



June 25, 2015

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

The undersigned organizations of the Federal-Postal Coalition, which collectively represent five million federal and postal workers, retirees and their survivors, write to express our deep concern over the failure of the federal government to adequately protect its personnel computer systems and the devastating impact recent breaches of these systems may have on tens of millions of Americans, including the federal workforce.

Along with all Americans, we are profoundly disturbed by the acknowledgment by government officials that state or non-state actors have stolen massive numbers of personnel records maintained by the Office of Personnel Management (OPM), including highly personal and sensitive security clearance data of millions of current and former employees, and even applicants for federal employment. These breaches could give our enemies the means to attempt to corrupt or blackmail government employees to spy or compromise military and intelligence secrets, and even to attempt to recruit Americans to join or assist terrorist organizations. Moreover, they could lead to the possibility that particular public servants – including intelligence, diplomacy and development, law enforcement, prosecutorial, and defense civilian personnel – could become vulnerable to grave risks that threaten their personal security and that of their families and loved ones.

Government employees reasonably expect their employer to faithfully protect the sensitive information they are required to disclose as a condition of their employment. But the long history of systemic failure by OPM and other agencies to properly manage their information technology infrastructure (IT) has undermined that expectation. Despite the explicit warnings by inspectors general since 1997 to OPM to take all necessary steps to guard its aged and newer computer systems, the agency has acted or failed to act in ways that have permitted the theft of massive amounts of personally identifiable information. As recently as last week, the Inspector General of OPM issued a flash audit of OPM's plans to improve its data security and found them to have a "very high risk of project failure."

The responsibility to correct what has transpired and to put the nation on a new course rests with you as the Chief Executive. This involves greater communication with federal workers and retirees, the organizations that represent them, and others impacted; heightened accountability; and the application of more aggressive safeguards to protect federal IT systems, including workforce databases.

To date, federal leaders have shared woefully insufficient information with the federal workforce, retirees and the American people about the breaches that have occurred, the extent of information revealed and what measures are being taken to prevent further harm. More meaningful and timely communication with those affected is critical. In addition, the financial credit reporting measures OPM has offered to those whose information has been compromised are woefully inadequate. We urge you to mandate immediate measures that inform federal employees, former employees and others whether their personal information has been disclosed through the breach of federal personnel and security clearance systems, and provide them with long-term credit protection measures.

The challenge of overhauling the legacy and current federal personnel systems to assure their protection also requires intensive effort. As you did with Healthcare.gov, we call upon you to immediately appoint a task force of leading agency, defense/intelligence, and private-sector IT experts, with a short deadline, to assist in the ongoing investigation, apply more forceful measures to protect federal personnel IT systems, and assure adequate notice to the federal workforce and the American public. The task force should be responsible for rebuilding the government's personnel databases to ensure their protection and functionality to the greatest extent possible. The gravity of the situation necessitates the full attention of the Administration and the leadership involvement of your top technology officials.

We also call upon you to request supplementary appropriations to ensure that these aims are fulfilled as quickly as possible. Time is not on our side; we do not have years to wait for OPM to complete this task on its own.

Our nation will remain strong because its people and its government are resolute in their commitment to the preservation of its security. We cannot allow the government's IT practices of the past to continue. The recent breaches are a wake-up call to this country and its leaders about the dangers of cyberterrorism and the critical need to protect our government's core functions. We ask you to apply the highest priority to these concerns in continuing to keep our country safe.

Thank you for your time and consideration of our views. Questions related to this communication should be directed to Alan Lopatin, Chairman of the Federal-Postal Coalition, at 202-487-4800 or Alan@ledgecounsel.com.

Sincerely,

American Federation of Government Employees
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees
American Foreign Service Association
FAA Managers Association
Federal Managers Association
Federally Employed Women

International Association of Fire Fighters
Laborers' International Union of North America
National Active and Retired Federal Employees Association
National Air Traffic Controllers Association
National Association of Assistant United States Attorneys
National Association of Government Employees
National Association of Letter Carriers
National Association of Postal Supervisors
National Association of Postmasters of the United States
National Council of Social Security Management Associations
National Federation of Federal Employees
National League of Postmasters
National Postal Mail Handlers Union
National Rural Letter Carriers' Association
National Treasury Employees Union
National Weather Service Employees Organization
Organization of Professional Employees at the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture
Patent Office Professional Association
Professional Aviation Safety Specialists
Professional Managers Association
Senior Executives Association