

## OFFICE OF THE SPECIAL MASTER

### Gemmell v. Hawkins – C. A. No. 16-350 WES

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#### Report (#5) to the Court

This Report is filed pursuant to Section IV.A.4 of the Order Appointing Special Master.

During this past month I have met with the parties and have met twice with Deloitte Consulting to review the implementation of a number of technological fixes pursuant to the corrective action plan that is guiding the activities designed to improve the timeliness of the processing of SNAP applications. A log of my activities is attached.

For the month of February, the Department of Human Services (“DHS”) reported timeliness numbers as follows: 85.5% for expedited SNAP applications and 78.6% for non-expedited SNAP applications. These percentages are slightly below those for January. A major reason for this appears to be that DHS has been processing a number of “late registration” applications that were identified because of a problem in the procedure by which applications are scanned, indexed and registered in order to be processed by the eligibility technicians (ETs). DHS has been meeting regularly to identify the reasons that certain applications are not timely processed and has determined that about 50% of the late-processed applications result from late registration. To correct this, the Director of DHS has directed that applications be scanned into the system and indexed the same day. The effect of this should show up in the March numbers. Attached to this Report is a DHS summary of the progress in timeliness of applications during the past year.

The volume of new SNAP applications continues to be high; there were approximately 4900 applications filed in February. While there is gradual improvement in the percentages, they still fall short of the standard of 96% for both categories. The goal is not only to achieve this

standard, but to maintain it on a monthly basis indefinitely. To this end, DHS has not only been working with Deloitte on technological fixes but has hired 40 new persons to process applications as well as taking other steps spelled out in my last report. DHS has hired a business design consultant to assess workflow and related matters with the goal of moving applicants through the DHS lobbies more quickly and thereby processing applications faster.

There still remain technological problems that Deloitte is addressing. The Director of DHS has met regularly with Deloitte to discuss the technological shortcomings of the system and will continue to do so. There are a number of smaller fixes that have already been implemented and that appear to have the desired effect of improving the timely processing of applications. Each fix should help to close the compliance gap, although it is not possible to assign a percentage to any one fix. A major upgrade is due to be implemented on May 19 provided that the testing has been done and DHS staff has been trained. As stated before, I think this upgrade, together with the other fixes now in place or soon to be in place, will go a long way toward reducing, and hopefully eliminating, the compliance gap. I will continue to be monitoring this and the other fixes through bi-weekly meetings with Deloitte.

DHS, pursuant to my Order issued on March 2 relating to the call center, is now implementing its plan to hire an outside vendor to provide additional support in the call center to shorten the unacceptable long wait times (for all R.I. Bridges programs, not just SNAP applications). I expect to see results from this hiring in April.

My goal remains to achieve compliance by June 2018.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/ Deming E. Sherman

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Special Master

April 2, 2018

cc Counsel of Record (by email)