

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 21, 2014

VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION

The Honorable Steve Linick
Inspector General
2201 C Street, N.W Address 2
Suite 8100, SA-3
Washington, D.C. 20522-0308

Dear Inspector General Linick:

A recent Government Accountability Office (GAO) report raises serious concerns about the use of administrative leave among 24 federal agencies from fiscal years 2011 to 2013.¹ During this period, agencies spent \$31 million on salaries of employees who were placed on administrative leave for more than one year and more than \$700 million on employees on leave for a month or more.²

In this report, GAO notes that the Department of State, unlike all other governmental agencies examined by GAO, does not report paid administrative leave to the Office of Personnel Management (OPM). Instead, the Department aggregates paid administrative leave with its regular work hours, thereby skewing its personnel data.³ This method conceals from OPM and the public the number of employees the Department may have on administrative leave and the associated costs. It is clear from press accounts such as the Department's response to Benghazi that the State Department places employees on paid administrative leave. For example, the Washington Post reported in August 2013 that four Department officials, including three diplomatic security officers and the former deputy assistant secretary for Near East affairs, were placed on paid administrative leave until internal investigation of the Benghazi attacks were completed.⁴

¹ GAO, *Use of Paid Administrative Leave*, GAO-15-79 (Washington D.C : October 2014)

² *Id*

³ *Id*

⁴ DeYoung, Karen. "State Dept. officials placed on leave after Benghazi attack are reinstated." *Washington Post* 20 August, 2013. Web. 16 Oct. 2014. http://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/state-dept-officials-placed-on-leave-after-benghazi-attacks-are-reinstated/2013/08/20/fb107928-09af-11e3-8974-f97ab3b3c677_story.html

In order to better understand the Department's administrative leave policy and potential violations of that of that policy, please examine and report on the following questions:

1. Why does the State Department aggregate its paid administrative leave with regular work hours, unlike other federal agencies?
2. What is the State Department's policy on paid administrative leave? If no policy exists, please explain how the agency grants administrative leave, and what controls, if any, are in place to prevent it from being used for extended periods of time. If there are no such safeguards, please explain why not.
3. For each fiscal year (2011 thru 2014), please obtain and report on statistical information regarding the total number of employees on paid administrative leave for:
 - a. One month to three months
 - b. Three months to six months
 - c. Six months to nine months
 - d. Nine months to a year
 - e. 1 to 1.5 years
 - f. 1.5 to 2 years
 - g. 2 to 2.5 years
 - h. 2.5 to 3 years
 - i. Beyond 3 years

Do not include an employee in more than one category. For each category, what is the total cost to the agency in salaries and benefits for those employees' paid administrative leave?

4. For each employee on paid administrative leave for one year or more, please provide a detailed narrative of the circumstances surrounding the extended paid leave, including:
 - j. Position title and GS level.
 - k. Employee division/office/component.
 - l. Total compensation received while on administrative leave.
 - m. Reason for being placed on administrative leave.
 - n. Exact length of time on administrative leave.
 - o. Current status of the employee (i.e. reassigned, demoted, terminated, still on administrative leave, etc.)
 - p. A full explanation of why reassignment to other duties or another location was not an appropriate alternative to paid leave.
 - q. A full explanation of why the employee was not placed on some form of unpaid leave.

Thank you in advance for your prompt attention to this matter. Should you have any questions regarding this matter, please do not hesitate to contact Chris Lucas of my staff at (202) 224-5225.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Chuck Grassley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Charles E. Grassley
Ranking Member
Committee on the Judiciary