

May 7, 2018

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Democratic Leader
U.S. House of Representatives

Dear Speaker Ryan and Leader Pelosi,

On behalf of the member companies of the Professional Services Council (PSC), I write to convey our association's support for the Securely Expediting Clearances Through Reporting Transparency (SECRET) Act (H.R. 3210). The SECRET Act is scheduled for consideration this week in the full House and we urge all members to support its passage.

The SECRET Act will require the Director of the National Background Investigation Bureau (NBIB) to submit quarterly reports on the backlog of personnel security clearances, including the size of the backlog and estimated wait times for initial investigations and period reinvestigations, and report to Congress on efforts to move the government toward Continuous Evaluation and true reciprocal recognition of clearances. Additionally, the bill requires that the Director submit a backlog mitigation plan that includes identified causes of the backlog, planned steps to reduce the backlog, and proposed process reforms to improve the efficiency and quality of clearance investigations.

According to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), 708,000 federal, military, and government contracting personnel were still awaiting clearances at the end of FY17. In previous studies, OMB reported that the average time to complete the fastest 90 percent of initial investigations for Secret clearances rose from 108 days in FY16 to 134 days in FY17. For the fastest 90 percent of Top Secret clearances, time to complete an initial investigation rose from 220 days in FY16 to 331 days in FY17. As the backlog continues to grow, wait times are also increasing.

For the contractor community, recruitment and retention remain as significant challenges. Contractors are often unable to fill positions requiring clearances, even when the positions are funded under existing contracts. Essential work goes unperformed, and critical national security missions are not met. While there is much work to be done—and we urge Congress to continue to prioritize efforts that will improve the security clearance process—the passage of H.R. 3210 will represent a critical step in quantifying, tracking, and mitigating the growing backlog of security clearance investigations.

We complement Congressmen Knight and Connolly for their bipartisan leadership and attention to this issue. If you have any questions or need additional information, please do not hesitate to reach out to me directly.

Respectfully,



Alan Chvotkin
Executive Vice President and Counsel

CC: The Honorable Steve Knight and the Honorable Gerry Connolly