

**THE STAY-AT-HOME FEDERAL WORKFORCE:
ANOTHER BIDEN-HARRIS LEGACY**

HEARING
BEFORE THE
**COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT
AND GOVERNMENT REFORM**
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THE STAY-AT-HOME FEDERAL WORKFORCE: ANOTHER BIDEN-HARRIS LEGACY

Wednesday, January 15, 2025

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM
Washington, D.C.

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:05 a.m., in room HVC-210, Capitol Visitor Center, Hon. James Comer [Chairman of the Committee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Comer, Turner, Foxx, Grothman, Cloud, Palmer, Higgins, Sessions, Biggs, Mace, Fallon, Donalds, Perry, Timmons, Burchett, Greene, Langworthy, Burlison, Crane, Jack, McGuire, Gill, Connolly, Norton, Lynch, Krishnamoorthi, Mfume, Brown, Stansbury, Garcia, Frost, Lee, Crockett, Randall, Subramanyam, Ansari, Bell, Simon, and Min.

Chairman COMER. The hearing of the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform will come to order.

I want to welcome everyone.

Without objection, the Chair may declare a recess at any time.

I now recognize myself for an opening statement.

I want to welcome everyone here and wish everyone a very good morning. This is the Committee's first hearing of the 119th Congress.

I welcome all of our new Members, and we recognized each of them yesterday. And I welcome the gentleman from Virginia, Mr. Connolly, in his new role as Ranking Member of the full Committee.

To say I am excited about you assuming the role of Ranking Member would be an understatement. I think this is a significant upgrade for the Minority, and I am excited. And I know you are a good man and want to govern.

They will get rid of you if I keep bragging about you.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Yes, please, do not go on.

Chairman COMER. But, anyway, welcome, and we look forward to working with you.

In 5 days, President Trump will take the oath of office and become the 47th President of the United States.

President Trump is going to change the way Washington works and will bring accountability to the unelected bureaucracy. This includes ensuring the Federal workforce is held accountable to the American people and ensuring they actually show up for work at the office.

When President Trump's team enters Federal agency headquarters in and around Washington, DC, they will find them to be mostly empty. That is due to the Biden Administration's failure to end pandemic era telework and bring Federal employees back to the office.

The COVID-19 pandemic is long over. Everyone knows that. It has been over for a long time.

It has been nearly 2 years since the House passed the SHOW UP Act, our bill to return Federal employees' telework to pre-pandemic levels, which only collected dust on Senator Schumer's desk last Congress.

Yet, we all see the situation in downtown Washington. The Government Accountability Office found that 17 of the largest 24 Federal agency headquarters in the D.C. area were less than 25 percent occupied, some much less than 25 percent occupied.

A separate study by the Public Buildings Reform Board determined occupancy rates were just half that at 12 percent—12 percent occupancy.

The Federal Government is the largest employer and office space occupant in D.C. Taxpayer money is being wasted to lease and maintain all that expensive, empty office space.

The resulting lack of foot traffic in the city is also economically devastating for the District, as D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser has testified.

To be clear, since the height of the pandemic, much of the Federal workforce has gotten up and gone to work every day. This, for example, includes those working in veterans' hospitals, patrolling the border, and performing other law enforcement functions.

But the Biden Administration's own data shows that the vast majority of Federal office workers around the Nation remain at home either some, most, or all the time. In fact, nearly 228,000—228,000—employees work entirely from home. The majority of the Department of Education staff now consists of remote employees who never come to the office.

And that is just the official data. In our telework investigation, we learned that most agencies have not been effectively tracking when employees are in the office. In other words, they do not even know if they are coming to work or not.

In the Biden-Harris Administration the example is set from the top. The Committee heard testimony last Congress from the former head of the General Services Administration who worked remotely from Missouri while GSA maintained a virtually empty headquarters building in downtown D.C. GSA is, of course, the agency in charge of Federal real estate management.

We also heard from the former head of the Biden-Harris Office of Personnel Management. Under oath, she repeatedly told Members she did not know how many D.C. area employees were going to their office. OPM is, of course, the agency in charge of governmentwide telework, and she did not even know what percentage of the Federal workforce was teleworking.

Throughout our investigation of Federal telework, and despite repeated hearings at both the full Committee, as well as the subcommittee-level led by Chairman Pete Sessions, Biden-Harris appointees failed to provide requested data about agency telework.

They do not know the impact massive telework has had on agency mission achievement or citizen services. They have no idea.

We do know that agencies have been plagued by poor performance. The Social Security Administration, for instance, has a record backlog of initial disability claims. There are long wait times at SSA field offices. Some of our constituents wait a half hour or longer to get their calls taken. It can take even longer for walk-ins to get seen in a field office.

