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# Foreword

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This report was prepared primarily to inform Congressional members and key staff of ongoing assignments in the General Accounting Office's Civil Agencies Information Systems issue area. This report contains assignments that were ongoing as of February 2, 1998, and presents a brief background statement and a list of key questions to be answered on each assignment. The report will be issued quarterly.

This report was compiled from information available in GAO's internal management information systems. Because the information was downloaded from computerized data bases intended for internal use, some information may appear in abbreviated form.

If you have questions or would like additional information about assignments listed, please contact Joel Willemsen, Director, on (202) 512-6408.

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## *Civil Agencies Information Systems*

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### **HIGH RISK SYSTEMS-CAIS**

**TITLE: HRA 28: EVALUATION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION'S YEAR 2000 READINESS (511230)**

**KEY QUESTIONS :** In FY 1998, the Department of Education (ED) will administer about \$47 billion in student financial aid to about 8 million students. These aid programs are supported by 9 major information systems. The systems pay interest to lenders on millions of student loans and track billions of dollars in liabilities for defaulted loans. To reduce the risk of financial loss, ED must ensure that these systems are year 2000 (Y2K) compliant well before December 31, 1999. Our objective is to determine how effectively ED is addressing the Y2K challenge for its student financial aid systems.

**TITLE: HRA:28 EVALUATION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF LABOR'S YEAR 2000 READINESS (511237)**

**KEY QUESTIONS :** The Department of Labor (DOL) administers a variety of programs covering workplace activities for nearly 10 million employers and over 100 million workers, including workers' compensation programs for federal employees and other specific employee groups. DOL's Office of Workers' Compensation Programs (OWCP) administers three major workers' compensation programs which annually process over 350,000 cases and provide approximately \$3 billion in compensation funds for wage replacement benefits, medical treatment, vocational rehabilitation, and other benefits to eligible workers. Our objective is to determine: What progress has DOL made in addressing the year 2000 computing challenge for its workers' compensation programs administered by OWCP?

**TITLE: HRA 25: NATIONAL WEATHER SERVICE' BUDGET AND OPERATIONS (511430)**

**KEY QUESTIONS :** There has been much confusion this year on the National Weather Service's (NWS) budget shortfall and how this might impact the agency's operations. The Secretary of Commerce, in June 1997, reassigned the Director of NWS because the Secretary believed that he was receiving conflicting information on NWS' budget needs. Our work will (1) describe the key events related to the formulation and execution of the fiscal year 1997 NWS budget, and (2) identify key events regarding NWS' fiscal year 1997 budget "shortfall" and efforts to address it.

**TITLE: HRA 28: YEAR 2000 DATA EXCHANGE PROBLEMS (511434)**

**KEY QUESTIONS :** Electronic data exchanges are a common method of information transfers among various levels of government and between our nation and other countries. Unless Year 2000 computing problems are identified and resolved in the systems performing these electronic data exchanges, widespread operational and financial repercussions could occur in the public and private sectors. GAO was asked to identify (1) the actions taken to address electronic data exchanges among, federal, state, and local governments; (2) federal actions taken to minimize the adverse economic impact of non-compliant Year 2000 data from other countries' information systems corrupting critical functions of our nation; and (3) international forums where the worldwide implications of this issue have been or could be addressed.

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## Civil Agencies Information Systems

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**TITLE: HRA 22:REVIEW OF FAA'S AIR TRAFFIC CONTROL (ATC) COMPUTER SECURITY (511536)**

**KEY QUESTIONS :** As the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) modernizes its Air Traffic Control (ATC) systems, it faces an increasing challenge to protect the integrity, confidentiality, and availability of ATC information. Computer security violations could result in expensive nationwide delays and even loss of life. Thus, effective controls are essential to minimize risks associated with potential vulnerabilities. (1) How effective is FAA's overall approach (policies, guidance, management structure) to computer security? (2) Is FAA effectively managing physical security at ATC facilities and systems security for its operational ATC systems? What measures could be strengthened? (3) Is FAA effectively managing computer security for future ATC modernization systems? What measures could be strengthened?

