

By: Francis Rose, Andrew Wagner | February 7, 2019

Section 809 Report: Streamlining IT acquisition regulations

*Section 809 Panel Commissioner **Bill LaPlante** outlines the panel's recommendations to change IT acquisitions, and why parts of the Clinger-Cohen Act might not be relevant for the Pentagon anymore.*

As part of the Section 809 Panel's recommendations to overhaul acquisition at the Department of Defense, they recommend exempting the Pentagon from a major government IT law. By removing the Defense Department's need to comply with Clinger-Cohen Act provisions, the panel believes that it could eliminate the much of the bureaucratic process that slows IT acquisition.

Commissioner **Bill LaPlante** from the Section 809 Panel says that much of Clinger-Cohen is now redundant. "We looked at this very hard, and what surprised us... was that the tenets of Clinger-Cohen had turned very much into a compliance oriented process. That was not adding value." In acquisition, there's three parts... requirements, the money and the acquisition itself. What we did with IT in the 90s, we added two other legs. We added the CIO compliance piece and later the chief management officer function. We found that there was a lot of redundancy and it wasn't adding value. The original purpose of Clinger-Cohen was spot on, but there are other processes in place that are already taking care of it." Another IT recommendation is to revise regulations to allow for better procurement of "consumption based solutions." LaPlante says that this suggestion was made with cloud in mind. "The fundamental driver behind it is the ubiquity of cloud services. As we looked at the use of cloud... we realized that the contracting mechanisms that were available in FAR part 37 for services, were just not optimized for cloud. Essentially, you can use cloud today in a way you surge. You may use it overnight to do lots of crunching of software, you may not need it two days later. A fixed-price contract doesn't make sense."