

FEDERAL AGENCIES

Watchdog sues for reorganization comments

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A watchdog group filed suit today against the Office of Management and Budget for the public comments the agency received on reorganizing the federal government.

The six-page [complaint](#) from **Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility**, filed in U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, alleges that OMB has refused to divulge those comments.

The suit comes after OMB failed to respond to the group's July 10 Freedom of Information Act request within the statutory deadline.

PEER specifically sought "a compilation of the topics addressed by the public suggestions, including a breakdown of the agencies or programs to which they were directed." It also sought any plans to incorporate suggestions into the Trump administration's policies.

President Trump signed an executive order last year to begin what he called "a long-overdue reorganization" of the executive branch's departments and agencies ([E&E Daily](#), March 14, 2017).

OMB Director Mick Mulvaney — who now wears a second hat as head of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau — was tasked with overseeing the reorganization. Under Mulvaney's watch, OMB solicited more than 100,000 suggestions from the public, said the complaint.

But after the public comment period ended, references to the reorganization were scrubbed from OMB's website, the suit states. A search today of OMB's site for the phrase "reorganization" did not turn up any documents.

"Was the White House call for public involvement just a stunt?" PEER Executive Director Jeff Ruch said in a statement. "After the suggestions were counted did anyone bother reading them?"

Ruch added, "Taco Bell's website displays much more information than the Office of Management and Budget's site now contains. In the Trump administration, the people's business is conducted as if by a privately-held corporation."

The suit echoes concerns from some members of Congress. At a Dec. 14 hearing, Sen. Heidi Heitkamp (D-N.D.) said she was "a little concerned" that OMB hadn't updated the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee on the reorganization.

"Ever since OMB announced that they are in fact looking at reorganization ... we haven't been able to get anyone from OMB to give us a status report," said Heitkamp, ranking member of the Regulatory Affairs and Federal Management Subcommittee.

"If we are going to be successful in doing our oversight," she said, "we're going to need cooperation from OMB. And I'm a little concerned that we're not getting it right now."

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