**TITLE: HRA 22:REVIEW OF FAA'S USER REQUEST EVALUATION TOOL (URET) (511547)**

**KEY QUESTIONS :** FAA has been pursuing competing systems to assist in detecting potential conflicts in aircraft trajectories. FAA conducted operational suitability demonstrations of a conflict probe prototype called the User Request Evaluation Tool (URET), and plans to initiate full scale development of URET in the near future. Objective: Assess the adequacy of FAA's efforts to evaluate URET.

### CRITICAL DEVELOPMENT EFFORTS-CAIS

**TITLE: HRA 28: VETERANS HEALTH ADMINISTRATION'S YEAR-2000 EFFORTS (511228)**

**KEY QUESTIONS :** The Year 2000 computer problem poses serious risk to information systems worldwide. The Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), like other government agencies, must address the Year 2000 problem in its current systems. For example, the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) must ensure Year 2000 compliance for its hospital systems as well as for biomedical devices provided to veterans. The Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) must ensure that benefits provided to veterans are not delayed due to Year 2000 problems. GAO has been requested to conduct a review to assess the status of (1) VHA's Year 2000 program and (2) VBA's Year 2000 program.

**TITLE: REVIEW OF FEDERAL AND STATES' INFORMATION SYSTEM ACTIVITIES AND PLANS TO COMPLY WITH WELFARE REFORM REQUIREMENTS, INCLUDING Y-2K (511229)**

**KEY QUESTIONS :** The welfare legislation passed in 1996 makes dramatic changes to the nation's welfare program by ending entitlement assistance, imposing benefit time limits, and requiring most recipients to work. Of concern is how states' existing automated systems will be able to support this reform. We have been asked to assess states' automated welfare systems and plans to comply with welfare reform requirements. Specifically, we will review (1) how states can improve their coordination of systems and build more effective, efficient interfaces between systems, (2) how HHS and Agriculture can strengthen their technical assistance and guidance to states to help improve systems, and (3) how adequately states, HHS, and Agriculture have identified Year 2000 issues related to systems and interfaces.

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**TITLE: REVIEW OF THE APPLICATION OF HHS' PROCESS FOR CERTIFYING THAT STATE CHILD SUPPORT ENFORCEMENT SYSTEMS MEET FEDERAL (511240)**

**KEY QUESTIONS :** The Family Support Act of 1988 (FSA) requires states to operate statewide automated child support enforcement systems. FSA specified that these systems were to be certified as operational by 10/1/97. However, HHS had certified only 17 of 54 state systems by this date. Because those states that significantly miss the deadline face potential financial penalties, HHS has been under pressure to certify the systems. As a result, GAO was asked to determine if the HHS certification process ensures compliance with the act and has been consistently applied.

**TITLE: USDA'S PLANS AND EFFORTS TO MODERNIZE INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY IN ITS SERVICE CENTERS (511433)**

**KEY QUESTIONS :** USDA is establishing 2,500 Service Centers to deliver service to its farm service, rural development, and conservation customers. In doing so, USDA plans to spend hundreds of millions of dollars to modernize information technology for these centers. However, as GAO has reported, USDA has historically had difficulty managing information technology. We will identify USDA's current plans and ongoing efforts to modernize information technology for its service center agencies, and identify the cost estimates associated with these plans.

**TITLE: HUD SYSTEMS INTEGRATION (511436)**

**KEY QUESTIONS :** A major cause of HUD being designated as a high risk department is that its information systems are fragmented and unreliable. Although HUD's spending on system integration efforts has exceeded the original \$100 million estimate, the systems continue to be listed as an internal control material weakness. GAO has been asked to review HUD's system integration efforts to (1) identify the expected total costs and completion date, (2) identify the reasons for delays and cost increases that have occurred since our April 1994 report on HUD IRM planning and management, (3) determine the extent HUD is using required practices to manage the systems integration projects as an investment, and (4) determine if HUD is applying sound systems development practices to reduce risks.

### IMPROVING INFORMATION MANAGEMENT-CAIS

**TITLE: SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION'S MANAGEMENT OF ITS IWS/LAN SYSTEMS MODERNIZATION INVESTMENTS (511226)**

**KEY QUESTIONS :** The Social Security Administration (SSA) faces major challenges in managing and implementing its multibillion-dollar systems modernization effort, the cornerstone of which is its Intelligent Workstation/Local Area Network (IWS/LAN) initiative. (1) How well is SSA managing its IWS/LAN modernization investments?

