

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM

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<https://oversight.house.gov>

August 12, 2020

The Honorable Michael Rigas
Acting Director
Office of Personnel Management
1900 E Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20405

Dear Acting Director Rigas:

The Subcommittee is concerned about the apparent mishandling of the 2020 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey (FEVS) by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). For a second time this year, OPM has abruptly postponed the administration of the FEVS, providing conflicting and contradictory reasoning for the need to do so.

On March 31, 2020, OPM explained that it postponed the 2020 FEVS commencement to July 13, 2020 to support “critical agency missions as well as maximize employee participation in the survey.”¹ Given the essential and urgent role of federal workers in responding to this pandemic, we recognized the justification to delay the FEVS by two months from its planned start — noting the delay would improve the federal government’s ability to understand how the pandemic was affecting employee engagement.

On April 17, 2020, the Subcommittee sent a letter to OPM supporting its decision to delay the government-wide 2020 FEVS to July, citing that, “as Acting Director of OPM and therefore Acting Chair of the Chief Human Capital Officers Council (CHCOC), you have a unique opportunity to collect information on federal agency leadership and management practices during the coronavirus crisis.”²

On May 6, 2020, OPM briefed Subcommittee staff on its continued efforts to administer the survey starting in July and to include additional questions that would examine federal employees’ continued operations of government during the coronavirus pandemic. At this

¹ Memorandum from Michael J. Rigas, Acting Director, Office of Personnel Management, to Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies, 2020 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey Delay (Mar. 31, 2020) (online at www.chcoc.gov/content/2020-federal-employee-viewpoint-survey-delay).

² Letter from Chairman Gerald E. Connolly, Subcommittee on Government Operations, et al., to Acting Director Michael Rigas, Office of Personnel Management (Apr. 17, 2020) (online at oversight.house.gov/sites/democrats.oversight.house.gov/files/2020-04-17.GEC%20to%20Rigas-%20OPM%20re%202020%20FEVS%20FINAL.pdf).

meeting, OPM staff indicated that they were taking all necessary steps to ensure that the survey would be administered in July and that it would not be delayed again.

On July 9, 2020, one business day before the survey was scheduled to be released into the field, you sent a memorandum as Acting Director of OPM and ex officio Acting Chair of the Chief Human Capital Officers Council (CHCOC) indicating that the survey would be postponed, again, until September 14, 2020.³ But this time, you did not provide reasonable notice or evidence-based justification for the delay.

Federal agencies are required by law to conduct an annual survey to assess employee satisfaction and leadership and management practices that contribute to agency performance. OPM is a critical partner for these agencies to ensure they conduct these surveys and collect information in ways that allow the federal government to improve leadership and operations. In addition, OPM is required by law to specify standardized survey questions to allow comparison of leadership and engagement scores across agencies.⁴

It is concerning that OPM would, without reasonable warning or justification, delay the FEVS a second time.⁵ Views of federal employees should never be ignored, especially during a time of crisis, a sentiment OPM officials agreed with at their May 6 briefing with Subcommittee staff.

For these reasons, the Subcommittee requests by August 26, 2020:

1. All documents, emails, and other information referring or relating to the decisions to postpone the 2020 FEVS; and
2. A follow-up briefing on the recent postponement and steps OPM is taking to ensure that it will administer the 2020 FEVS beginning on September 14, 2020.

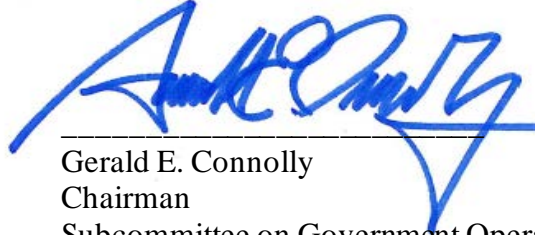
The Committee on Oversight and Reform is the principal oversight committee of the House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate “any matter” at “any time” under House Rule X. If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact Committee staff at (202) 225-5051.

³ Memorandum from Michael J. Rigas, Acting Director, Office of Personnel Management, to Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies, 2020 Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey Delay (July 9, 2020) (online at www.chcoc.gov/content/2020-federal-employee-viewpoint-survey-delay-0).