Yet, nearly all SSA employees telework. A lot. In fact, they work from home more often than not, per the Administration's own data.

We will hear today from Martin O'Malley who left his job as SSA Commissioner late last November. Before doing so, he signed an agreement extending over 40,000 SSA union members' telework arrangement through October 2029. That is through the entire Trump Administration and beyond.

And he is not the only agency that inked a long-term telework deal for employees in the past year.

How is this good for democracy? The voters just delivered President Trump an electoral mandate to run the executive branch. Should union contracts designed to tie his hands take precedence over the mandate by the people?

What adds insult to injury is that the American Federation of Government Employees union, which fought to make telework an entitlement at Social Security and other agencies, is now recalling its own staff to union headquarters.

Based on a conversation with the American Federation of Government Employees union spokesman, the *Washington Post* reports the union is returning its own employees to the office, quote, "to ensure that the staff is fully prepared to tackle an onslaught of Trump policies targeting the Federal workforce," end quote.

The union's message could not be clearer. For those doing the people's business in a Federal job, showing up should be optional. Those charged with blunting the Trump agenda, however, they need to be on their A game, and that requires, guess what, showing up in person.

Well, I, for one, want Federal employees to also be on their A game, and so do the American people. Federal workers must show up for them.

I look forward to working with the Trump Administration and getting Federal employees back to work.

With that, I will yield to the Ranking Member for his opening statement, and then we will have two other opening statements by Ms. Greene and by Mr. Mfume, I believe.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thanks for calling this first hearing of the 119th Congress for our Committee, and, of course, the first hearing in which I have the privilege of presiding as Ranking Member of the Committee.

During my first term in Congress back in '09, I was proud to co-author the Telework Enhancement Act of 2010. In a testament to what we can accomplish when we work together, that bill promoted a growing and robust Federal telework program and had bipartisan support.

Telework used to be something we could genuinely call a bipartisan issue. But some have chosen to demagogue the issue to score

cheap political points and to carry out the directives of billionaire oligarchs, like Elon Musk, who have called for an end to all telework and remote work no matter who that hurts, no matter including the military and their spouses and people who need workplace accommodations.

In all we do in this Committee, we should ask ourselves: How can we make the Federal Government work better for families and hardworking Americans? How can we ensure that we are getting the Federal benefits they earned and deserve faster and without headache?

When it comes to Federal telework, we should be focused on employee performance and the bottom line, not a rigid schedule of 5 days a week, 8 hours a day. There is a difference between universal remote working in a pandemic and a scheduled architecture for telework that is programmed, approved, and overseen.

Telework has long been a powerful tool for the Federal Government to hire, recruit, and retain the best employees, and that is going to be increasingly true with the younger generation of workers.

Let us be clear, the Federal Government's pandemic era telework policy—maximum telework—was something completely different from the structured telework program we created in the Telework Enhancement Act.

Maximum telework was an emergency response to a public health crisis that protected workers while ensuring continuity of operations for Federal agencies. Some parts of it worked. Some did not. But regardless, it was terminated.

The structured telework programs in place now at Federal agencies are contractual agreements designed to maximize benefits for the American people.

Some of my Republican colleagues proposed throwing out the good with the bad by falsely implying that properly administered and structured telework policies allow Federal workers to shirk their duties. But agency performance data does not support that argument—including, I might add, at Administrator O'Malley's Social Security Administration.

We know that one-size-fits-all approaches to telework like the other ones that are advanced simply are not sustainable. If we want a Federal workforce operating at its best, we have got to be flexible.

The nonpartisan Government Accountability Office found that telework is a vital tool for agencies to fill high-need positions and that when positions are not eligible for telework it can be very difficult to find people willing to do the job.

If our ultimate aim is to attract the most effective workforce to serve the American people well, why would we prevent Federal managers from doing what works to get the job done?

If you listen to the narrative coming from some, you would think that the Federal telework program is anomalous, an aberration in a Nation full of private sector workers that report to the office every single day. But, once again, the numbers do not support that assertion.

In fact, the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office found that private sector workers are working from home more than their

Federal counterparts. Telework-eligible workers in the Federal Government tend to be people who have no shortage of options for higher-paying jobs outside of the government.

And to put it bluntly, younger workers in the labor market expect and even demand the flexibility that comes from telework, a reality we must face when we look at our aging Federal workforce. Workers over 50 make up 42 percent of the Federal workforce today, as compared to just 33 percent of the private sector labor force.

