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Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

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2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

MAJORITY (202) 225-5074
FACSIMILE (202) 225-3974
MINORITY (202) 225-5051

<http://oversight.house.gov>

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October 22, 2013

The Honorable Darrell E. Issa
Chairman
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

We are in receipt of your letter yesterday to Steve VanRoekel, U.S. Chief Information Officer at the Office of Management and Budget, and Todd Park, U.S. Chief Technology Officer at the Office of Science and Technology Policy, regarding implementation of the online Federally Facilitated Health Insurance Exchange component of the Affordable Care Act website. We are writing to object to your letter's characterization of a meeting our staffs had on October 16, 2013, with CGI Federal Inc. (CGI), one of the major contractors working to implement this section of the website.

Your letter suggests that CGI officials told Committee staff that White House officials were directly responsible for making technical decisions about the website, that these decisions were made for political reasons, and that these decisions resulted in delays and other problems with the website. Your letter mischaracterizes the briefing we received and omits key information from CGI that directly contradicts your accusations. For example, your letter states:

CGI officials told Committee staff that CMS officials and employees constantly mentioned the "White House" when discussing matters with CGI. For example, CMS officials would routinely state: "this is what the White House wants." Moreover, CGI officials told Committee staff that the ability to shop for health insurance without registering for an account—a central design feature of the health insurance exchange—was removed "in late August or early September." Although, CGI officials were not able to identify who within the Administration made the decision to disable the anonymous shopping feature, evidence is mounting that political considerations motivated the decision.

In contrast, your letter omits a series of questions asked by Committee staff and answered by CGI officials that directly contradict your assertions. For example, in response to a question by Committee staff, CGI officials stated that they had no knowledge of any White House role in specific decisions relating to the website. CGI officials also stated that they had seen no

evidence of political considerations affecting operational decisions about the website. And when asked if they were aware of any political intervention by anyone at the White House, CGI officials answered, "No, sir."

Instead, CGI officials told Committee staff that they were well aware that effective implementation of the Affordable Care Act website is a top priority of the White House, and that CMS officials routinely stressed the importance of its proper functioning. Your letter appears to mix together news reports of questionable veracity with partial and incomplete descriptions of Committee briefings to create an unsubstantiated narrative that White House officials were making technical decisions based on political motivations.

Unfortunately, this has become an unfortunate pattern with this Committee. In the Committee's past investigations involving Operation Fast and Furious, the attacks in Benghazi, and the IRS review of applicants for tax-exempt status, your approach has been to leap directly to accusations against the White House and top Administration officials with no basis in fact.

Rather than attempting to politicize this issue by making unsubstantiated allegations, we urge you to work with us to ensure that the Affordable Care Act is implemented effectively and efficiently so millions of Americans can receive the affordable health insurance coverage to which they are entitled. We believe there are many significant technical questions and larger procurement matters that should be addressed through responsible oversight not only in this case, but across the federal government.

As your letter correctly pointed out, our Committee has been at the forefront of examining these types of questions under your leadership, as well as the leadership of former Committee Chairmen Henry Waxman and Tom Davis. As a result, no other Committee is better suited to develop concrete reform efforts to improve our IT acquisition and oversight systems, save taxpayers money, and deliver services more effectively. We hope you will work with us in a bipartisan manner to implement these goals.

Sincerely,



Elijah E. Cummings
Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight and
Government Reform



Gerald E. Connolly
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Government
Operations