

**GAO**

July 1995

**Federal Human  
Resource Management  
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 Human Resource Management issue area. This report contains assignments that were ongoing as of July 6, 1995, 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; or Timothy Bowling, Associate Director, on (202) 512-7680.

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## ***Federal Human Resource Management***

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### **REDESIGNING PAY & BENEFITS**

**TITLE: REVIEW OF THE ACCURACY OF FEDERAL JOB EVALUATION (966406)**

**TITLE: SURVEY OF U.S. CAPITOL POLICE PERSONNEL ADMINISTRATION (966632)**

**BACKGROUND :** Because the U.S. Capitol Police is a legislative branch entity, the various personnel laws governing the executive branch may not apply to its employees. As part of its work on issues pertaining to the application of personnel laws to the legislative branch, the requester has asked us to examine selected personnel functions of the Capitol Police.

**KEY QUESTIONS :** (1) What laws govern EEO, hiring and promotion, appraisal, and employee grievance policies at the Capitol Police? (2) To the extent that these laws are inapplicable, what equivalent policies, procedures, and regulations guide Capitol Police activities, and do these reflect commonly accepted personnel management principles?

**TITLE: FEDERAL RETIREMENT ISSUES (966633)**

**KEY QUESTIONS :** (1) How do retirement benefits afforded to Members of Congress and congressional staff compare with benefits available to other federal employees? (2) How do federal retirement programs compare with those of private companies and state governments?

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### **REDESIGNING PAY & BENEFITS**

**TITLE: SURVEY OF FEDERAL AGENCIES' USE OF RETENTION BONUSES (966637)**

**BACKGROUND :** The Federal Employees Pay Comparability Act of 1990 provided for pay retention bonuses to help retain valuable employees. The requester asked us to determine the extent to which such bonuses are being awarded and what criteria agencies use.

**KEY QUESTIONS :** Q1. What were the total number and total average dollar amounts of retention bonuses paid by major agencies during FYs 1991 thru 1994? Q2. How did agencies plan for using retention bonuses? Q3. How did agencies determine who would be offered retention bonuses? Q4. What were the grades and other characteristics of employees who received these bonuses?

**TITLE: COMPARISON OF FEDERAL EMPLOYEES' COMPENSATION ACT (FECA) PROVISIONS WITH THOSE OF SELECTED STATES (966638)**

**BACKGROUND :** The requesters asked for info on (1) Fed. Employees' Comp. Act (FECA) provisions compared to those of selected states, (2) FECA claimant profiles, & (3) lifetime benefits received by injured & noninjured workers, for use in considering what changes, if any, are needed in the fed. workers' comp. prog.

**KEY QUESTIONS :** 1. How do key Fed. Employees' Comp. Act (FECA) provisions compare with those of states? 2. What are the profiles of injured workers receiving FECA benefits? 3. How do comp. benefits of FECA beneficiaries at various ages & service yrs. compare to benefits (a) they would receive if transferred to the retirement rolls & (b) retiring noninjured workers would receive?

**TITLE: COMPARISON OF RETIREMENT BENEFITS FOR MEMBERS OF CONGRESS, CONGRESSIONAL STAFF AND OTHER EMPLOYEES (966650)**

**KEY QUESTIONS :** For CSRS and FERS, how do retirement benefit provisions vary for employee groups, including Members of Congress and congressional staff?

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### **REDESIGNING PAY & BENEFITS**

**TITLE: COSTS OF THE FEDERAL RETIREMENT SYSTEM (966651)**

**TITLE: CONGRESSIONAL RETIREMENT ISSUES (966652)**

**KEY QUESTIONS :** (1) How do retirement benefits available to Members and congressional staff compare with benefits available to other groups of employees under CSRS and FERS? (2) Why were preferential provisions adopted for Members and congressional staff? (3) What are options for achieving (a) consistency among Members, congressional staff and other groups and (b) cost savings?

**TITLE: EVALUATION OF MEDIA INFORMATION ON THE FEDERAL RETIREMENT SYSTEMS AND THE CONGRESSIONAL PROVISIONS (966654)**

**KEY QUESTIONS :** Were the Oct. 30, 1994, "60 Minutes" broadcast and the Oct. 1994 "Money magazine" article fair and accurate in their portrayal of the federal retirement systems?

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### **REDESIGNING PAY & BENEFITS**

**TITLE: REVIEW OF AN ESTIMATE OF THE EXCESS VALUE OF PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT (966659)**

**TITLE: OVERVIEW OF FEDERAL RETIREMENT PROGRAMS (966664)**

**KEY QUESTIONS :** For CSRS and FERS, what are their (1) histories, (2) retirement eligibility provisions, (3) benefit formulas, (4) cost-of-living adjustments, and (5) financing arrangements?

