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ONE HUNDRED TENTH CONGRESS

**U.S. House of Representatives**  
**Committee on Energy and Commerce**  
**Washington, DC 20515-6115**

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June 24, 2007

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The Honorable David M. Walker  
Comptroller General  
U.S. Government Accountability Office  
441 G Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Comptroller General Walker:

A federally-funded research and development center (FFRDC) is an organization sponsored by a Federal agency to meet some special research, development, or other need that otherwise could not be met as effectively by existing government or private resources. Sponsoring agencies contract with universities, other nonprofits, or private companies for the operation and administration of their FFRDCs. A number of agencies make extensive use of FFRDCs to obtain the advice and assistance they need to carry out their important missions. This Committee is seeking the assistance of the Government Accountability Office (GAO) in pursuing a number of issues related to the creation and use of FFRDCs by the government.

Specifically, we request basic information on the number of FFRDCs currently in existence, the dates when they were created, the agencies who sponsored them, the number of employees they have, and the nature and dollar value of their current portfolio of work. In addition, there are a series of issues that the Committee believes warrant further study by GAO. Although this is not an exhaustive list, these issues include:

1. What are the limits on the work that FFRDCs may do for entities or agencies other than their sponsoring agencies?
2. To what extent are FFRDCs engaged in performing work that is inherently governmental in nature?
3. To what extent are contracts awarded to FFRDCs on a noncompetitive basis?

4. Are there indications that agencies are using FFRDCs to circumvent restrictions on the use of personal services contracts?
5. Are agencies using FFRDCs to park funds that otherwise might expire?
6. What was the justification for the recent creation of two FFRDCs by the Department of Homeland Security, and to what extent are these entities engaged in activities currently performed by FFRDCs sponsored by other agencies or by the Department of Energy's national laboratories?

The Committee appreciates your attention to this important issue, and requests that you coordinate your efforts and questions through John Sopko, Majority Committee staff, at (202) 226-2424, or Alan Slobodin, Minority Committee staff, at (202) 225-3641.

Sincerely,



John D. Dingell  
Chairman



Joe Barton  
Ranking Member



Bart Stupak  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations



Ed Whitfield  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations