

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

MAJORITY (202) 225-5074

MINORITY (202) 225-5051

<http://oversight.house.gov>

November 22, 2016

The Honorable Denise Turner Roth
Administrator
General Services Administration
301 7th Street SW
Washington, D.C. 20410

Dear Administrator Roth:

The General Services Administration (GSA) is responsible for maintaining the System for Award Management (SAM). This is a critical resource used by contract officers to ensure federal grants and contract awards are made to responsible awardees. The System stores data that federal contract officers must check to ensure the recipients of federal grant and contract awards are tax compliant. A recent independent investigation, however, raised questions about the quality of the data in SAM and whether that data is current.¹

Under the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) federal contracting officers must make an affirmative finding that a potential contractor is responsible.² The FAR also requires contractors to certify they are compliant with federal tax law.³ This means that a contract officer should not make an award to a contractor that has a delinquent federal tax debt. In order to make an affirmative finding that a contractor is tax compliant, federal contract officers must rely upon resources, such as SAM, to verify information provided by the contractor. These responsibility determinations are only as good as the data available in SAM.

A recent investigation by an independent media entity found federal agencies made contract awards of \$63.8 million in FY 2016 to contractors with \$112 million in tax liens.⁴ According to the report, federal agencies, including GSA, the National Institutes of Health, and the Internal Revenue Service, made awards to contractors that had delinquent federal tax debt.

¹ Arthur Kane, *Companies That Owe Taxes Still Score Big Government Contracts*, AMERICAN MEDIA INSTITUTE, Oct. 14, 2016, <https://americanmediainstitute.com/investigations/companies-owe-taxes-still-score-big-government-contracts/>.

² FAR § 9.103.

³ FAR §9.104-5.

⁴ Arthur Kane, *Companies That Owe Taxes Still Score Big Government Contracts*, American Media Institute (Oct. 14, 2016), <https://americanmediainstitute.com/investigations/companies-owe-taxes-still-score-big-government-contracts/>.

The Government Accountability Office (GAO) reported routinely checking SAM listings to identify contractors that are ineligible for awards; however, the investigation found that GAO awarded a contract to Advanced Automation Technologies—a company with active tax liens as of September 9, 2016, according to the report.⁵ Other agencies awarded Advanced Automation Technologies nearly \$15 million in contracts over several years despite court records showing seven active tax liens that have not been satisfied.⁶ Agencies must have access to up-to-date information so they can make informed acquisition decisions.

The federal government annually awards more than \$1 trillion in grants and contracts.⁷ It is important to ensure that federal contracts and grants, which are funded by taxpayers, are only awarded to responsible businesses and individuals. The Committee has questions about whether SAM contains reliable, current information, and whether taxpayer money is subsidizing contractors that do not pay their own taxes. So the Committee can better understand GSA's management of the SAM database please produce the following information as soon as possible, but no later than December 6, 2016:

1. Documents referring or relating to GSA's processes for compiling, verifying, and publishing contractor data on:
 - a. Active exclusions in SAM; and⁸
 - b. Active exclusions for contractors with delinquent federal tax debt in SAM;
2. Documents referring or relating to the frequency at which GSA updates the information on contractor exclusion status within SAM;
3. Documents sufficient to identify contractors that have active exclusions due to delinquent federal tax debt; and
4. All memoranda, guidance, or other resources GSA makes available to contract officers to ensure contract awards are not made to contractors with delinquent federal tax debt.

The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform is the principal oversight committee of the House of Representatives and may at "any time" investigate "any matter" as set forth in House Rule X.

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ *Id.*

⁷ USASpending.gov, available at <https://www.usaspending.gov/Pages/Default.aspx> (last visited Nov. 10, 2016).

⁸ From GSA instructional information: Exclusion records identify those parties excluded from receiving federal contracts, certain subcontracts, and from certain types of federal financial and non-financial assistance and benefits. These are also commonly known as "suspensions" and "debarments". https://www.sam.gov/sam/transcript/Public_-_Identifying_Excluded_Entities.pdf.

