

# Republicans Push to Restore Job Competitions with Private Sector

BY SARAH CHACKO | JULY 19, 2011

House Republicans want to restore competitions to determine whether some federal jobs should be done by government or contract workers.

In a July 14 letter, 21 House Republicans urge the Appropriations Committee chairman to ensure that the 2012 appropriation bills still awaiting votes restore use of the Office of Management and Budget Circular A-76, which guides the job competitions. Congress issued a moratorium on the use of Circular A-76 in 2009.

Language that would prohibit or restrict use of A-76 has already been voted out of the House-passed Defense, Homeland Security, Agriculture and Energy and water development appropriations bills.

The House also included a recommendation to stop insourcing commercial activities in the Defense authorization bill, which has passed the House and is currently awaiting action in the Senate.

Provisions that prohibit or delay the use of competitive sourcing studies like Circular A-76 or that encourage insourcing are counterproductive to reducing the deficit, limiting the size of government and creating private-sector jobs, the letter to Appropriations Committee Chairman Harold Rogers said.

Federal workers doing commercial activities also adds to the government payroll, takes away focus on inherently governmental activities and reduces tax revenues, they wrote.

More than 850,000 federal positions are commercial in nature, according to data gathered through the Federal Activities Inventory Reform Act. Less than 10 percent of those positions have been studied to see if private-sector performance is more appropriate, the letter states.

Competitive sourcing is estimated to reduce costs by 30 percent, regardless of if the work goes to the public or private sector. If applied to the 850,000 positions, that could save taxpayers \$27 billion annually, according to the letter.

Last month, 31 national and regional business and trade associations wrote a similar letter to Rogers. And last week, the Professional Services Council trade association sent a letter to all House members in support of lifting the A-76 moratorium.

However, PSC has raised concerns that the provision to stop insourcing could "further polarize the debate around rightsizing the acquisition workforce." The department should have some flexibility to insource work, even if it is not inherently governmental, to retain core capabilities and critical expertise, such as some acquisition workforce positions, PSC vice president of government relations Roger Jordan said in May.