

## More and More Federal Employees Seeing Security Clearances Pulled

### Financial Troubles and Strained Overseas Relationships to Blame

An increasing number of federal employees are seeking legal counsel after seeing their security clearances pulled – an action that frequently results in job loss. In September, the Office of the Director of National Intelligence reported a 5 percent decline in the number of federal employees who held top secret clearance in the 2010 fiscal year, compared to the previous fiscal year. As the nation struggles to clean up its debt, many federal employees are doing the same. Unfortunately for some, the recession caused financial hardships such as foreclosures that blemish credit reports which are prompting security clearance revocations. “During a security clearance reinvestigation financial records are thoroughly checked. If those records are compromised with something like a foreclosure then the government sees that as trouble” said Christopher Graham, a former Defense Office of Hearings and Appeals (DOHA) administrative judge who practices security clearance representation at Tully Rinckey PLLC. “The government views an individual with financial hardships as someone who is more likely to take a bribe or be blackmailed. That’s not a person they trust to be on their team.” Top secret security clearances are checked every five years; secret clearances are reinvestigated every 10 years while confidential clearances are supervised every 15 years. After a security clearance is suspended based upon the findings of a reinvestigation, Mr. Graham said a federal employee faces a higher risk of losing his or her job. “That makes someone’s security clearance their livelihood and that’s a disturbing thought for families in dire financial straits,” Mr. Graham added. “Since 9/11, the government mandated that security clearances were now needed for all of these jobs that never required one before. At the time it made sense but it no longer does because we are better protected. The government needs to reclassify many of these positions.” Federal employees faced with financial troubles must do two things to prevent their security clearance from being revoked. Mr. Graham implored them to keep all financial records and make good faith efforts to prove to the government that they are paying back their debt or fixing the problem at hand. In addition to money problems, strained U.S. relationships with other countries are becoming more of a factor in the removal of security clearances. “Right now the United States is on rocky ground with the Middle East and Southwest Asia. If a federal employee has a relative who is a citizen and resident of these countries then that’s a concern” warned Mr. Graham. “They’re most likely going to have their security clearance pulled and that’s a tough pill to swallow considering all that the employee may have done for his/her country. The government is basically profiling and it’s legal since there is no right to a security clearance.”