

MAJORITY MEMBERS:

TIM WALBERG, MICHIGAN, *Chairman*

JOE WILSON, SOUTH CAROLINA  
VIRGINIA FOXX, NORTH CAROLINA  
GLENN THOMPSON, PENNSYLVANIA  
GLENN GROTHMAN, WISCONSIN  
ELISE M. STEFANIK, NEW YORK  
RICK W. ALLEN, GEORGIA  
JAMES COMER, KENTUCKY  
BURGESS OWENS, UTAH  
LISA C. MCCLAIN, MICHIGAN  
MARY E. MILLER, ILLINOIS  
JULIA LETLOW, LOUISIANA  
KEVIN KILEY, CALIFORNIA  
MICHAEL RULLI, OHIO  
JAMES C. MOYLAN, GUAM  
ROBERT F. ONDER, JR., MISSOURI  
RYAN MACKENZIE, PENNSYLVANIA  
MICHAEL BAUMGARTNER, WASHINGTON  
MARK HARRIS, NORTH CAROLINA  
MARK B. MESSMER, INDIANA  
RANDY FINE, FLORIDA



COMMITTEE ON  
EDUCATION AND WORKFORCE  
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
2176 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6100

MINORITY MEMBERS:

ROBERT C. "BOBBY" SCOTT, VIRGINIA,  
*Ranking Member*

JOE COURTNEY, CONNECTICUT  
FREDERICA S. WILSON, FLORIDA  
SUZANNE BONAMICI, OREGON  
MARK TAKANO, CALIFORNIA  
ALMA S. ADAMS, NORTH CAROLINA  
MARK DESAULNIER, CALIFORNIA  
DONALD NORCROSS, NEW JERSEY  
LUCY MCBATH, GEORGIA  
JAHANA HAYES, CONNECTICUT  
ILHAN OMAR, MINNESOTA  
HALEY STEVENS, MICHIGAN  
GREG CASAR, TEXAS  
SUMMER L. LEE, PENNSYLVANIA  
JOHN MANNION, NEW YORK  
YASSAMIN ANSARI, ARIZONA

July 14, 2025

The Honorable Gene L. Dodaro  
Comptroller General  
U.S. Government Accountability Office  
441 G Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20548

Dear Mr. Dodaro:

On May 6, the Subcommittee on Workforce Protections held a hearing to examine the *Federal Employees' Compensation Act* (FECA) to consider how it might be improved to more effectively benefit injured federal workers, while also protecting taxpayers from waste, fraud, and abuse.<sup>1</sup> Enacted in 1916, FECA provides workers' compensation benefits to federal employees who become injured or ill through work-related activity. However, for more than 50 years, the law has not been meaningfully updated. The existing program has long been criticized for being susceptible to waste, fraud, and abuse and for being overly generous, as many beneficiaries remain on the program well into retirement. Some of these concerns have been raised by the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) in its previous examinations of FECA. On behalf of the Committee on Education and Workforce (Committee), we request GAO again examine FECA and update its previous work on the subject.

FECA is the workers' compensation program for federal employees. Among other benefits, FECA provides disability compensation for the duration of a disability or the life of the beneficiary. Beneficiaries receive two-thirds of their pre-disability wage, or 75 percent of the pre-disability wage if the worker has dependents. In Fiscal Year (FY) 2024, FECA provided nearly \$3 billion in benefits to more than 178,000 workers and survivors for work-related injuries or illnesses. Of these benefits payments, more than \$2 billion were for wage-loss compensation.<sup>2</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> *FECA Reform and Oversight: Prioritizing Workers, Protecting Taxpayer Dollars: Hearing Before the Subcomm. on Workforce Protections of the H. Comm. on Educ. & Workforce*, 119th Cong. (May 6, 2025), <https://edworkforce.house.gov/calendar/eventsingle.aspx?EventID=412390>.

<sup>2</sup> DEP'T OF LAB., OFF. OF WORKERS' COMPENSATION PROGRAMS, FECA CLAIMS ADMINISTRATION, <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/owcp/FECA/about>.

While the last major revisions to the FECA program enacted by Congress were in 1974, various proposed revisions have been considered over the past decade. In 2012 and 2020, GAO issued reports that analyzed FECA compensation levels under existing and proposed revisions to the program. The reports examined how Federal Employee Retirement System (FERS) benefits compared to total disability FECA benefits at retirement age under the existing compensation structure and a proposed reduction to FECA compensation at retirement age.<sup>3</sup> The 2012 reports also analyzed the effects of a proposal to compensate all FECA beneficiaries at a single rate, regardless of dependents. These reports provided policymakers and the public with important context about the adequacy of FECA benefits. For example, GAO's 2020 report found that various factors, such as the timing of an injury in a career, affect how FECA total disability benefits compare to the benefits a federal worker would have received in retirement. Median current and reduced FECA packages were found to be greater than the FERS median for retirees who would have had shorter careers absent an injury or who were injured later in their careers. However, median FECA packages were similar to or less than FERS for retirees with longer careers absent an injury or who were injured earlier in their careers.<sup>4</sup>

Other types of revisions to FECA have also been considered in the past to improve program efficiency and integrity. For example, proposals aimed at reducing costs and improving efficiencies have suggested that FECA allow injured federal workers to receive care from state-licensed physician assistants and nurse practitioners.<sup>5</sup> In addition, the Department of Labor's (DOL) Office of Inspector General (OIG) has recommended instituting a three-day waiting period immediately after an injury or illness before benefits begin for all federal workers.<sup>6</sup> During this waiting period, injured workers would have to use sick leave or annual leave. Currently, non-postal service workers can immediately receive up to 45 days of continued pay following an alleged traumatic work-related injury while their FECA claim is adjudicated.