Moreover, about 15 percent of Federal workers are eligible to retire, right this moment.

Unfortunately, some want to make the Federal workplace an inhospitable environment and drive workers away, making it less desirable as a workplace and as a place for younger workers to want to apply.

It is a continuation, frankly, of the cruelty and attacks on Federal agencies and employees that we saw in the previous administration: pay freezes; executive orders targeting collective bargaining; relocations; and, of course, the crown jewel, Schedule F. That would replace, perhaps, as many as 100,000 nonpolitical merit-based Federal workers with partisan lackeys, and Trump is promising to do it all again.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today about why they think some have chosen as their very first witness of the new Congress a pro-worker former Commissioner of the Social Security Administration, and whether their attacks on Mr. O'Malley are a preview of an anti-worker agenda bent on cutting Social Security benefits among other proposed ideas coming out of Project 2025 and the so-called DOGE.

With that, I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman COMER. The gentleman yields back.

The Chair now recognizes Ms. Greene for an opening statement.

Ms. GREENE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Good morning.

I am glad this Committee's first hearing is dealing with the Federal workforce. Government accountability needs to start with Federal employees. And if you ask any American, they will tell you straight to your face they are not happy with the Federal workforce.

This Congress, I will be chairing the Subcommittee on Delivering on Government Efficiency. We will be working closely with the Trump Administration and its DOGE effort to make our government more efficient, more cost-effective, and more accountable.

During President Trump's first term, Federal employees tried to undermine the America First agenda at every turn. The swamp was hard at work, not for the American people but, indeed, to subvert their will. Make no mistake. They will attempt to do the same this term.

A new poll that nearly half of all Federal employees plan to resist Trump, it shows this includes 73 percent of Democrat Federal employees. This is totally unacceptable.

Unelected bureaucrats do not have a mandate from the American voters. President Trump does. And President Trump is the incoming President starting on Monday. This means that the unelected

bureaucrats that work for the Federal Government will come into place, and they will come to heel to the American people that have delivered the mandate.

Again, President Trump was elected to put the Federal bureaucracy in its place—and that includes back in the office. However, Mr. O'Malley signed a contract on his way out the door of the Social Security Administration to stifle President Trump's authority over the Federal workforce. This locks in telework policies from the Biden era.

Mr. O'Malley left his job as head of the Social Security Administration in late November to run to be Chairman of the DNC. But right before he did, he gave a parting gift to his friends, his buddies, who run the largest Federal employee union. He signed a contract with the American Federation of Government Employees that ensures Biden-era telework levels for tens of thousands of Social Security employees until 2029.

Keep in mind, this was the union he was supposed to be negotiating against, not for.

As Commissioner of the Social Security Administration, Mr. O'Malley was supposed to be serving the American taxpayers who paid his salary. Instead, he worked for the union that endorsed him for his job.

And while Mr. O'Malley was signing off on this contract to allow public servants to continue to work from home, the union he negotiated the deal for was starting to send their own employees back to their own offices in Washington.

Unfortunately, this hypocrisy is nothing new from the Democrats and their special interests, and it is certainly something my subcommittee will work with President Trump to crack down on.

I am thankful to Chairman Comer that we are starting this work today.

It is also absurd that taxpayers are literally paying Federal employees to do business for their own unions. In other words, when unelected bureaucrats are supposed to be working for the American people, they are, instead, doing work for their unions.

The Biden Administration has refused to publish totals for the use and cost of official time, which prior administrations released every year.

However, based on available data, we can assume two or three hundred million dollars are being spent annually on official time. That is two or three billion dollars over a decade that Americans are paying for unelected bureaucrats to not do their job.

As I work with DOGE on cost-cutting ideas, official time will be among the many items on the list.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

Chairman COMER. The gentlelady yields back.

The Chair now recognizes Mr. Mfume for an opening statement.

Mr. MFUME. Thank you very much, Chairman Comer, Ranking Member Connolly, to all of our witnesses who are appearing here today. A special hello to Mr. O'Malley, former Mayor of Baltimore and Governor of the state of Maryland. And a special hello to Tom Davis, a former Congressman who could not stay away, had to come back.

Mr. Chairman, as Members of Congress charged with the task of oversight, I think it is fair to say we should all have the same expectations when it comes to performance and when it comes, quite frankly, to productivity, and that no matter the level of Federal telework, each agency choosing to utilize telework must, in fact, operate and execute their own unique mission effectively and efficiently.

I think it is fair to say what this means is that Congress has a duty to engage and work with nonpartisan, objective organizations where possible to ensure that agency heads throughout government are properly collecting data and evaluating the impact of telework.