⁴ Pub. L. No. 108-136 (2004).

⁵ Office of Personnel Management, Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey, About Page (online at www.opm.gov/fevs/about/).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Gerald E. Connolly", is written over a horizontal line. The signature is stylized and cursive.

Gerald E. Connolly
Chairman
Subcommittee on Government Operations

Enclosure

cc: The Honorable Jody B. Hice, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Government Operations

Responding to Oversight Committee Document Requests

1. In complying with this request, produce all responsive documents that are in your possession, custody, or control, whether held by you or your past or present agents, employees, and representatives acting on your behalf. Produce all documents that you have a legal right to obtain, that you have a right to copy, or to which you have access, as well as documents that you have placed in the temporary possession, custody, or control of any third party.
2. Requested documents, and all documents reasonably related to the requested documents, should not be destroyed, altered, removed, transferred, or otherwise made inaccessible to the Committee.
3. In the event that any entity, organization, or individual denoted in this request is or has been known by any name other than that herein denoted, the request shall be read also to include that alternative identification.
4. The Committee's preference is to receive documents in electronic form (i.e., CD, memory stick, thumb drive, or secure file transfer) in lieu of paper productions.
5. Documents produced in electronic format should be organized, identified, and indexed electronically.
6. Electronic document productions should be prepared according to the following standards:
 - a. The production should consist of single page Tagged Image File ("TIF"), files accompanied by a Concordance-format load file, an Opticon reference file, and a file defining the fields and character lengths of the load file.
 - b. Document numbers in the load file should match document Bates numbers and TIF file names.
 - c. If the production is completed through a series of multiple partial productions, field names and file order in all load files should match.
 - d. All electronic documents produced to the Committee should include the following fields of metadata specific to each document, and no modifications should be made to the original metadata:

BEGDOC, ENDDOC, TEXT, BEGATTACH, ENDATTACH, PAGECOUNT, CUSTODIAN, RECORDTYPE, DATE, TIME, SENTDATE, SENTTIME, BEGINDATE, BEGINTIME, ENDDATE, ENDTIME, AUTHOR, FROM, CC, TO, BCC, SUBJECT, TITLE, FILENAME, FILEEXT, FILESIZE, DATECREATED, TIMECREATED, DATELASTMOD, TIMELASTMOD,

INTMSGID, INTMSGHEADER, NATIVELINK, INTFILPATH, EXCEPTION,
BEGATTACH.

7. Documents produced to the Committee should include an index describing the contents of the production. To the extent more than one CD, hard drive, memory stick, thumb drive, zip file, box, or folder is produced, each should contain an index describing its contents.
8. Documents produced in response to this request shall be produced together with copies of file labels, dividers, or identifying markers with which they were associated when the request was served.
9. When you produce documents, you should identify the paragraph(s) or request(s) in the Committee's letter to which the documents respond.
10. The fact that any other person or entity also possesses non-identical or identical copies of the same documents shall not be a basis to withhold any information.
11. The pendency of or potential for litigation shall not be a basis to withhold any information.
12. In accordance with 5 U.S.C. § 552(d), the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and any statutory exemptions to FOIA shall not be a basis for withholding any information.
13. Pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 552a(b)(9), the Privacy Act shall not be a basis for withholding information.
14. If compliance with the request cannot be made in full by the specified return date, compliance shall be made to the extent possible by that date. An explanation of why full compliance is not possible shall be provided along with any partial production.
15. In the event that a document is withheld on the basis of privilege, provide a privilege log containing the following information concerning any such document: (a) every privilege asserted; (b) the type of document; (c) the general subject matter; (d) the date, author, addressee, and any other recipient(s); (e) the relationship of the author and addressee to each other; and (f) the basis for the privilege(s) asserted.
16. If any document responsive to this request was, but no longer is, in your possession, custody, or control, identify the document (by date, author, subject, and recipients), and explain the circumstances under which the document ceased to be in your possession, custody, or control.
17. If a date or other descriptive detail set forth in this request referring to a document is inaccurate, but the actual date or other descriptive detail is known to you or is otherwise apparent from the context of the request, produce all documents that would be responsive as if the date or other descriptive detail were correct.

