suggested improvements to panel procedures?

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, use of these other procedures merits closer examination. In this job, we will attempt to determine (1) in what ways can and have agencies published final rules without proposed rules, (2) how often agencies use these types of rulemaking, (3) which agencies are using these types of rulemaking, and (4) what potential implications are associated with publishing final regulatory actions without a notice of proposed rulemaking.

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?