It means also that Congress must provide the proper levels of funding to allow agency heads to be able to hire workers that they, in fact, need to do the work and to evaluate telework performance on a regular basis with a regular standard.

What this does not mean, I think it is fair to say, is that all Federal employees who are teleworking are lazy or apathetic or are not doing their job, and it does not mean that all telework should be abandoned or eliminated.

While we are all here trying to, I hope, seek and find common ground on this matter, it certainly does not mean that any of us sitting as lawmakers have any sort of right to harass or to denigrate Federal employees/American citizens who have chosen to dedicate their life and their life's employment to public service.

I think it is also fair to say that we must remember that in the wake of COVID-19, millions of Americans, including Federal workers, were forced to shift to telework.

Telework was not always perfect, but in difficult conditions, lest we forget, our hardworking Federal employees—who exist, by the way, in all of our districts—delivered over and over again during that period for the American people.

While the pandemic and public health emergencies raged on and ultimately ended, President Biden initiated a return to Federal offices in August 2023. Today, according to the Office of Personnel Management, about half of all Federal employees are eligible for telework—eligible, not doing it—and while 10 percent are fully remote.

Currently, across the Federal Government, telework-eligible employees spend about 61 percent of their time in the office. These figures mean that we find ourselves in a place where telework has become an integral part of the Federal landscape.

Evidence borne out shows over and over again the fact that telework with the right safeguards can lead to improved productivity and better attract and retain sorely needed talent.

For example, a recent GAO report shared that Veterans Benefits Administration found that telework helped employee engagement, as well as employee retention. And the Social Security Administration experienced a 6.2 percent gain in productivity last year—while, I should say, in a telework posture.

At the end of the day, telework is not a cure-all or a be-all, it is simply a tool, and like any other tool has its value, its worth. So, instead of taking that out of the toolbox, we ought to do a better job, I think, of trying to find a way to uplift our Federal employ-

ees and examining how we can use the tool of telework to improve our Federal workforce and the Federal services they provide.

So, as we enter into this hearing, the first of the 119th Congress, this Committee, I think, has a real choice. We can commit to doing the real hard oversight and cooperation needed to actually improve the efficiency and the effectiveness of our government, or we can give in to attempts to score political points.

When I say efficiency and effectiveness, I think that ought to be the goal of all of us. And so, as we examine this whole area of telework, if that is our guidepost, our North Star, then, ultimately, we will find a way that increases the effectiveness and the efficiency of our workforce.

And so, it is my real hope that all of us, colleagues on both sides of the aisle, make the right choice as we move forward.

And, Mr. Chairman, I yield back. Thank you for the time.

Chairman COMER. The gentleman yields back.

I am very pleased to introduce our witnesses today. I think we have a very impressive panel.

Mr. Martin O'Malley is the former Commissioner of the U.S. Social Security Administration. Prior to that, Mr. O'Malley was the Governor of Maryland. He also served two terms as Mayor of Baltimore.

And, Mr. O'Malley, I might add that Mr. Mfume and I are big Baltimore Ravens fans.

Rachel Greszler is a senior research fellow at the Heritage Foundation, a visiting fellow in workforce at the Economic Policy Innovation Center. Ms. Greszler specializes in retirement and labor policies and worker compensation, including with respect to Federal employees.

No stranger to this Committee, former Congressman Tom Davis is the President of the Federal City Council, which promotes economic development in the Nation's Capital. Mr. Davis represented the 11th congressional District of Virginia for seven terms.

And when Mr. Connolly comes back, he is going to have a special welcome to you as well. I believe that is his old district.

While in Congress, Mr. Davis served as Chairman of this Committee, the House Oversight Committee, from 2003 to 2007.

We want to welcome you back, Congressman.

And Mika Cross is a workforce expert speaker and strategist. Ms. Cross has worked with the Federal Government agencies and private industry to help entities leverage flexible, remote, and hybrid work.

Again, welcome all of our witnesses.

Pursuant to Committee Rule 9(g), the witnesses will please stand and raise their right hand.

Do you solemnly swear or affirm that the testimony you are about to give is the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

[Chorus of ayes.]

Chairman COMER. Let the record show that the witnesses answered in the affirmative.

Thank you all, and please take your seat.

Again, we appreciate you being here today and look forward to your testimony.

Let me remind the witnesses that we have read your written statement, and it will appear in full in the hearing record. Please limit your oral statement to 5 minutes.

As a reminder, please press the button on the microphone in front of you so that it is on, and the Members can hear you. When you begin to speak, the light in front of you will turn green. After 4 minutes, it will turn yellow. When the red light comes on, your 5 minutes have expired, and we ask that you please wrap it up.