The Honorable Denise Turner Roth

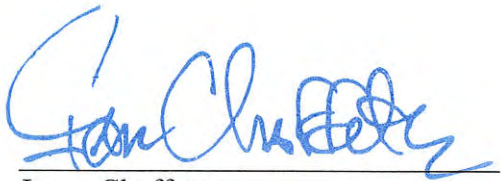
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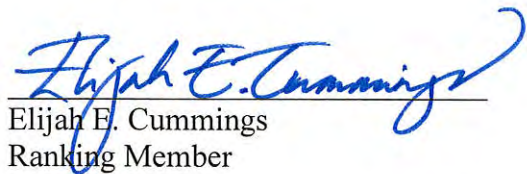
When producing documents to the Committee, please deliver production sets to the Majority staff in Room 2157 of the Rayburn House Office Building and the Minority staff in Room 2471 of the Rayburn House Office Building. The Committee prefers, if possible, to receive all documents in electronic format. An attachment to this letter contains additional instructions for responding to the Committee's request.

If you have any questions about this request, please contact Drew Baney of Chairman Chaffetz' staff at (202) 225-5074 or Krista Boyd of Ranking Member Cummings's staff at (202) 225-5051. Thank you for your attention to this matter

Sincerely,



Jason Chaffetz
Chairman



Elijah E. Cummings
Ranking Member

Enclosure

Responding to Committee Document Requests

1. In complying with this request, you are required to produce all responsive documents that are in your possession, custody, or control, whether held by you or your past or present agents, employees, and representatives acting on your behalf. You should also produce documents that you have a legal right to obtain, that you have a right to copy or to which you have access, as well as documents that you have placed in the temporary possession, custody, or control of any third party. Requested records, documents, data or information should not be destroyed, modified, removed, transferred or otherwise made inaccessible to the Committee.
2. In the event that any entity, organization or individual denoted in this request has been, or is also known by any other name than that herein denoted, the request shall be read also to include that alternative identification.
3. The Committee's preference is to receive documents in electronic form (i.e., CD, memory stick, or thumb drive) in lieu of paper productions.
4. Documents produced in electronic format should also be organized, identified, and indexed electronically.
5. Electronic document productions should be prepared according to the following standards:
 - (a) The production should consist of single page Tagged Image File ("TIF"), files accompanied by a Concordance-format load file, an Opticon reference file, and a file defining the fields and character lengths of the load file.
 - (b) Document numbers in the load file should match document Bates numbers and TIF file names.
 - (c) If the production is completed through a series of multiple partial productions, field names and file order in all load files should match.
 - (d) All electronic documents produced to the Committee should include the following fields of metadata specific to each document:

BEGDOC, ENDDOC, TEXT, BEGATTACH, ENDATTACH,
PAGECOUNT, CUSTODIAN, RECORDTYPE, DATE, TIME, SENTDATE,
SENTTIME, BEGINDATE, BEGINTIME, ENDDATE, ENDTIME, AUTHOR, FROM,
CC, TO, BCC, SUBJECT, TITLE, FILENAME, FILEEXT, FILESIZE,
DATECREATED, TIMECREATED, DATELASTMOD, TIMELASTMOD,
INTMSGID, INTMSGHEADER, NATIVELINK, INTFILPATH, EXCEPTION,
BEGATTACH.
6. Documents produced to the Committee should include an index describing the contents of the production. To the extent more than one CD, hard drive, memory stick, thumb drive, box or folder is produced, each CD, hard drive, memory stick, thumb drive, box or folder should contain an index describing its contents.

