

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

January 31, 2005

The Honorable David M. Walker
Comptroller General of the United States
Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, NW
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Comptroller Walker:

We are writing to request that you investigate several recent actions taken by the Office of Special Counsel (OSC) and Special Counsel Scott Bloch. These actions, which involve the possible violation of civil service laws and the possible misuse of federal funds, include the following:

- Requiring 12 senior DC-based employees to transfer to field offices around the country or else lose their jobs;
- Opening a field office in Detroit, even though the OSC does not appear to have a significant caseload in that region;
- Apparently using no-bid management consultant contracts; and
- Apparently signing a contract with Mr. Alan Hicks, a former boarding school headmaster, for unspecified services.

Efforts to learn more about the rationale for these actions have thus far been unsuccessful. On January 26, 2005, Reps. Waxman and Danny Davis sent a series of detailed questions to Mr. Bloch about the involuntary transfer of the 12 employees, the decision to open a Detroit field office, and the use of no-bid contracts. (A copy of the letter is attached.) Mr. Bloch responded that same day but did not address their specific questions and refused to delay the personnel moves.

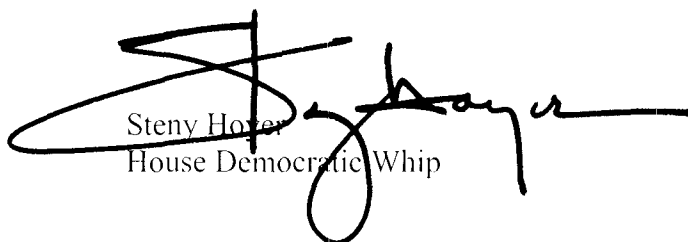
A nonprofit group, Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility, also has been unable to obtain information about Mr. Bloch's actions through the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). OSC has responded that it lacks the staff to respond to the FOIA request until at least July 2005. This assertion is curious since OSC has decided that 20% of its DC staff is free to be relocated to other offices throughout the nation.


As you are aware, the OSC is charged with overseeing the administration of FOIA throughout the federal government, ensuring that other federal agencies comply with civil service regulations, and providing legal protections to whistleblowers. A GAO investigation is necessary to determine whether OSC has violated any of these civil service laws or misspent federal funds.


Thank you for your prompt attention to this request.


Sincerely,


Eliot L. Engel
Member of Congress


Steny Hoyer
House Democratic Whip


Henry A. Waxman
Ranking Member
Committee on Government Reform


Danny K. Davis
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Civil Service
& Agency Organization


Edolphus Towns
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Government
Efficiency & Financial Management


Barney Frank
Ranking Member
Committee on Financial Services