I now recognize Mr. O'Malley for his opening statement.

**STATEMENT OF MARTIN O'MALLEY
FORMER COMMISSIONER
SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION**

Mr. O'MALLEY. Mr. Chairman, Members of the Committee, it is a great honor to be with all of you.

Social Security is a lifeline to 72 million Americans all across the United States. Fifty percent of American seniors living alone depend entirely on Social Security to keep them out of poverty, not to mention millions of people with disabilities also depend on Social Security to keep them out of poverty, to keep them from dying in poverty.

But after 10 years of Congress reducing customer service staffing at Social Security to a 50-year low, the challenge faced by this vitally important agency is, perhaps, the most daunting in its 89-year history, and that is saying a lot. But the reason for this crisis is no mystery.

Social Security today is struggling to serve more customers than ever—and we all knew they were coming—more customers than ever with staffing that Congress has reduced to a 50-year low. This hard but central truth is the underlying operational context of everything we will discuss here today.

And I do not believe that this was your intention. In fact, Appropriations Chairman Tom Cole, after learning of this reality, said to me that it was more a matter of congressional neglect than it was of congressional intent.

But this is what happens when an agency is forced to serve more and more customers than ever with fewer and fewer staff year after year after year. The American people deserve better. In fact, they have already paid for better.

I know your offices have received their calls. I know you have heard their cries. Some of you will, therefore, be glad to learn that over the last year, notwithstanding the yawning, gaping, growing mismatch between rising customers and declining staff, the agency was led through a series of actions that achieved real measurable progress on some of its toughest problems.

We drove down the speed to answer on the 1-800 number from 42 minutes at the beginning of last year to 12.8 minutes in October 2024.

We eliminated the clawback cruelty that used to intercept 100 percent of the beneficiary's monthly benefit if there was a mistake in overpayment.

We cleared more disability cases than we received for the first time in years. For 27 weeks in a row, we reduced the backlog of

administrative law judge disability hearings and their average processing times, both to 30-year lows.

And we drove up overall productivity by 6.2 percent. To repeat, last year we drove up productivity by 6.2 percent, the largest single-year increase since 2012.

The dramatic turnaround achieved last year is important. People's lives depend on this agency. But, men and women of the Committee, the mismatch between rising customers and reduced staffing is growing, and only you can address this problem, not by cutting staff, not by falsely accusing staff of failing to work hard enough, but by restoring the customer service for which Americans have already paid, worked their whole life to pay for.

In conclusion, the turnaround in customer service achieved by the hardworking men and women of the Social Security Administration last year was an achievement unrivaled by any agency in the Federal Government in recent years. But as the number of American beneficiary customers continues to climb, the people of the United States who depend on Social Security urgently need your help right now.

I look forward to answering your questions. And I yield back my time.

Chairman COMER. The gentleman yields back.

Before I recognize Congressman Davis, I am going to yield to Mr. Connolly.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I was derelict in my opening statement not to welcome back my friend and colleague, Tom Davis, who served both as Ranking Member and as Chairman of this Committee with distinguished service. He was my predecessor in the 11th District of Virginia, he was my predecessor as Chairman of Fairfax County, and he was my predecessor as a member of the Board. So, our two careers have kind of tracked each other over many years.

And it is great to see you. Welcome back, Tom.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman COMER. Congressman Davis, I now recognize you for your opening statement.

**STATEMENT OF TOM DAVIS
PRESIDENT
FEDERAL CITY COUNCIL**

Mr. DAVIS. Thank you very much.

And, Mr. Connolly, thank you. Congratulations on your new role. Just for the record, I left office undefeated and unindicted. I just retired.

Chairman Comer, Ranking Member Connolly, and Members of the Committee, I appreciate the opportunity to testify.

I am Tom Davis. One of my roles is President of the Federal City Council. This is a civic organization established in 1954. We have over 250 businesses dedicated to the improvement of our Nation's Capital. We work at the intersection of Federal and local Washington to create a more economically and socially vibrant District of Columbia.

Washington, DC, is the epicenter of Federal operations, with 374,000 Federal employees in the region representing 11.1 percent of the regional workforce, including 162,000 in the District itself, 44.3 percent of the District's workforce. When the Federal Government sneezes, D.C. and the region catch a cold.

Today, Washington has the highest work-from-home rate in the country, according to the U.S. Census, with real-time occupancy data from Kastle Systems showing a D.C. ranking consistently last among major cities.

This unprecedented shift to remote work has devastated our local economy in four critical areas.