**TITLE: CURRENT AND FUTURE FUNDING OF TH CSRS AND FERS RETIREMENT PROGRAMS (966668)**

**KEY QUESTIONS :** (1) What are the financing arrangements for CSRS and FERS? (2) What impact do these arrangements have on the budget and the government's ability to pay retirement benefits? (3) Should the retirement systems be moved out of the unified federal budget?

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### **CAPITALIZING ON AMERICA'S DIVERSITY**

**TITLE: EFFECTIVENESS OF SELECTED AGENCIES' AFFIRMATIVE EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMS TO IMPROVE WOMEN AND MINORITY REPRESENTATION (966497)**

**BACKGROUND :** This job is one in a series that we have done on the federal affirmative employment program for the Sen. Comm. on Governmental Affairs. It will also address two other congressional requests dealing with alleged discriminatory practices at the Departments of the Interior and Agriculture.

**KEY QUESTIONS :** The objectives are to determine (1) the representation of women and minorities at selected agencies, (2) the agencies' compliance with EEOC affirmative employment planning requirements and (3) how well EEOC and OPM monitor the agencies' programs.

**TITLE: ALLEGED SEXUAL HARASSMENT AT THE NATIONAL INSTITUTES OF HEALTH (966595)**

**BACKGROUND :** Alleged sexual harassment and sex discrimination at NIH has recently drawn congressional interest, as well as the attention of the media. These allegations, if true, violate the principle that all federal employees are entitled to a workplace environment free from the effects of sexual harassment and sex discrimination.

**KEY QUESTIONS :** (1) What is the best estimate of the extent and nature of sexual harassment and sex discrimination within NIH? (2) What is the cost to taxpayers associated with prosecuting and defending those accused of sexual harassment or sex discrimination within NIH?

**TITLE: REPRESENTATION OF HISPANIC EMPLOYEES IN THE FEDERAL WORKFORCE (966623)**

**BACKGROUND :** GAO, OPM, and MSPB reported in 1993 that Hispanic employees were not fully represented in the federal workforce. Although the Hispanic Employment Program has operated since 1970, the requestor is concerned that Hispanic employees have not achieved full representation in the federal workforce.

**KEY QUESTIONS :** (1) Where are Hispanic employees under represented and fully represented in the federal workforce? (2) What impediments, if any, preclude Hispanic workers from achieving full representation? (3) What lessons can be learned from public and private sector efforts that have been successful in hiring and retaining Hispanic and other minority employees?

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### **CAPITALIZING ON AMERICA'S DIVERSITY**

**TITLE: STATUS OF AFRICAN-AMERICAN EMPLOYEES AT THE SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION (966631)**

**BACKGROUND :** GAO did a previous study looking at the Social Security Administration's (SSA) development of affirmative action plans for fiscal years 1983 to 1985. We concluded in that study that African Americans were underrepresented at SSA. The requester wants us to determine what progress African-American employees have made in employment and promotions at SSA since 1985.

**KEY QUESTIONS :** (1) What is the current employment status of African-Americans at SSA? (2) What progress has been made since 1985? (3) Do the SSA EEO program and discrimination complaint process comply with EEOC's requirements? (4) Have SSA's personnel transactions had a disparate impact on African-American personnel?

**TITLE: SSA FY 1994 PROMOTIONS TO GS 12-15 (966665)**

**KEY QUESTIONS :** Are there inconsistencies in the population of male employees at the GS 11-15 levels and the promotion rates of males to the next higher grade level?

### **REINVENTING THE PUBLIC SERVICE**

**TITLE: CONTRACTORS' CONFLICT OF INTEREST (966588)**

**BACKGROUND :** The requestor wants GAO to survey what federal agencies are doing to avoid potential conflicts of interest by their advisory and assistance services contractors. The requestor also asked GAO to determine if sufficient information exists to determine where potential conflicts exist.

**KEY QUESTIONS :** (1) What are agencies doing to avoid potential conflicts of interest with advisory and assistance services contractors? (2) Do sources of information exist that will disclose conflicts of interest and is information provided to agencies & the public? (3) To what extent do agency Inspectors General evaluate the potential for conflict of interest?

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## *Federal Human Resource Management*

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### REINVENTING THE PUBLIC SERVICE

**TITLE: REVIEW OF THE PRESIDENTIAL APPOINTMENT PROCESS (966621)**

**BACKGROUND :** The process of appointing key federal executives is lengthy and difficult. In 1993, candidates were nominated for only 65 percent of the top jobs, while only 75 percent of those nominated were confirmed. Such delays result in acting officials, who do not have full authority or standing to carry out policy goals. Programs can be disrupted and accountability hindered.

