

Oversight of House of Representatives, see section 1(b) of Pub. L. 104-14, set out as a note preceding section 21 of Title 2, The Congress. Committee on Government Reform and Oversight of House of Representatives changed to Committee on Government Reform of House of Representatives by House Resolution No. 5, One Hundred Sixth Congress, Jan. 6, 1999. Committee on Government Reform of House of Representatives changed to Committee on Oversight and Government Reform of House of Representatives by House Resolution No. 6, One Hundred Tenth Congress, Jan. 5, 2007.

§ 716. Availability of information and inspection of records

(a)(1) The Comptroller General is authorized to obtain such agency records as the Comptroller General requires to discharge the duties of the Comptroller General (including audit, evaluation, and investigative duties), including through the bringing of civil actions under this section. In reviewing a civil action under this section, the court shall recognize the continuing force and effect of the authorization in the preceding sentence until such time as the authorization is repealed pursuant to law.

(2) Each agency shall give the Comptroller General information the Comptroller General requires about the duties, powers, activities, organization, and financial transactions of the agency. The Comptroller General may inspect an agency record to get the information. This subsection does not apply to expenditures made under section 3524 or 3526(e) of this title.

(b)(1) When an agency record is not made available to the Comptroller General within a reasonable time, the Comptroller General may make a written request to the head of the agency. The request shall state the authority for inspecting the records and the reason for the inspection. The head of the agency has 20 days after receiving the request to respond. The response shall describe the record withheld and the reason the record is being withheld. If the Comptroller General is not given an opportunity to inspect the record within the 20-day period, the Comptroller General may file a report with the President, the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, the Attorney General, the head of the agency, and Congress.

(2) Through an attorney the Comptroller General designates in writing, the Comptroller General may bring a civil action in the district court of the United States for the District of Columbia to require the head of the agency to produce a record—

(A) after 20 days after a report is filed under paragraph (1) of this subsection; and

(B) subject to subsection (d) of this section.

(3) The Attorney General may represent the head of the agency. The court may punish a failure to obey an order of the court under this subsection as a contempt of court.

(c)(1) Subject to subsection (d) of this section, the Comptroller General may subpoena a record of a person not in the United States Government when the record is not made available to the Comptroller General to which the Comptroller General has access by law or by agreement of that person from whom access is sought. A subpoena shall identify the record and the authority for the inspection and may be issued by the

Comptroller General. The Comptroller General may have an individual serve a subpoena under this subsection by delivering a copy to the person named in the subpoena or by mailing a copy of the subpoena by certified or registered mail, return receipt requested, to the residence or principal place of business of the person. Proof of service is shown by a verified return by the individual serving the subpoena that states how the subpoena was served or by the return receipt signed by the person served.

(2) If a person residing, found, or doing business in a judicial district refuses to comply with a subpoena issued under paragraph (1) of this subsection, the Comptroller General, through an attorney the Comptroller General designates in writing, may bring a civil action in that district court to require the person to produce the record. The court has jurisdiction of the action and may punish a failure to obey an order of the court under this subsection as a contempt of court.

(d)(1) The Comptroller General may not bring a civil action for a record withheld under subsection (b) of this section or issue a subpoena under subsection (c) of this section if—

(A) the record related to activities the President designates as foreign intelligence or counterintelligence activities;

(B) the record is specifically exempted from disclosure to the Comptroller General by a statute that—

(i) without discretion requires that the record be withheld from the Comptroller General;

(ii) establishes particular criteria for withholding the record from the Comptroller General; or

(iii) refers to particular types of records to be withheld from the Comptroller General; or

(C) by the 20th day after a report is filed under subsection (b)(1) of this section, the President or the Director certifies to the Comptroller General and Congress that a record could be withheld under section 552(b)(5) or (7) of title 5 and disclosure reasonably could be expected to impair substantially the operations of the Government.

(2) The President or the Director may not delegate certification under paragraph (1)(C) of this subsection. A certification shall include a complete explanation of the reasons for the certification.

(e)(1) The Comptroller General shall maintain the same level of confidentiality for a record made available under this section as is required of the head of the agency from which it is obtained. Officers and employees of the Government Accountability Office are subject to the same statutory penalties for unauthorized disclosure or use as officers or employees of the agency.

(2) The Comptroller General shall keep information described in section 552(b)(6) of title 5 that the Comptroller General obtains in a way that prevents unwarranted invasions of personal privacy.

(3) This section does not authorize information to be withheld from Congress.

(Pub. L. 97-258, Sept. 13, 1982, 96 Stat. 892; Pub. L. 108-271, §8(b), July 7, 2004, 118 Stat. 814; Pub. L. 115-3, §2(c), Jan. 31, 2017, 131 Stat. 7.)

HISTORICAL AND REVISION NOTES

Revised Section	Source (U.S. Code)	Source (Statutes at Large)
716(a)	31:54(a).	June 10, 1921, ch. 18, §313(a), 42 Stat. 26; Apr. 3, 1980, Pub. L. 96-226, §102, 94 Stat. 312; June 10, 1921, ch. 18, 42 Stat. 20, §313(b)-(f); added Apr. 3, 1980, Pub. L. 96-226, §102, 94 Stat. 312.
716(b)	31:54(b).	
716(c)	31:54(c).	
716(d)	31:54(d).	
716(e)	31:54(e), (f).	