7. Documents produced in response to this request shall be produced together with copies of file labels, dividers or identifying markers with which they were associated when the request was served.
8. When you produce documents, you should identify the paragraph in the Committee's schedule to which the documents respond.
9. It shall not be a basis for refusal to produce documents that any other person or entity also possesses non-identical or identical copies of the same documents.
10. If any of the requested information is only reasonably available in machine-readable form (such as on a computer server, hard drive, or computer backup tape), you should consult with the Committee staff to determine the appropriate format in which to produce the information.
11. If compliance with the request cannot be made in full by the specified return date, compliance shall be made to the extent possible by that date. An explanation of why full compliance is not possible shall be provided along with any partial production.
12. In the event that a document is withheld on the basis of privilege, provide a privilege log containing the following information concerning any such document: (a) the privilege asserted; (b) the type of document; (c) the general subject matter; (d) the date, author and addressee; and (e) the relationship of the author and addressee to each other.
13. If any document responsive to this request was, but no longer is, in your possession, custody, or control, identify the document (stating its date, author, subject and recipients) and explain the circumstances under which the document ceased to be in your possession, custody, or control.
14. If a date or other descriptive detail set forth in this request referring to a document is inaccurate, but the actual date or other descriptive detail is known to you or is otherwise apparent from the context of the request, you are required to produce all documents which would be responsive as if the date or other descriptive detail were correct.
15. Unless otherwise specified, the time period covered by this request is from January 1, 2009 to the present.
16. This request is continuing in nature and applies to any newly-discovered information. Any record, document, compilation of data or information, not produced because it has not been located or discovered by the return date, shall be produced immediately upon subsequent location or discovery.
17. All documents shall be Bates-stamped sequentially and produced sequentially.
18. Two sets of documents shall be delivered, one set to the Majority Staff and one set to the Minority Staff. When documents are produced to the Committee, production sets shall be delivered to the Majority Staff in Room 2157 of the Rayburn House Office Building and the Minority Staff in Room 2471 of the Rayburn House Office Building.

19. Upon completion of the document production, you should submit a written certification, signed by you or your counsel, stating that: (1) a diligent search has been completed of all documents in your possession, custody, or control which reasonably could contain responsive documents; and (2) all documents located during the search that are responsive have been produced to the Committee.

Definitions

1. The term “document” means any written, recorded, or graphic matter of any nature whatsoever, regardless of how recorded, and whether original or copy, including, but not limited to, the following: memoranda, reports, expense reports, books, manuals, instructions, financial reports, working papers, records, notes, letters, notices, confirmations, telegrams, receipts, appraisals, pamphlets, magazines, newspapers, prospectuses, inter-office and intra-office communications, electronic mail (e-mail), contracts, cables, notations of any type of conversation, telephone call, meeting or other communication, bulletins, printed matter, computer printouts, teletypes, invoices, transcripts, diaries, analyses, returns, summaries, minutes, bills, accounts, estimates, projections, comparisons, messages, correspondence, press releases, circulars, financial statements, reviews, opinions, offers, studies and investigations, questionnaires and surveys, and work sheets (and all drafts, preliminary versions, alterations, modifications, revisions, changes, and amendments of any of the foregoing, as well as any attachments or appendices thereto), and graphic or oral records or representations of any kind (including without limitation, photographs, charts, graphs, microfiche, microfilm, videotape, recordings and motion pictures), and electronic, mechanical, and electric records or representations of any kind (including, without limitation, tapes, cassettes, disks, and recordings) and other written, printed, typed, or other graphic or recorded matter of any kind or nature, however produced or reproduced, and whether preserved in writing, film, tape, disk, videotape or otherwise. A document bearing any notation not a part of the original text is to be considered a separate document. A draft or non-identical copy is a separate document within the meaning of this term.
2. The term “communication” means each manner or means of disclosure or exchange of information, regardless of means utilized, whether oral, electronic, by document or otherwise, and whether in a meeting, by telephone, facsimile, email (desktop or mobile device), text message, instant message, MMS or SMS message, regular mail, telexes, releases, or otherwise.
3. The terms “and” and “or” shall be construed broadly and either conjunctively or disjunctively to bring within the scope of this request any information which might otherwise be construed to be outside its scope. The singular includes plural number, and vice versa. The masculine includes the feminine and neuter genders.
4. The terms “person” or “persons” mean natural persons, firms, partnerships, associations, corporations, subsidiaries, divisions, departments, joint ventures, proprietorships, syndicates, or other legal, business or government entities, and all subsidiaries, affiliates, divisions, departments, branches, or other units thereof.

5. The term “identify,” when used in a question about individuals, means to provide the following information: (a) the individual's complete name and title; and (b) the individual's business address and phone number.
6. The term “referring or relating,” with respect to any given subject, means anything that constitutes, contains, embodies, reflects, identifies, states, refers to, deals with or is pertinent to that subject in any manner whatsoever.
7. The term “employee” means agent, borrowed employee, casual employee, consultant, contractor, de facto employee, independent contractor, joint adventurer, loaned employee, part-time employee, permanent employee, provisional employee, subcontractor, or any other type of service provider.