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Winner of cost-cutting contest meets Obama

By Sarah Mimms | smimms@govexec.com | January 28, 2011

The winner of the White House's second annual cost-cutting contest met with President Obama on Friday to discuss her idea of ending automatic delivery of *Federal Register* hard copies.

Business Administrator Trudy Givens, a 19-year Bureau of Prisons employee from Wisconsin, [won](#) the Securing Americans Value and Efficiency award with 20,000 votes in November 2010. She said she was very excited to have the opportunity to meet with Obama. "It was wonderful. It was very historical," she said. "I think it's going to be very memorable for me ... and my family."

The contest is part of the White House's continued efforts to increase government efficiency, one of the cornerstones of the president's State of the Union address. "We shouldn't just give our people a government that's more affordable," Obama said on Tuesday evening. "We should give them a government that's more competent and efficient. We cannot win the future with a government of the past."

Givens' winning idea will allow the government to save money on printing and postage. "I receive the *Federal Register* at the place that I work, and basically it's not being used," she said.

Since statute requires that the *Register* be available in hard copy, she suggested employees be allowed to opt-in for a paper copy to be sent to them. Since Givens' idea was implemented, the number of hard copies of the *Federal Register* shipped daily has dropped dramatically from 25,000 to only 500, according to the White House.




She said she discussed her idea, and how she came up with it, with Obama in the Oval Office on Friday afternoon.

The proposal -- Givens' first entry in the SAVE contest -- was selected out of 18,000 ideas from federal employees nationwide. According to Chief Performance Officer Jeffrey Zients, this was the first year employees and the public were able to vote online. Employees had the opportunity to go on the award website and review, comment on and rank entries. After 57,000 votes were tallied, administration officials selected four finalists and voting was opened to the general public to pick a winner.

President Obama established the SAVE award in 2009 as a means of increasing government efficiency and reducing waste. The idea was to ask rank-and-file federal employees where they thought their agencies could make cuts.

"The president has always said that the best ideas usually don't come from Washington, or from the top," Zients said in a [video](#) on the SAVE award website. "They come from the folks on the front lines. That means listening to those with first-hand experience."

All the SAVE award submissions have been sent to the relevant agencies

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"for potential action and inclusion in the 2012 budget," Zients wrote in a Nov. 15 blog post. "Our gratitude goes out to all of the federal employees who submitted their ideas to boost government performance. ... Each of us in the federal government has the ability and the responsibility to pitch in to make every tax dollar count," Zients wrote.

Givens brought her husband, also a 19-year Bureau of Prisons employee, and their 12-year old daughter, Jessica, with her to Washington. They plan to spend the weekend "taking in the Smithsonian."

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I agree her idea saves money, but what about the other ideas submitted, you would think the top ten or more ideas would all be ways the government could save money. Why not implement the top ten ideas. To run such a big contest and only use one idea is a great waste of money and time.

Dave | Posted January 31, 2011 | 8:57 AM

Our office is one of the 500 still receiving the Federal Register, but we never opted in to continue to receive it. So I guess we're going to have to see if we can now opt-out.

Paul Thomson | Posted January 31, 2011 | 8:25 AM

I hate to be cynical, but what a joke.

JM | Posted January 31, 2011 | 7:38 AM

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