



November 18, 2014

The Honorable Robert “Bob” Goodlatte (R-VA)
House Judiciary Committee, Chairman
2138 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable John Conyers Jr. (D-MI)
House Judiciary Committee, Ranking Member
2142 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Darrell Issa (R-CA)
House Committee on Oversight and
Reform, Chairman
2157 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Elijah Cummings (D-MD)
House Committee on Oversight and Government
Government Reform, Ranking Member
2471 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen and Ranking Members:

On behalf of the Association for Commuter Transportation (ACT), I write to you today regarding recent findings of fraud and abuse within the US Patent & Trade Office’s (USPTO) telework program. The findings of abuse within the USPTO’s telework program are not and should not be indicative of what to expect from telework programs. The findings about USPTO’s program prove that telework programs need to be held to a high standard with efficient internal controls and effective management; however, those findings do not indicate that telework programs generally are inefficient.

One of the greatest fears related to these findings is that if Federal employees are allowed to telework, their productivity will go down. However, studies have shown the exact opposite. In most cases employees who telecommute, even for a few days a week, are as productive or more productive than their employees who work from a central office five days a week. Major employers, including British Telecom, JD Edwards, and American Express, show home-based employees to be 20-40% more productive than their office counterparts

A successful telework environment includes several key elements. First, it requires management commitment and technology, including planning and consensus building. When done correctly, the benefits are plentiful. A telework policy can help reduce or replace business-related trips. It helps maintain productivity in the event of disasters or disruptions. In 2010, Washington DC was hit by three major snowstorms in five weeks, virtually crippling the region’s transportation system. During that time, 60% of GSA employees were able to work from home because of the agency’s telework planning and policies.

A successful telework policy also reduces the need for capital expansion such as office space and parking. Sun Microsystems saves \$70 million a year in real estate alone, while Dow Chemical has seen similar savings in that it reduced a third of its non-real estate costs through telework.

Other benefits include reduced employee absenteeism by 2-4 days per year, increased employee morale, recruitment, retention by 50-65%, extension of work hours without adding staff, and better communication among time zones.

The impact on our environment and the transportation system is another positive side effect. When Los Angeles County began a telework program, it saw an increase of teleworkers by 10%, which led to reduced employee travel time of 335,340 hours annually and eliminated more than 147.6 tons of air pollutants.



ACT is a strong supporter of the 'Federal Telework Improvement Act'. Prior to that legislation's passage, participation in Federal telework programs lagged far behind similar programs in the private sector and among local governments. Thanks largely to the 'Federal Telework Improvement Act', participation in Federal telework programs has increased dramatically. According to the Washington Council of Governments' 2013 Commuter Connections State of the Commute Report [<http://www.commuterconnections.org/wp-content/uploads/SOC-2013-Telework-Pullout.pdf>]:

Federal agency employees telecommute at a rate of 38%, which is much higher than the regional average (27%). An additional 19% of federal government workers in the Washington metropolitan region could and would telework if given the opportunity. Formal telework programs in this region are most common with employees who work for a federal government agency.

An increase in telework has led to happier and more productive employees and has saved the Federal government significant amounts of funding.

ACT is concerned by the findings of the USPTO telework program review and we recognize that without appropriate internal controls, there may be other instances of abuse. That said, we urge Congress to avoid overreaction to these findings and instead encourage Congress to require tighter internal controls, protocols for accessibility and availability, clear communication standards between managers and telecommuters as well as proper training for Federal managers.

To that extent, the Association for Commuter Transportation and its members stand ready to assist Federal agencies in reviewing their internal controls and providing recommendations to individual agencies on how to improve their telework program management. Additionally, at the onset of the 114th Congress, ACT will submit to your Committees a series of legislative recommendations on how to improve the 'Federal Telework Improvement Act'.

If you have any questions, please contact ACT Government Affairs Director Jason Pavluchuk at Pavluchuk@actweb.org or 202-285-6414.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark Wright". The signature is fluid and cursive, written over a white background.

Mark Wright
Executive Director
Association for Commuter Transportation