**KEY QUESTIONS :** (1) What lessons have past administrations learned that might form the basis for future improvements? (2) Why haven't key recommendations from existing studies on improving the process been implemented? (3) What are the major steps in the appointment process and how much time does it take for each of the steps? (4) How can the appointment process be improved?

**TITLE: REVIEW OF OPM DELEGATION AND DECENTRALIZATION OF PERSONNEL ACTIVITIES (966625)**

**BACKGROUND :** The National Performance Review (NPR) calls for OPM to forward legislation turning over recruiting, examining, and other personnel processes to agencies. Historically, portions of these processes have been delegated to agencies, but abuses have resulted and OPM has resumed responsibility. Currently, OPM's expected oversight role is unclear.

**KEY QUESTIONS :** (1) Do agencies believe they have the capacity to accept the additional responsibility envisioned by the NPR, and do they welcome this responsibility? (2) How will OPM and agency oversight be accomplished, and what measurements (e.g., goals and outcomes) will be used to ensure accountability?

**TITLE: FEDERAL DOWNSIZING (966646)**

**BACKGROUND :** In our September 1994 testimony, we reported on the results to date of the fiscal year 1994 buyouts at non-defense agencies. Because of continuing congressional interest in reducing the size of the federal workforce, we will examine agencies' downsizing efforts and the management of workforce reductions.

**KEY QUESTIONS :** 1. Which agencies have lost/gained staff, and why? How will Natl. Performance Review II affect agency gains and losses? 2. What savings might result from downsizing? 3. Are agencies backfilling vacancies with contractors? 4. Are agencies complying with applicable laws and policies on downsizing? 5. What help exists for displaced workers?

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### **REINVENTING THE PUBLIC SERVICE**

**TITLE: TRANSITION PLANS FOR PRIVATIZING OPM INVESTIGATIONS (966647)**

**BACKGROUND :** Under the Natl Perf Review, OMB asked OPM to find ways to privatize Off of Fed Investigations' (OFI) activities. OMB said privatizing OFI will give agencies more flexibility to meet their needs & save \$30 m. The proposed approach would turn OFI into an Employee Stock Ownership Plan. Concerns have been raised that OPM may have decided to privatize without adequate analysis.

**KEY QUESTIONS :** (1) Do OPM's plans address key aspects of restructuring and transitioning OFI's workload to agencies? (2) What functions does OPM plan for the proposed Employee Stock Ownership Plan? (3) Do OPM's plans include an appropriate cost-benefit analysis? (4) What are OPM's plans for paying OFI's shut-down costs? (5) Do agencies' plans address key aspects of doing investigations?

**TITLE: FEDERAL DOWNSIZING: THE ADMINISTRATION'S MANAGEMENT OF WORKFORCE REDUCTIONS (966655)**

**KEY QUESTIONS :** How are positions counted, who tracks eliminated positions, and what is the baseline? Where have reductions occurred, who determines targets for the individual agencies, and on what basis are the targets determined? Are agencies being given any guidance on how to achieve reductions? Will RIFs be necessary to achieve target reductions?

**TITLE: FEDERAL DOWNSIZING: THE PRESIDENT'S FISCAL YEAR 1996 BUDGET AND ITS COMPLIANCE WITH THE FEDERAL WORKFORCE RESTRUCTURING ACT OF 1994 (966656)**

**KEY QUESTIONS :** Did the Administration meet FY 94 full-time equivalents (FTE) targets, & is it likely to meet them in FY 95? Does the Administration's reporting system provide an accurate tally of FTEs? Can the proposed reductions be achieved solely through attrition & early-outs? What are the savings associated with workforce reductions? Have agencies complied with sec 5(f) of the Act?

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### **REINVENTING THE PUBLIC SERVICE**

**TITLE: COMPLIANCE WITH FTE TARGETS 1994-1996 (966661)**

**BACKGROUND :** The requester asked GAO to provide information on the progress of federal downsizing efforts in meeting the goals of the Workforce Restructuring Act of 1994.

**KEY QUESTIONS :** Do the workforce levels in the President's fiscal year 1996 budget comply with the Full Time Equivalent (FTE) ceiling mandated by the Workforce Restructuring Act of 1994?

### **BUILDING THE WORK FORCE OF THE FUTURE**

**TITLE: BEST HRM PRINCIPLES: LESSONS LEARNED FROM LEADING ORGANIZATIONS (966634)**

**BACKGROUND :** The capacity of the federal government to effectively manage its human resources is a critical component in meeting the public's performance expectations. Reforms to civil service may have major impacts on how the government attracts, retains, develops and motivates its future workforce.

