



**U.S. House of Representatives**  
**Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure**

**James L. Oberstar**  
**Chairman**

**Washington, DC 20515**

**April 14, 2009**

**John L. Mica**  
**Ranking Republican Member**

David Heymsfeld, Chief of Staff  
Ward W. McCarragher, Chief Counsel

James W. Coon II, Republican Chief of Staff

Mr. Gene L. Dodaro  
Acting Comptroller General  
Government Accountability Office  
441 G St., NW  
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Dodaro:

On April 1, 2009, the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure's Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation held a hearing to examine the administration of the Coast Guard's Office of Civil Rights (OCR) and the service's implementation of Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) and Equal Opportunity (EO) programs. At the hearing, the Director of the OCR announced action plans to improve the OCR's structure, policies, and procedures as well as the administration and provision of civil rights services throughout the Coast Guard. We request that you assess whether these action plans are supporting the provision of effective and efficient civil rights services to the members and employees of the Coast Guard. Please submit a final report on the implementation of these changes to the Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation by April 1, 2010.

In April 2008, the Director of OCR asked the Department of Homeland Security to commission and supervise an independent assessment of the OCR and of civil rights programs within the Coast Guard. The study, conducted by Booz|Allen|Hamilton, was presented to the Coast Guard in February 2009, and subsequently released to the public. The study concluded that both the OCR and the administration and provision of civil rights services in the Coast Guard are limited by a number of shortcomings. Specifically, the study found that the Coast Guard currently fails to fully protect the confidential personal information of Coast Guard employees. The service fails to conduct thorough analyses of barriers to equal opportunity in employment and to develop specific plans to break these barriers down. Further, the study found that civil rights service providers are not adequately trained and that service providers cannot ensure implementation of a complaints management process in full compliance with regulatory requirements. Studies commissioned by the Coast Guard in 1998 and 2001 reached similar conclusions.

During its April 1 hearing, the Subcommittee learned that OCR had been authorized to fill 6 additional full-time civilian positions. The Subcommittee also learned that the OCR Director developed extensive action plans subsequent to the release of the Booz|Allen|Hamilton report to bring the OCR and the administration and provision of civil rights services into compliance with all applicable federal regulations. The Subcommittee plans another hearing on or about June 15, 2009, to consider the current state of civil rights services in the Coast Guard.

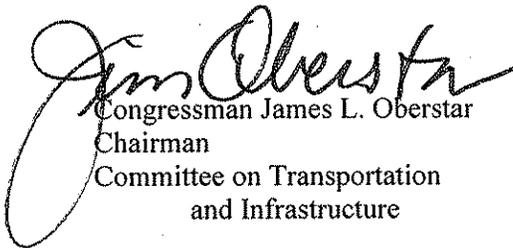
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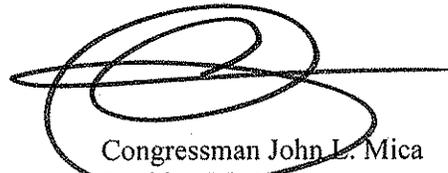
To ensure that a thorough assessment can be made of the Coast Guard's efforts in resolving deficiencies in its civil rights services, we request that the Government Accountability Office (GAO):

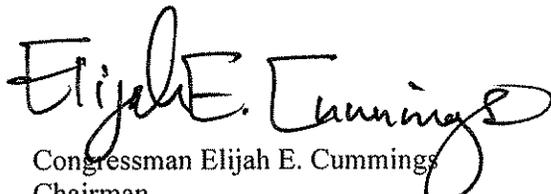
1. Assess the extent to which the action plans developed by the Director of OCR, including those developed in direct response to findings made by the Booz|Allen|Hamilton team's February 2009 Program Review, are
  - a. enabling the Coast Guard's EEO program to meet the standards of a model program as defined by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), and
  - b. supporting the provision of effective and efficient EO services to the members of the Coast Guard.
2. Track implementation by the OCR of the action plans prepared by the OCR Director.
3. Assess whether the OCR has the resources and personnel necessary to maintain a model EEO program as defined by the EEOC and an effective and efficient EO program.
4. Identify any additional measures necessary to enable the Coast Guard's EEO program to meet the standards of a model EEO program and to ensure the effective and efficient administration and provision of EO services.

For additional information, please feel free to contact our staff members, John Cullather (Oberstar, Cummings) at 202-226-3578 or John Rayfield (Mica, LoBiondo) at 202-226-0204.

Sincerely,

  
Congressman James L. Oberstar  
Chairman  
Committee on Transportation  
and Infrastructure

  
Congressman John L. Mica  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Transportation  
and Infrastructure

  
Congressman Elijah E. Cummings  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Coast Guard  
and Maritime Transportation

  
Congressman Frank A. LoBiondo  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Coast Guard  
and Maritime Transportation