

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

MAJORITY (202) 225-5051
MINORITY (202) 225-5074
<https://oversight.house.gov>

March 30, 2022

The Honorable Kiran Ahuja
Director
U.S. Office of Personnel Management
1900 E Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20415

The Honorable Robin Carnahan
Administrator
U.S. General Services Administration
1800 F Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006

Dear Director Ahuja and Administrator Carnahan:

We are continuing our oversight of the Biden Administration's return-to-work policies for the federal workforce.¹ In his March 1, 2022 State of the Union Address, President Biden declared, "It's time for America to get back to work[.] People working from home can feel safe again and begin to return to their offices."² He committed the federal government to lead in the effort, stating "We're doing that here in the federal government. The vast majority of federal workers will once again work in person."³ However, these pronouncements are not reflected in the number of employees working on premises at the departments and agencies. Therefore, we request documents and information about the Administration's current plans to have the federal workforce return to the workplace as well as information related to capacity and usage of the federal real property portfolio.

It is long overdue for the federal workforce to return to work at their duty stations. We have repeatedly urged the Administration to bring federal employees back as soon as possible.⁴ Every day Americans wait for that return is another day they suffer underperforming, inefficient

¹ See, e.g., Letter from Subcommittee on Government Operations Ranking Member Jody Hice to Acting General Services Administration Director Kathleen McGettigan (May 18, 2021) ("May 2021 Hice Letter"), online at [Hice-Letter-to-OPM-Return-to-Workplace.pdf \(house.gov\)](#).

² Remarks by President Biden in State of the Union Address at 16 (Mar. 1, 2022), online at [Remarks by President Biden in State of the Union Address | The White House](#).

³ *Id.*

⁴ See, e.g., Press Release, *Comer & Hice: Biden Administration Puts Feds and Unions First, Americans Last* (June 14, 2021), online at [Comer & Hice: Biden Administration Puts Feds and Unions First, Americans Last - United States House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform](#); Press Release, *Hice: Federal Workforce's Failure to Return to the Workplace Impairs Service to Americans and Jeopardizes National Security* (Dec. 1, 2021), online at [Hice: Federal Workforce's Failure to Return to the Workplace Impairs Service to Americans and Jeopardizes National Security - United States House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform](#); May 2021 Hice Letter.

services from federal workers not at their offices.⁵ It is also another day taxpayer funds are wasted on unoccupied federal office space. The high cost of excess federal real property holdings has been a long-standing problem.⁶ It can only have been exacerbated by the broad under-utilization of federal real property during the pandemic expansion of telework and remote work. It must be brought under control—not worsened by further delay in returning federal employees to in-person work.

According to OPM’s website, however, the federal government is “[t]ransitioning to a hybrid work environment.”⁷ This means “[f]ederal agencies are beginning the transition to a . . . workplace that incorporates a mix of employees who are working in the office and those who are working from other locations.”⁸ OPM’s 2021 “Guide to Telework and Remote Work in the Federal Government” points in the same direction. It emphasizes “[a]gencies now have an opportunity to revisit how they were operating prior to the pandemic and leverage lessons learned during the pandemic to integrate telework and remote work into their strategic workforce plans.”⁹ OPM also clearly promoted a permanent expansion of telework and remote work: “As we look to the future, OPM is encouraging agencies to strategically leverage workplace flexibilities such as telework, remote work, and alternative/flexible work schedules[.]”¹⁰

None of that sounds like what President Biden described. Are the vast majority of federal workers returning to their offices or are they not? If not, does the federal government need to maintain all the real property in its portfolio? To help inform the Committee’s ongoing oversight of these issues, we request that you produce the following documents and information no later than April 13, 2022:

1. The date by which OPM expects the federal government to have achieved the return of “the vast majority of federal workers to work in person” at their official worksites;
2. All documents and communications referring or relating to agency plans to return “the vast majority of federal workers to work in person” at their official worksites;

⁵ See, e.g., Lisa Rein, *Federal Agencies Are Still Dealing with Pandemic Backlogs. A Shutdown Could Make Delays Worse*, WASHINGTON POST (Sept. 29, 2021) (describing substantial services delays at the Internal Revenue Service, State Department and Social Security Administration).

⁶ See, e.g., U.S. Government Accountability Office, *Testimony before the Subcommittee on Government Operations, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, House of Representatives – FEDERAL REAL PROPERTY: Excess and Underutilized Property Is an Ongoing Challenge* (April 25, 2013) (testimony of David Wise, Dir., Physical Infrastructure), online at [GAO-13-573T, FEDERAL REAL PROPERTY: Excess and Underutilized Property Is an Ongoing Challenge](#).

⁷ OPM.gov, *Re-Entry Toolkit*, online at [Re-Entry Toolkit | OPM.gov](#).

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ U.S. Office of Personnel Management, *2021 Guide to Telework and Remote Work in the Federal Government: Leveraging Telework and Remote Work in the Federal Government to Better Meet Our Human Capital Needs and Improve Mission Delivery* at 1 (November 2021), online at [2021 Guide to Telework and Remote Work in the Federal Government](#).

¹⁰ *Id.*

Director Ahuja, Administrator Carnahan

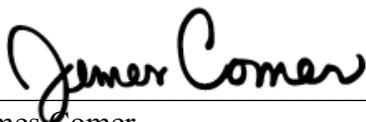
March 30, 2022

Page 3

3. All documents and communications referring or relating to either OPM or agency plans to transition instead to hybrid work environments (*i.e.*, to materially expand future levels of telework and remote work beyond pre-pandemic levels).
4. A list of all federal real property holdings administered by the General Services Administration with office space being used at less than full capacity;
5. A listing of the monthly costs to the federal government of owning, leasing and maintaining unused federal office space in those properties, listed property by property, agency by agency, and in total.

The Committee on Oversight and Reform has primary legislative jurisdiction over the “[f]ederal civil service,” “[g]overnment management and accounting measures, generally,” and the “[o]verall economy, efficiency, and management of government operations and activities” pursuant to House Rule X. Additionally, the Committee is the principal oversight committee of the U.S. House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate “any matter” at “any time” under House Rule X. Thank you in advance for your cooperation with this inquiry.

Sincerely,



James Comer
Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight and Reform



Jody Hice
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on
Government Operations

cc: The Honorable Carolyn Maloney, Chairwoman
Committee on Oversight and Reform

The Honorable Gerald E. Connolly, Chairman
Subcommittee on Government Operations