

**“Oversight of the U.S. General Services Administration”**  
**Full Committee on Oversight and Accountability**  
**10:00 AM, November 14, 2023**  
**2154 RHOB**  
**Rep. Gerald E. Connolly (D-VA)**

I planned to use this oversight hearing to address the good government issues that my subcommittee, the Cybersecurity, Information Technology, and Government Innovation subcommittee, is working on that overlap with the mission of the General Services Administration (GSA), including implementation of my legislation the FedRAMP Authorization Act, the Modernizing Government Technology Reform Act, which would reauthorize the transformative Technology Modernization Fund, and the long-running Federal Information Technology Acquisition Reform Act (FITARA) Scorecard, which is approaching its 17<sup>th</sup> iteration.

That was before, however, GSA announced its decision to select Greenbelt, Maryland as the site for a new FBI headquarters. There is overwhelming evidence that GSA administered a site selection process fouled by political interference and repeatedly curated to arrive at a predetermined outcome. At nearly every step, GSA suppressed, dismissed, and overrode the judgement and recommendations of career officials from GSA and the FBI. This has led the Director of the FBI to take the extraordinary step of calling into question the “fairness and transparency in the process and GSA’s failure to adhere to its own site selection plan.”

In July 2023, the agency overturned long-established site selection criteria and scoring rules. The changes made to the criteria were almost exclusively responsive to grievances from representatives of the Greenbelt site meant to tilt the selection process in favor of Greenbelt. GSA made these changes over the objections of the FBI, which wrote to GSA in a June 26, 2023 memo that the original scoring criteria “best balanced the many wide-ranging elements considered for optimal site selection.”

That same month, the agency unilaterally removed a career official from the position of Site Selection Authority, the person tasked with confirming the recommendation of the site selection panel and certifying a final site selection. The agency, instead, installed a political appointee as the Site Selection Authority. Director Wray, once again, raised serious objections to the change. Additionally, the FBI identified potential conflicts of interest the appointee had related to the Greenbelt site. These concerns were never fully addressed by GSA.

In August 2023, the site selection panel, comprised of two career GSA officials and one career FBI official, reached a unanimous decision to select Springfield, Virginia as the home for the new FBI headquarters. The new Site Selection Authority unilaterally overturned the decision of the panel by making changes to the scoring that benefited the Greenbelt site and hurt the Springfield site. According to the FBI, “the justification offered for those changes have been both varied and insufficient.”

In short, GSA changed the original site selection criteria over the objections of the FBI Director. Then changed the person tasked with confirming the final site selection from a career official to a political appointee. That appointee had a conflict of interest tied to the Greenbelt site as identified by the FBI. That appointee then overturned the unanimous decision from a panel of career officials to unilaterally select Greenbelt, and then promptly left the federal government.

It is clear, GSA has overseen a deeply flawed site selection process worse than I have ever witnessed in my time in Congress. This decision must be reversed.

The General Services Administration (GSA) has by no means, covered itself in glory during other recent oversight issues that have come before this Committee. Those problems include the agency's choice to reverse its decision on the constitutionality of maintaining former President Trump's lease of the Old Post Office without proving justification and then former-Administrator Murphy's refusal to ascertain the winner of the 2020 Presidential election.

The recent FBI headquarters site selection is yet another instance in which GSA has shamelessly caved to political pressure putting blatant politics over merit. GSA's reputation for objective procurement processes free of politics has taken a mortal hit from which it will struggle for years into the future.