18. This request is continuing in nature and applies to any newly-discovered information. Any record, document, compilation of data, or information not produced because it has not been located or discovered by the return date shall be produced immediately upon subsequent location or discovery.
19. All documents shall be Bates-stamped sequentially and produced sequentially.
20. Two sets of each production shall be delivered, one set to the Majority Staff and one set to the Minority Staff. When documents are produced to the Committee, production sets shall be delivered to the Majority Staff in Room 2157 of the Rayburn House Office Building and the Minority Staff in Room 2105 of the Rayburn House Office Building.
21. Upon completion of the production, submit a written certification, signed by you or your counsel, stating that: (1) a diligent search has been completed of all documents in your possession, custody, or control that reasonably could contain responsive documents; and (2) all documents located during the search that are responsive have been produced to the Committee.

Definitions

1. The term “document” means any written, recorded, or graphic matter of any nature whatsoever, regardless of how recorded, and whether original or copy, including, but not limited to, the following: memoranda, reports, expense reports, books, manuals, instructions, financial reports, data, working papers, records, notes, letters, notices, confirmations, telegrams, receipts, appraisals, pamphlets, magazines, newspapers, prospectuses, communications, electronic mail (email), contracts, cables, notations of any type of conversation, telephone call, meeting or other inter-office or intra-office communication, bulletins, printed matter, computer printouts, teletypes, invoices, transcripts, diaries, analyses, returns, summaries, minutes, bills, accounts, estimates, projections, comparisons, messages, correspondence, press releases, circulars, financial statements, reviews, opinions, offers, studies and investigations, questionnaires and surveys, and work sheets (and all drafts, preliminary versions, alterations, modifications, revisions, changes, and amendments of any of the foregoing, as well as any attachments or appendices thereto), and graphic or oral records or representations of any kind (including without limitation, photographs, charts, graphs, microfiche, microfilm, videotape, recordings and motion pictures), and electronic, mechanical, and electric records or representations of any kind (including, without limitation, tapes, cassettes, disks, and recordings) and other written, printed, typed, or other graphic or recorded matter of any kind or nature, however produced or reproduced, and whether preserved in writing, film, tape, disk, videotape, or otherwise. A document bearing any notation not a part of the original text is to be considered a separate document. A draft or non-identical copy is a separate document within the meaning of this term.
2. The term “communication” means each manner or means of disclosure or exchange of information, regardless of means utilized, whether oral, electronic, by document or otherwise, and whether in a meeting, by telephone, facsimile, mail, releases, electronic

message including email (desktop or mobile device), text message, instant message, MMS or SMS message, message application, or otherwise.

3. The terms “and” and “or” shall be construed broadly and either conjunctively or disjunctively to bring within the scope of this request any information that might otherwise be construed to be outside its scope. The singular includes plural number, and vice versa. The masculine includes the feminine and neutral genders.
4. The term “including” shall be construed broadly to mean “including, but not limited to.”
5. The term “Company” means the named legal entity as well as any units, firms, partnerships, associations, corporations, limited liability companies, trusts, subsidiaries, affiliates, divisions, departments, branches, joint ventures, proprietorships, syndicates, or other legal, business or government entities over which the named legal entity exercises control or in which the named entity has any ownership whatsoever.
6. The term “identify,” when used in a question about individuals, means to provide the following information: (a) the individual’s complete name and title; (b) the individual’s business or personal address and phone number; and (c) any and all known aliases.
7. The term “related to” or “referring or relating to,” with respect to any given subject, means anything that constitutes, contains, embodies, reflects, identifies, states, refers to, deals with, or is pertinent to that subject in any manner whatsoever.
8. The term “employee” means any past or present agent, borrowed employee, casual employee, consultant, contractor, de facto employee, detailee, fellow, independent contractor, intern, joint adventurer, loaned employee, officer, part-time employee, permanent employee, provisional employee, special government employee, subcontractor, or any other type of service provider.
9. The term “individual” means all natural persons and all persons or entities acting on their behalf.