First, the impact on small businesses has been severe. D.C. office activity, as measured by Kastle Systems, remains at less than half of its pre-COVID level.

The exodus forced the closure of at least 375 small businesses immediately after COVID, with downtown retail vacancy rates more than doubling from 10 percent in 2019 to 22 percent in 2023.

These are not just statistics. They represent family owned restaurants, neighborhood cafes, and local shops that relied on the daily presence of Federal workers.

Remote-capable workers typically spend \$127 a week near their workplace on food, retail, and services. Spending now has been shifted to other areas.

Second, this shift has triggered a fiscal crisis through declining commercial property values and reduced tax revenues. D.C.'s office vacancy rate has reached an unprecedented 21.2 percent, with vacant office space representing 8.4 million square feet, a staggering 46.2 percent jump between 2020 and 2023.

This vacancy crisis has led to plummeting commercial property values and corresponding tax revenue declines, forcing the District to implement over \$500 million in budget cuts affecting essential services.

This economic impact extends to Virginia and Maryland where tax bases are declining as expenditures need to expand, particularly at Metro.

Third, our public transit systems are facing an existential threat. Pre-pandemic Federal employees represent 40 percent of Metro's weekday ridership. By 2021, this collapsed to just 14 percent, causing Federal passenger revenues to plunge from \$180 million to \$25 million. This dramatic decline has contributed to huge operating gaps in Metro's budget, both capital and its ongoing budgets.

It also has affected the Virginia Railway Express and the MARC system in Maryland.

Fourth, and perhaps most concerning, the impact on downtown vitality and Federal operations. Recent GAO findings show that 17 of 24 Federal agencies reviewed used just 25 percent or less of their headquarter's capacity during 2023.

This underutilization drains Federal resources while creating dead zones in our Federal enclave. Empty streets and vacant buildings contribute to safety concerns, while previously vibrant neighborhoods have experienced notable declines in cultural and social activities.

The Federal Government has demonstrated remarkable resilience during the pandemic keeping operations running under unprecedented circumstances.

But as private sector employees across the country scale back their remote work, the Federal Government has become an outlier. This position not only impacts operational effectiveness, but threatens the economic and social fabric of our Nation's Capital.

While telework flexibility has, perhaps, an enhanced space in workforce management today, the current situation has created unsustainable challenges for our region.

We need a balanced approach that recognizes both the benefits of workplace flexibility and the essential role that in-person work plays in maintaining economic vitality, fostering innovation, and supporting the countless small businesses and Federal services on Federal workers.

The private sector is far ahead of the Federal Government on this issue because having workers in the office is proving to be more productive and effective. The Federal Government must follow and set a positive example.

Federal contractors in particular take their cues from the Federal Government. A return-to-office strategy that brings back more Federal workers to their workplace would help stabilize our local economy, support small businesses, restore public transit ridership, and revitalize the downtown areas.

This is not just about maintaining buildings. It is about maintaining the vibrant collaborative environment that has long made Washington, DC, a unique and dynamic Capital City.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify. I look forward to your questions.

Chairman COMER. Thank you.

I now recognize Ms. Greszler for her opening statement.

**STATEMENT OF RACHEL GRESZLER
VISITING FELLOW IN WORKFORCE
ECONOMIC POLICY INNOVATION CENTER**

Ms. GRESZLER. Good morning, and thank you for the opportunity to be here today.

My name is Rachel Greszler, and I am a visiting fellow in workforce at the Economic Policy Innovation Center.

Today I would like to briefly review the state of Federal telework, discuss how a lack of accountability hinders effective telework, and offer a few policies to improve it.

According to the Office of Personnel Management, 43 percent of Federal employees teleworked in 2023. That is nearly twice the 22 percent that teleworked in 2019.

The Telework Enhancement Act of 2010 requires agencies to have telework policies, to determine which positions are eligible for telework, and to, quote, "ensure that telework does not diminish employee performance or agency operations."

It is the President's authority under Article II. His duties are to supervise executive agencies and faithfully execute the laws, including managing telework policies.

The Biden Administration rightly noted that the law does not mandate telework or confer a legal right or entitlement to telework.

Subsequently, and following a record high 47 percent of Federal employees who teleworked in 2022, the Biden Administration directed agencies to aggressively implement a substantial increase in meaningful in-person work, noting that, quote, “It was critical for the well-being of our teams and will enable us to deliver better results for the American people.”

The incoming Trump Administration also has the right and duty to pursue its own telework policies. And telework can be very useful if it is flexible, responsive, and employees are held accountable.

But that can be hard to accomplish with civil service protections and practices that make it extremely difficult, costly, and time-consuming to effectively discipline or dismiss Federal employees.