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## Civil Agencies Information Systems

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**TITLE: HRA 5:REVIEW OF HCFA'S EFFORTS TO TEST AND IMLEMNT COMMERCIAL OFF-THE-SHELF (COTS) SOFTWARE TO DETECT AND REDUCE WASTE, FRAUD, AND ABUSE IN THE MEDICARE PROGRAM (511227)**

**KEY QUESTIONS :** Recently, the Health and Human Services (HHS) Inspector General reported that 14 percent (or about \$23 billion) of Medicare's FY96 payments were improper. Therefore, interest is high in the Health Care Financing Administration's (HCFA) efforts to use technology in helping to reduce fraud and abuse. Our objective is to determine if HCFA has established and is using an adequate methodology for testing commercial claims software in Iowa for potential implementation with its Medicare claims processing systems.

**TITLE: REVIEW OF VA'S IMPLEMENTATION OF CLINGER-COHEN ACT OF 1996 (511233)**

**KEY QUESTIONS :** Because buying and developing information technology (IT) can be a risky undertaking, a systematic investment approach, as prescribed by the Clinger-Cohen Act and other related legislative reforms, can provide federal agencies opportunities to achieve greater benefits from their IT investments. The overall objective of our work will be to assess the Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) implementation of the Clinger-Cohen Act and other legislative reforms as they relate to investments in IT. Specifically, (1) how has VA implemented the Clinger-Cohen Act of 1996 and other legislative reforms as they relate to investments in IT; and, (2) how has VA implemented the Chief Information Officer (CIO) provision of the Clinger-Cohen Act?

**TITLE: VETERANS BENEFITS ADMINISTRATION DATA-CENTER CONSOLIDATION (511235)**

**KEY QUESTIONS :** OMB Bulletin 96-02 requires Executive agencies to reduce operating costs by consolidating data-center operations. Accordingly, the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) and the Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA) had discussed consolidating their respective data centers. However, on March 28, 1997, VA decided to defer data-center consolidation so that it could focus its attention on achieving year 2000 compliance. The requester is concerned that VA has recently changed this position and now plans to complete data center consolidation by June 1998. (1) Has VA altered its plans on data-center consolidation? (2) If so, what is/are VA's reason(s) for this change?

**TITLE: FOLLOW-UP ON SSA'S IMPLEMENTATION OF GAO'S YEAR 2000 RECOMMENDATIONS (511242)**

**KEY QUESTIONS :** SSA has been asked to provide congressional committees with monthly updates on its progress in implementing the recommendations contained in GAO's recently issued year 2000 readiness report (GAO/AIMD-98-6). We were subsequently asked to review SSA's monthly reports and assess SSA's progress in addressing our year 2000 recommendations.

**TITLE: REVIEW OF USDA ACTIONS TO IMPROVE TELECOMMUNICATIONS MANAGEMENT AND ACHIEVE SAVINGS (511431)**

**KEY QUESTIONS :** In 1995 and 1996, GAO reported that USDA had wasted millions of dollars ineffectively managing its \$100 million annual investment in telecommunications. GAO made numerous recommendations to help USDA improve the acquisition and management of its substantial investment in telecommunications resources. Given that about two years have passed, Congress requested that GAO determine what actions have been taken by USDA to address and resolve the telecommunications management problems GAO identified and to what extent have these problems been resolved.

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**TITLE: HRA 28: YEAR 2000 REVIEW OF LEGISLATIVE BRANCH AGENCIES - GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE (GPO) (511437)**

**KEY QUESTIONS :** The year 2000 computing crisis is quickly becoming the most urgent information processing problem facing the government and industry. Because of this, the Chairman of the Legislative Branch Appropriations Subcommittee requested that GAO review the year 2000 programs of legislative branch agencies. This assignment will focus on the Government Printing Office (GPO). Specifically, we will determine whether GPO is adequately preparing for and addressing its year 2000 computing issues.

