

# DOD acquisition reform panel looks to sunset Clinger-Cohen

Defense

- By Lauren C. Williams
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The Section 809 Panel, charged in a 2016 defense bill to streamline and reform Defense Department acquisition practices, issued its [final report](#) Jan. 15 with 58 new recommendations and bringing the grand total to 93 across all three reports.

The panel is known for making [sweeping recommendations](#) in its past reports and this latest installment is no different, with the ultimate goal of shifting DOD's practices towards those of commercial business.

The panel dedicated much attention to IT procurement, including recommendations seeking to exempt DOD from the Clinger-Cohen Act, establishing a revolving fund for IT modernization projects and creating a pilot program for direct contracting with IT consultants.

Clinger-Cohen compliance rules, the report states, are "not only outdated but also a time-consuming burden for programs that are layered on top of DoD's robust resources, requirements and acquisition system."

The section on Clinger-Cohen, the foundational 1996 legislation which required CIOs at big agencies and set the stage for the Federal IT Acquisition Reform Act, also notes that the central CIO role at DOD is "in transition" as a result of the restructuring that gave rise to the chief management officer role.

"Ultimately, a DOD CMO with broader authority, including budget allocation and reprogramming authority, may be more successful [than a CIO] at overseeing business processes and enforcing incremental development," the report states.

The thrust of the report meshes well with DOD's current trajectory: pushing for more partnerships with industry, seeking out small businesses and startups, and putting former industry executives in high-level buying positions.

Panelists ascribed DOD's sluggish acquisition process "to the limited interaction" with industry IT market, which has directly affected warfighting capabilities and causing warfighters to work with "less functionality and at higher operating costs."

The final installment also touched on workforce issues and emphasized government-industry partnerships, training, and better career paths for acquisition professionals.

According to the report, the panel suggested revamping the Defense Acquisition Workforce Improvement Act to focus on qualifications, tailoring acquisition career paths to mission needs, creating an acquisition innovation center at the National Defense University as well as a separate comprehensive public-private exchange program. (DOD launched a Defense-Industry Talent Exchange Pilot Program that focuses on acquisition Jan. 9.)

The panel also discussed the use of acquisition data, saying DOD should use existing defense business system open-data requirements and "consolidate or eliminate competing data architectures within the defense acquisition and financial system."

Other recommendations included reducing and eliminating unnecessary or redundant paperwork, expanding the use and authority of other transaction authorities for production, and implement role-based planning to prevent unnecessary security clearance applications. Restructuring the acquisition code to make it more readable and cutting down on government jargon in commercial contracts were also recommended.

## About the Author



Lauren C. Williams is a staff writer at FCW covering defense and cybersecurity.

Prior to joining FCW, Williams was the tech reporter for ThinkProgress, where she covered everything from internet culture to national security issues. In past positions, Williams covered health care, politics and crime for various publications, including The Seattle Times.

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