For example, it took years to fire a senior IRS employee who routinely abused his remote arrangement by playing golf during the workday. In the private sector, he would have been fired in a day.

When accountability requires so much time and effort by managers, it is not surprising that only 32 percent of Federal employees say that steps are taken in their work unit to deal with a poor performer who cannot or will not improve.

A lack of accountability hurts employee morale, it wastes taxpayer dollars, and it enables misuse and abuse of telework.

Fortunately, many agencies include provisions in their telework plans that prevent individuals who are on performance improvement plans from being eligible for telework. But some, instead, specifically maintain the rights of individuals who are on performance improvement plans to telework.

Some agencies have also made highly problematic changes to telework provisions in an apparent attempt to thwart the incoming Trump Administration.

The Social Security Administration modified its collective bargaining agreement on November 27 to strike out management’s ability to eliminate approved telework due to operational needs or an employee’s performance and to strike out the authority of deputy commissioners to set telework policies, replacing that previous authority with a requirement that the new Administration’s incoming deputy commissioners, quote, “adhere to the current number of telework days, eligible positions, and percentage of employees permitted to telework until October 25, 2029.”

This is especially concerning considering that 98.5 percent of SSA employees are eligible for telework. That leaves fewer than 900 SSA employees who are not eligible for telework spread across more than 1,400 SSA offices and serving 73 million people.

Another concerning aspect of this, and of all collective bargaining agreements, is that taxpayers subsidize unions through official time, which means paying Federal employees to work for their unions instead of doing their government jobs.

That includes things like nurses at the VA spending 100 percent of their time working for the union instead of treating veterans and a VA hospital allocating half of its hospital wing primarily for the union’s use.

The irony of all this official time is that Federal employees cannot bargain for pay or benefits, so they are often left negotiating

for tedious things like the heights of cubicle space, the right to smoke on smoke-free campuses, or the right to wear Spandex at work.

Telework can be useful, but a lack of accountability contributes to abuse and could lead to blanket restrictions.

To promote more responsible and effective telework, policy-makers should first maximize telework savings by getting rid of unused office space and ensuring the correct locality-based pay adjustments.

Second, they should prevent collective bargaining agreements from obstructing a new President's legal duties, including, if necessary, amending the Federal Service Labor-Management Relations Statute.

And third, do not pay Federal employees to work for their unions instead of the jobs they were hired to perform.

Thank you.

Chairman COMER. Thank you.

The Chair now recognizes Ms. Cross for her opening statement.

**STATEMENT OF MIKA J. CROSS
(MINORITY WITNESS)
WORKPLACE TRANSFORMATION STRATEGIST
AND FEDERAL WORKPLACE EXPERT**

Ms. CROSS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member Connolly and distinguished Members of this Committee. Thanks for having me.

I have served America both in and out of uniform for more than two decades. I worked in areas like the United States intelligence community, the Department of Labor, the Office of Personnel Management—I could go on and on—the United States Department of Agriculture, before jumping over to private industry, where I worked for a fully remote company called FlexJobs.

And when I did, I vowed to bring back the best and promising practices to share with government agencies for the purposes of efficiency, accountability, and strengthening the way that we work and serve America.

The title of this hearing suggests that telework in the Federal Government is new, but it has been around for decades and decades offering cost-efficient operations during emergencies and weather events even while expanding job opportunities nationwide in areas like my home state of Maine, in Georgia where I served, and in Mr. Chairman's home state of Kentucky.

Before the pandemic, less than 5 percent of the United States workforce worked from home. During the pandemic, over 60 percent did, and it has now stabilized at between 30 and 40 percent, with Federal telework mirroring rates as in private industry.

Last year, telework saved taxpayers \$230 million through reduced office space and lower operating costs. And the 2024 OPM report to Congress showed the lowest Federal telework participation rates in 5 years, with only 7 percent of the Federal workers working fully remote and 43 percent teleworking at least monthly.

In contrast, in states like yours, 59 percent of public servants, state and local government employees, were teleworking in a hy-

brid environment last year, as compared to the 43 percent in the Federal Government.

Telework and flexible work have revolutionized productivity and engagement and recruitment in areas like the intelligence community and for law enforcement agencies. During the pandemic, the IC quickly adopted telework and other flexibilities, boosting productivity and engagement scores to more than 76 percent in 2020, up from 69 percent in 2019.

Today, the IC ranks No. 1 among large agencies in work-life balance on the Best Places to Work list across the Federal Government.