**TITLE: HRA 28: YEAR 2000 REVIEW OF LEGISLATIVE BRANCH AGENCIES - LIBRARY OF CONGRESS (LOC) (511438)**

**KEY QUESTIONS :** The year 2000 computing crisis is quickly becoming the most urgent information processing problem facing the government and industry. Because of this, the Chairman of the Legislative Branch Appropriations Subcommittee requested that GAO review the year 2000 programs of legislative branch agencies. This assignment will focus on the Library of Congress (LOC). Specifically, we will determine whether LOC is adequately preparing for and addressing its year 2000 computing issues.

**TITLE: HRA 28: YEAR 2000 OF LEGISLATIVE BRANCH AGENCIES - ARCHITECT OF THE CAPITOL (AOC) (511439)**

**KEY QUESTIONS :** The year 2000 computing crisis is quickly becoming the most urgent information processing problem facing the government and industry. Because of this, the Chairman of the Legislative Branch Appropriations Subcommittee requested that GAO review the year 2000 programs of legislative branch agencies. This assignment will focus on the Architect of the Capitol (AOC). Specifically, we will determine whether AOC is adequately preparing for and addressing its year 2000 computing issues.

**TITLE: HRA 28: YEAR 2000 REVIEW OF LEGISLATIVE BRANCH AGENCIES - CONGRESSIONAL BUDGET OFFICE (CBO) (511440)**

**KEY QUESTIONS :** The year 2000 computing crisis is quickly becoming the most urgent information processing problem facing government and industry. Because of this, the Chairman of the Legislative Branch Appropriations Subcommittee requested that GAO review the year 2000 programs of legislative branch agencies. This assignment will focus on the Congressional Budget Office (CBO). Specifically, we will determine whether the CBO is adequately preparing for and addressing its year 2000 computing issues.

**TITLE: HRA 28: YEAR 2000 REVIEW OF LEGISLATIVE BRANCH AGENCIES - CAPITOL POLICE (CP) (511441)**

**KEY QUESTIONS :** The year 2000 computing crisis is quickly becoming the most urgent information processing problem facing government and industry. Because of this, the Chairman of the Legislative Branch Appropriations Subcommittee requested that GAO review the year 2000 programs of legislative branch agencies. This assignment will focus on the Capitol Police (CP). Specifically, we will determine whether the CP is adequately preparing for and addressing its year 2000 computing issues.

**EMERGING TECHNOLOGY ISSUES-CAIS**

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## *Civil Agencies Information Systems*

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**TITLE: HRA 28: YEAR 200 COMPUTING CRISIS: FAA MUST ACT QUICKLY TO PREVENT SYSTEMS FAILURES (511442)**

### **OTHER ISSUE AREA WORK - CAIS**

**TITLE: CONGRESSIONAL OVERSIGHT OF HCFA'S INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY INITIATIVES (511239)**

**KEY QUESTIONS :** The Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA) has cancelled its Medicare automation contract, the Medicare Transaction System (MTS), however it is using the same contractor to complete several portions of the original contract. Separately, HCFA has signed a 1-year follow-on agreement to its fiscal year 1997 interagency agreement with the Los Alamos National Laboratory to develop automated methods to detect fraudulent and abusive Medicare claims. The requester is concerned about HCFA's management of these efforts and is continuing to monitor them. Consequently, GAO has been asked us to assist in monitoring these initiatives.

**TITLE: THE BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT'S (BLM) EFFORTS TO MITIGATE AND MANAGE RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH THE DEVELOPMENT, DEPLOYMENT, AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AUTOMATED LAND AND MINERAL RECORD SYSTEM (ALMRS) (511429)**

**KEY QUESTIONS :** The Bureau of Land Management's (BLM) Automated Land and Mineral Record System (ALMRS), at a cost of over \$500 million, is intended to provide an efficient means of recording, maintaining, and retrieving land description, ownership, and use information to support BLM, other federal programs, and interested parties. BLM is working to complete the development of ALMRS with final testing, certification, and deployment planned for fiscal year 1998. Because of concern about the successful development and implementation of ALMRS, GAO was asked to address (1) whether BLM was effectively managing the project management and technical risks associated with completing, testing, deploying, and implementing ALMRS?



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