



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-0523

December 8, 2021

The Honorable Shalanda Young
Acting Director
Office of Management and Budget
725 17th Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20503

The Honorable Kiran Ahuja
Director
Office of Personnel Management
1900 E Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20415

The Honorable Robin Carnahan
Administrator
U.S. General Services Administration
1800 F Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20405

Dear Acting Director Young, Director Ahuja, and Administrator Carnahan:

I write to you to continue to express my serious concerns regarding in-person staffing levels at Federal offices. The Biden Administration's "maximum telework" edict is not working for the American people, many of whom are struggling to secure in-person services from their Federal government. Seniors seeking assistance from the Social Security Administration, families looking for passport assistance from the State Department, and many others have paid their taxes, but they've paid for services not rendered.

According to a White House [memo](#) issued on November 24, 2021, 92% of Federal employees have received at least one COVID-19 vaccination dose. In its announcement, the White House stated that increased vaccination rates would lead to a "safer, more productive, and efficient workforce." The efficiency of a Federal agency must be directly measured by its ability to serve our citizens, and recent data proves that many agencies are failing to do so.

Pursuant to data¹ released on December 4, 2021 by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), there are currently 256,369 backlogged veteran benefits claims still awaiting VA review, due largely to the suspension of in-person benefits examinations. A National Taxpayer Advocate Service report² to Congress on the 2021 filing season reveals that Internal Revenue Service (IRS) employees have answered incoming calls, on average, only 14 percent of the time over the course of this past year. Americans' trust in the Federal government is historically low, and it is no mystery as to why.

And yet, as Americans continue to struggle to access the in-person services and benefits they are entitled to, the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) remains focused on "telework"

¹ https://www.benefits.va.gov/reports/detailed_claims_data.asp

² https://www.taxpayeradvocate.irs.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/JRC22_SAO_ReviewFiling.pdf

as a solution to the very problems that it has created for many Americans – releasing a 79-page [memo](#) last month that calls for a reevaluation of telework in the Federal workforce and claims that “agencies demonstrated that they have been able to carry out their missions effectively” throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. This could not be further from the truth for millions of Americans who are still awaiting their VA benefits, 2020 tax returns, or other critical services.

Instead of focusing on how the Federal workforce can better function in the future, it is critical that your agencies focus on the issues at hand now. I am concerned about the impact that the continued closure of Federal offices throughout the country is having on Americans, particularly our most vulnerable citizens, who rely on in-person services. The inability for the American people we all serve to receive timely and complete service from the Federal government is unacceptable.

Therefore, I am requesting responses to the below questions regarding telework for Federal employees, as well as plans to bring vaccinated Federal employees back to the office, by no later than Wednesday, December 15, 2021:

- Given the high vaccination level of the Federal workforce, why does the Current Operating Status of the Federal government – [per](#) OPM guidance – remain at “maximum telework,” as it has been since March 2020?
- Of the approximately 2.1 million Federal civilian workers, how many are currently teleworking?
- Does the Safer Federal Workforce Task Force plan to make public the “reentry” plans that it required all Federal agencies to submit by July 19, 2021 (per Memorandum M-21-25)?
- Does the Safer Federal Workforce Task Force plan to enforce agency “reentry” plans?
- How have Federal agencies been monitoring the efficacy and productivity of Federal employees who are teleworking?

Millions of Americans across the country are completing jobs that require a return to in-person work. Federal offices that are unable to perform their duties remotely in service of our neighbors should be no different. Since the start of the pandemic, many Americans have had to make sacrifices – including having even more patience when dealing with the Federal bureaucracy. As most of the country emerges from pandemic-related disruptions, it is simply no longer acceptable for our citizens to tolerate subpar service while this Administration insists that the Federal civilian workforce work from home without clear justification.

Timely answers to these questions will be important in returning the level of service that Americans deserve from their government.

Sincerely,



KEVIN McCARTHY
House Republican Leader