**KEY QUESTIONS :** (1) What human resource management (HRM) principles do leading private and public sector organizations follow? (2) What strategies do they use to implement the principles? (3) What lessons can be learned from leading organizations about changing HRM? (4) What changes are needed to civil service laws to facilitate these changes in the federal government?

**TITLE: NECESSITY FOR PHS' AND NOAA'S UNIFORMED COMMISSIONED CORPS (966636)**

**BACKGROUND :** The requesters have asked us to assess the rationale for maintaining the Public Health Service and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration commissioned corps with military pay and benefits and to determine whether the retirement programs for corps members should be funded like other federal retirement systems.

**KEY QUESTIONS :** (1) Why were the commissioned corps established? (2) Are these reasons still viable? (3) What are the precedents for eliminating such organizations? (4) What is the federal budgetary obligation to the 7,500-member Public Health Srvc. & Nat'l. Oceanic & Atmospheric Admin. commissioned corps inactive reserves? (5) Why are corps members' retirement benefits not prefunded?

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### **OTHER ISSUE AREA WORK**

**TITLE: REVIEW OF MSPB APPELLATE PROCESS AND WORKPLACE ENVIRONMENT ISSUES (966605)**

**BACKGROUND :** The Merit Systems Protection Board plays a critical role in protecting the federal merit employment system by hearing appeals from employees in cases of adverse personnel actions. To ensure that the appeals process is run effectively and the Board's own personnel practices are fair, the requesters have asked for the first major review of the Board by GAO since 1987.

**KEY QUESTIONS :** (1) Is the Board accomplishing its mission through the appeals process? (2) What accountability mechanisms are in place to provide Board employees the merit system protections that the Board was created to uphold? (3) Has the Board been successful in fostering an environment based on trust, respect, and fairness in its work place?

**TITLE: CONVERSIONS AND NONCOMPETITIVE APPOINTMENTS TO CAREER POSITIONS IN THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH (966641)**

**BACKGROUND :** During 1994, many staffers of retired or defeated Members of Congress may be seeking career appointments in the executive branch. Also, Schedule C and noncareer SES appointees may be looking for career positions. GAO has been asked to monitor and periodically report on these appointments, as well as to review agency adherence to merit system principles.

**KEY QUESTIONS :** During 1994 and 1995 for career positions at the GS/GM-9 level and above: (1)How many conversions of Schedule C/noncareer SES appointees to career positions occurred? (2)How many competitive and noncompetitive (Ramspeck) appointments of legislative employees to career and noncareer positions occurred? (3)Did these conversions and appointments adhere to merit principles?

**TITLE: REVIEW OF CONVERSIONS AND NONCOMPETITIVE RAMSPECK ACT APPOINTMENTS DURING THE PAST TEN YEARS (966643)**

**BACKGROUND :** The requester has asked us to analyze ten years of Ramspeck Act appointments and conversions of political appointees to career positions. They have stated that they believe the data will provide needed perspective on the anticipated debate over "burrowing-in".

**KEY QUESTIONS :** (1) How many congressional staffers have secured career appointments in the executive branch using the Ramspeck Act over the past ten years? (2) How many former political appointees were converted to career appointments in the past 10 years? (3) For both Ramspeck appointments and conversions, what is the employee's new position, job series and grade?

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### **OTHER ISSUE AREA WORK**

**TITLE: VETERANS' PREFERENCE INQUIRY (966658)**

**KEY QUESTIONS :** (1) The constituent was not hired for a federal position. Is he entitled to an explanation under the provisions of 5 USC 3318? (2) Do reinstatement eligible veterans have preference over other new hires? (3) Must applicants for federal positions be interviewed?

**TITLE: REVIEW OF SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS OF RAMSPECK ACT AND OTHER APPOINTMENTS OF FORMER CONGRESSIONAL EMPLOYEES (966663)**

**KEY QUESTIONS :** (1) How many Ramspeck Act appointments have been made recently and how many agencies have made these appointments? (2) What are the grades, job series, position titles, and locations of these Ramspeck appointees? (3) What other types of appointments were used to appoint former congressional employees? (4) What are the long-term trends in Ramspeck appointments?

**TITLE: REVIEW OF CONVERSIONS AND NONCOMPETITIVE APPOINTMENTS TO CAREER POSITIONS IN THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH (966667)**

**BACKGROUND :** Many former congressional employees who lost jobs when their employers were defeated or retired last year have been receiving career appointments in the executive branch. Also, political appointees working in executive agencies are being converted to career positions. GAO has been asked to monitor and report on the numbers and types of these appointments through 1995.

**KEY QUESTIONS :** For CY 1994 and 1995: (1) How many former congressional employees were appointed by executive branch agencies and what hiring authorities were used? (2) How many former political appointees were converted to career positions? (3) How many former White House staff were appointed into the career service under the White House service appointment authority?

