



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS  
ASSISTANT SECRETARY FOR HUMAN RESOURCES AND ADMINISTRATION  
WASHINGTON DC 20420

February 19, 2015

The Honorable Charles E. Grassley  
Chairman  
Committee on the Judiciary  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Grassley:

This response is to your October 21, 2014 inquiry regarding the Government Accountability Office (GAO) report on the use of paid administrative leave among 24 federal agencies. We regret the delay in our response. We wanted to ensure the accuracy of the data provided. The numbered responses below correspond to the numbered questions in your letter.

1. The Department of Veterans Affairs' Policy on Administrative Absence, VA Handbook 5011, is attached. The policy prescribes different processes depending on the reason for the administrative absence. The approval level for these absences may vary from the first level supervisor for short absences under an hour, up to the level of the Secretary if all employees or large groups of employees will be excused from duty. Safeguards are provided by adherence to the VA policy at all levels of the organization.
2. Administrative leave is recorded within the Personnel and Accounting Integrated Data (PAID) system by pay period hours not months; therefore, VA queried for greater than or equal to 160 hours as the basis for selection. There were a total of 2,560 employees on paid administrative leave for more than one month in Fiscal Year (FY) 2014. This equated to \$22,998,095.52 in salaries paid. VA is unable to calculate the total cost.
3. VA's responses below have also been characterized by the equivalent number of hours in the requested periods.
  - a. For the period of 1-3 months or greater than or equal to 160 hours and less than or equal to 480 hours: VA found 2,277 employees.
  - b. For the period of 3-6 months, or greater than 480 hours and less than or equal to 960 hours: VA found 200 employees.
  - c. For the period of 6-9 months, or greater than 960 hours and less than or equal to 1,440 hours: VA found 53 employees.
  - d. For the period of 9-12 months, or greater than 1,440 hours: VA found 30 employees.
4. VA found that there were no employees on administrative leave for a period greater than one year as of pay period #20 (October 5 thru October 18, 2014).
5. Please see enclosed table with requested data.



The Honorable Charles E. Grassley

6. GAO notes that 5,891 VA employees were placed on administrative leave between one and six months. Given VA's population of approximately 340,000 employees, 1.7 percent of our workforce falls into this category. As noted in several places in the GAO report, a combination of factors contributed to large amounts of paid administrative leave being charged by agencies. The GAO found inaccuracies in Office of Personnel Management (OPM) data due to differences between agencies' leave recording practices and what OPM officials consider paid administrative leave. These variations occur because there is no government-wide guidance on what agencies should record, and limited guidance on what payroll providers should report, as paid administrative leave. The VA is in the process of reviewing its policies on administrative leave and has developed guidance to ensure that administrative leave is charged and coded appropriately in our time and attendance systems. Additionally, VA is preparing to implement a new time-keeping system known as VA Time and Attendance System (VATAS), which will centralize, streamline, and standardize VA's timekeeping practices, records, and reporting. VATAS will allow VA to refine how it records such things as official time for union activities, training and temporary duty. VATAS will also provide opportunities for VA to document specific reasons for the appropriate charge of paid administrative leave (i.e., pending agency investigations, inclement weather, voting, etc.). These actions should correct erroneous usages of administrative leave, and will allow better comparisons of VA to other federal agencies.

Thank you for your concern and your continued support of VA and the Veterans we serve. If you need additional information, please have a member of your staff contact Kristina Shea, Congressional Relations Officer, at (202) 461-6437 or [Kristina.Shea@va.gov](mailto:Kristina.Shea@va.gov). A similar letter has been sent to Chairman Jason Chaffetz.

Sincerely,



Gina S. Farrisee

Enclosures