GAO has also examined program integrity issues related to improper payments in the FECA program and found examples of claimants receiving overlapping FECA, unemployment, and disability insurance benefits, as well as examples of claimants underreporting employment wages used to determine FECA benefits.<sup>7</sup> DOL's OIG recently testified to Congress that since FY 2015,

---

<sup>3</sup> See GAO, FEDERAL EMPLOYEES' COMPENSATION ACT: COMPARISONS OF BENEFITS IN RETIREMENT AND ACTIONS NEEDED TO HELP INJURED WORKERS CHOOSE BEST OPTION, GAO-20-523 (July 23, 2020); GAO, FEDERAL EMPLOYEES' COMPENSATION ACT: ANALYSIS OF PROPOSED PROGRAM CHANGES, GAO-13-108 (Oct. 26, 2012); GAO, FEDERAL EMPLOYEES' COMPENSATION ACT: ANALYSIS OF PROPOSED CHANGES ON USPS BENEFICIARIES, GAO-13-142R (Nov. 26, 2012); GAO, FEDERAL EMPLOYEES' COMPENSATION ACT: EFFECTS OF PROPOSED CHANGES ON PARTIAL DISABILITY BENEFICIARIES, GAO-13-143R (Dec. 7, 2012).

<sup>4</sup> GAO, FEDERAL EMPLOYEES' COMPENSATION ACT: COMPARISONS OF BENEFITS IN RETIREMENT AND ACTIONS NEEDED TO HELP INJURED WORKERS CHOOSE BEST OPTION, GAO-20-523, at 1 (July 23, 2020).

<sup>5</sup> See Improving Access to Workers' Compensation for Injured Federal Workers Act, H.R. 3170, 119th Cong. (2025).

<sup>6</sup> *FECA Reform and Oversight*, *supra* note 1 (written statement of Luiz A. Santos, DOL Acting Inspector, at 9-10), [https://edworkforce.house.gov/uploadedfiles/santos\\_testimony.pdf](https://edworkforce.house.gov/uploadedfiles/santos_testimony.pdf).

<sup>7</sup> See GAO, DISABILITY INSURANCE: ACTIONS NEEDED TO HELP PREVENT POTENTIAL OVERPAYMENTS TO INDIVIDUALS RECEIVING CONCURRENT FEDERAL WORKERS' COMPENSATION, GAO-15-531 (July 8, 2015); GAO, FEDERAL EMPLOYEES' COMPENSATION ACT: CASE EXAMPLES ILLUSTRATE VULNERABILITIES THAT COULD RESULT IN IMPROPER PAYMENTS OR OVERLAPPING BENEFITS, GAO-13-386 (Apr. 3, 2013).

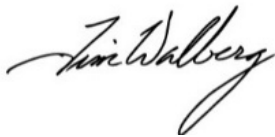
the OIG has opened more than 320 criminal investigations involving the FECA program, resulting in the indictment and conviction of 322 individuals and recovering more than \$1.7 billion.<sup>8</sup>

In light of the challenges facing the FECA program, we request that GAO examine the program's integrity, efficiency, and ability meet its primary goal of safely returning employees back to the workforce. Specifically, the Committee would like to understand:

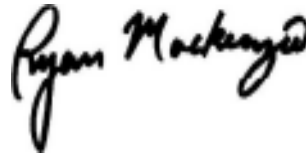
1. To what extent has DOL's Office of Workers' Compensation Programs (OWCP) analyzed the effects of FECA claims process reforms that stakeholders have proposed, such as instituting a three-day waiting period prior to continuation of pay for all FECA claimants, allowing nurse practitioners and physician assistants to approve claims, or other reforms related to program integrity and efficiency.
2. To what extent OWCP follows leading practices for risk management and fraud prevention in the FECA program, consistent with GAO's Fraud Risk Framework.<sup>9</sup>
3. How OWCP calculates FECA benefit payments and ensure payment integrity over time, including the use of federal and non-federal data sources.
4. To what extent has OWCP denied claims or reduced compensation amounts for FECA total disability benefits in recent years for various reasons related to program integrity, such as suspicion of fraud or a beneficiary's partial or full recovery from injury.
5. How the FECA program compares to selected state workers compensation programs in returning an employee back to the workforce.
6. How the FECA program compares to selected state workers compensation programs in the length and cost of rehabilitative care provided for the most common or top workplace injuries.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Tim Walberg  
Chairman



Ryan Mackenzie  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Workforce Protections

---

<sup>8</sup> *FECA Reform and Oversight*, *supra* note 1 (written statement of Luiz A. Santos, DOL Acting Inspector, at 2).

<sup>9</sup> GAO, A FRAMEWORK FOR MANAGING FRAUD RISKS IN FEDERAL PROGRAMS, GAO-15-593SP (July 2015).