In the section, the word “records” is substituted for “books, documents, papers, or records”, “books, records, correspondence, memoranda, papers, and documents”, and “written information, books, documents, papers, or records” for consistency in the revised title and with other titles of the United States Code. The word “Congress” is substituted for “Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the President of the Senate” for consistency in the revised title.

In subsections (a) and (b), the word “agency” is substituted for “departments and establishments” because of section 701 of the revised title.

In subsection (a), the words “methods of business” are omitted as surplus. The words “or any of his assistants or employees, when duly authorized by him” are omitted because of sections 702(b) and 711 of the revised title. The word “inspect” is substituted for “shall . . . have access to and the right to examine” for consistency. The cross reference to section 3524 is added for clarity.

In subsection (b)(1), the words “to the Comptroller General” are substituted for “access to” for clarity and consistency. The words “in his discretion”, “in addition to subsection (a)”, “a period of”, and “to the written request of the Comptroller General” are omitted as surplus. The words “or any of his designated assistants or employees” are omitted because of sections 702(b) and 711 of the revised title.

In subsection (b)(2), before clause (A), the words “bring a civil action” are substituted for “apply” to conform to rule 2 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure (28 App. U.S.C.). In clause (A), the words “calendar” and “written” are omitted as surplus.

In subsection (b)(3), the words “head of the agency” are substituted for “defendant official” for consistency.

In subsection (c)(1), the words “require by . . . the production of” are omitted as surplus. The words “person not in the United States Government” are substituted for “contractors, subcontractors, or other non-Federal persons” for consistency and to eliminate unnecessary words. The words “from whom access is sought”, “in the case of service by certified or registered mail”, and “post office” are omitted as surplus.

In subsection (c)(2), the words “judicial district” are substituted for “jurisdiction of any district court of the United States” for consistency and to eliminate unnecessary words. The words “contumacy or” are omitted as surplus. The words “may bring a civil action” are substituted for “upon application made by” to conform to rule 2 of the Federal Rules of Civil Procedure (28 App. U.S.C.).

In subsection (d)(1), before clause (A), the words “requiring the production of material” are omitted as surplus. In clause (C), the words “in writing”, “consists of matters which . . . from disclosure”, “United States Code”, “of such material to the Comptroller General”, and “Federal” are omitted as surplus.

In subsection (e)(1), the words “the head of” are added for consistency. The words “from which such material was obtained” are omitted as surplus.

AMENDMENTS

2017—Subsec. (a). Pub. L. 115-3 added par. (1) and redesignated existing provisions as par. (2).

2004—Subsec. (e)(1). Pub. L. 108-271 substituted “Government Accountability Office” for “General Accounting Office”.

§ 717. Evaluating programs and activities of the United States Government

(a) In this section, “agency” means a department, agency, or instrumentality of the United States Government (except a mixed-ownership Government corporation) or the District of Columbia government.

(b) The Comptroller General shall evaluate the results of a program or activity the Government carries out under existing law—

(1) on the initiative of the Comptroller General;

(2) when either House of Congress orders an evaluation; or

(3) when a committee of Congress with jurisdiction over the program or activity requests the evaluation.

(c) The Comptroller General shall develop and recommend to Congress ways to evaluate a program or activity the Government carries out under existing law.

(d)(1) On request of a committee of Congress, the Comptroller General shall help the committee to—

(A) develop a statement of legislative goals and ways to assess and report program performance related to the goals, including recommended ways to assess performance, information to be reported, responsibility for reporting, frequency of reports, and feasibility of pilot testing; and

(B) assess program evaluations prepared by and for an agency.

(2) On request of a member of Congress, the Comptroller General shall give the member a copy of the material the Comptroller General compiles in carrying out this subsection that has been released by the committee for which the material was compiled.

(Pub. L. 97-258, Sept. 13, 1982, 96 Stat. 893.)

HISTORICAL AND REVISION NOTES

Revised Section	Source (U.S. Code)	Source (Statutes at Large)
717(a)	31:1157.	Oct. 26, 1970, Pub. L. 91-510, §207, 84 Stat. 1168.
717(b)	31:1154(a).	
717(c)	31:1154(c).	Oct. 26, 1970, Pub. L. 91-510, §204(a)-(c), 84 Stat. 1168; re-stated July 12, 1974, Pub. L. 93-344, §702(a), 88 Stat. 326.
717(d)	31:1154(b).	

Subsection (a) restates the source provisions because of section 701 of the revised title and for consistency with section 101 of the revised title.

In subsection (b), before clause (1), the word “evaluate” is substituted for “review and evaluate” to eliminate unnecessary words. In clause (3), the words “a committee of Congress” are substituted for “any committee of the House of Representatives or the Senate, or any joint committee of the two Houses” for consistency and to eliminate unnecessary words.

In subsection (c), the word “evaluate” is substituted for “review and evaluation” to eliminate unnecessary words.

In subsection (d)(1), before clause (A), the words “committee of Congress” are substituted for “committee of either House or any joint committee of the two Houses” for consistency and to eliminate unnecessary