

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-5000

April 18, 2023

The Honorable Kiran Ahuja
U.S. Office of Personnel Management
1900 E. Street NW,
Washington, D.C. 20415

Dear Director Ahuja:

I am writing to inquire about the status of the backlog of retirement cases at the U.S. Office of Personnel Management (OPM). My office has recently been contacted by multiple constituents who have reported experiencing significant delays in the processing of their retirement claims. It is critical that these claims are processed and fulfilled in a timely manner as this matter concerns the livelihoods of American retirees. Furthermore, months-long processing delays are simply not acceptable, as it is the American taxpayer who is ultimately responsible for funding the office's operations and management.

According to a recent Federal News Network article, it was reported that OPM currently possesses a backlog of over 24,000 claims, 12,000 higher than the steady-state goal. The article goes on to explain that the average processing time increased from 85 to 93 days between the months of December and January.¹ OPM has cited the continuing reliance on paper-based applications and manual processing, insufficient staffing capacity, and incomplete applications as the main reasons for delays.

A report conducted by GAO back in 2019 identified several areas of potential improvement. These suggestions included the implementation of an IT modernization plan, establishing management performance goals regarding processing timelines, providing explanatory information on estimated processing times, identifying effective strategies to reduce delays, assessing its assistance to agencies on retirement applications, and improving the retirement application error report that is sent to federal agencies by making it more user-friendly. As of this year, only one of these suggestions has been fully implemented.²

It is imperative that we ensure American retirees are receiving proper, timely assistance when approaching retirement. In order to get to the bottom of this situation, please provide my office with information on the following matters:

1. What is the current status, as of April 2023, in clearing out the processing backlog?
2. What strategies is OPM currently considering to minimize and prevent future processing backlogs?

¹ <https://federalnewsnetwork.com/retirement/2023/02/opm-makes-no-progress-with-retirement-backlog-to-start-2023/>

² <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-19-217>

3. What action has been taken by OPM to address the suggestions posed by the GAO report including the need for an IT modernization plan?

Thank you for your time and consideration of this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Harriet M. Hageman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Harriet" being more prominent than the middle initial "M." and the last name "Hageman".

Harriet M. Hageman
Member of Congress