And a recent GAO report found that frequent teleworkers at USCIS outperformed less frequent teleworkers in accountability and customer responsiveness, and job applicants showed three times more interest in remote positions even over jobs that offered telework, highlighting the critical impact on recruitment for mission critical roles.

The 2024 National Defense Authorization Act also emphasizes the critical role of remote work in military readiness. Many military families rely on dual incomes and live in rural areas across this country with limited job opportunities. So, high unemployment rates among military spouses create financial strain, negatively impacting reenlistment and retention rates.

The NDAA mandates GAO to also report on Federal telework to ensure that Federal remote jobs are accessible for military spouses, and remote and telework is also essential for retaining foreign service officers, which impacts both military readiness and national security.

Attracting remote workers and creating more remote jobs can revitalize local communities, breathe new life into downtowns, and support rural communities. The Tulsa Remote program is a prime example, generating more than \$563 million in employment income by attracting more than 2,900 remote workers to live and work there.

Imagine the potential if we leverage remote work nationwide to reverse brain drain and bring more jobs to states, support local businesses around the country, and prevent economic decline in both downtown areas and rural communities.

Four years ago, I testified before this Committee on the future of Federal work to leverage lessons from the pandemic, and since then work dynamics have continued to change dramatically, posing challenges for all employers, in industry and across the government.

Despite return-to-office headlines, the best employers understand that flexible work is here to stay because enforcing rigid return-to-office policies can harm performance, productivity, and even profitability.

A recent KPMG survey shows that only one-third of U.S. CEOs expect a full return to office within the next 3 years. Flexible companies see better financial growth, and they outperform those with strict RTO mandates, which lead to lower engagement and often also lead to the attrition of your top performers, the very ones you want, to leave. They are not going to push out the ones that you want to hold accountable.

For over two decades, I also personally balanced a successful career in government while teleworking and while parenting my two kids as a single parent. It allowed me to manage my responsibilities as a single mother. And in today's competitive talent market, offering flexibility is essential for productivity, competitiveness, and long-term success.

Thank you.

Chairman COMER. Thank you.

We will now begin the Member questions. The Chair recognizes Mr. Turner from Ohio.

Mr. TURNER. Mr. Chairman, thank you. And thank you for having this hearing on this important issue.

Ms. Cross, I just want to point out first off that there is no one on this Committee that is opposed to remote work. The Members of this Committee all work from multiple locations. So, we understand that where and when appropriate, remote work is essential. The issue is an absent workforce and when and where is too much?

And I want to thank you for your service to your country. I am particularly interested in your testimony because I am actually the Chairman of the Intelligence Committee, and you cite some specific information about the intelligence community workforce.

And I want to thank you for your work. You have worked on quality of life and workforce improvement for the Intelligence Committee, but you cite some statistics that I believe are a little misleading, and I want to walk you through those.

In your opening statement, you claim that the U.S. intelligence community is a top place to work in the Federal Government—I agree—and you credit it to telework.

However, the survey you cite and the graphic in your statement shows that the IC has been ranked in the top five agencies since 2012, long before the COVID-19 expansion of telework.

Likewise, you highlight the IC as a top three agency in engagement and satisfaction, again, crediting telework, but the IC held that same top three ranking, by your own statistics, in 2019 before the increase in telework.

Finally, the increased engagement scores that you use to advocate for telework, in the high 70s in 2020—by the way, in 2020, in the height you actually cite, it is the height of the pandemic, which actually nobody was too happy then. It is in the high 70s. Yet your own statement contradicts itself when you acknowledge that even with a shift back to in-person work engagement, the levels remained in the 70s in 2023.

So, it seems like your statistics do not necessarily prove your conclusion because it proves a high satisfaction even though you are citing that there is telework and there is options of flexible work.

So, I want to give you an option—an opportunity—to at least discuss the fact that your statistics show that the intelligence community, even without telework or remote work options, remains a very high satisfactory place to work.

Ms. CROSS. Thank you. Yes, I am happy to address that, and those are great points because I did not mean to convey that telework and remote work were the only factors that drove engagement. But studies show across industry in Gallup research—

Mr. TURNER. Well, I have got limited time. So, I just appreciate that you have said that.

Ms. CROSS. Oh. OK.

Mr. TURNER. So, Ms. Cross, the next aspect, though, that concerned me the most is that in intelligence work specifically, the type of work is work that does not lend itself to telework. It does not lend itself to isolation. It requires specialized equipment, specialized access, specialized access to other individuals. It certainly is specialized locations.

So, it does concern me that you cite it as an interest of increasing telework in the intelligence community because, in fact, by its nature, it is going to be the opposite. People are going to have to be in special locations with specialized equipment and with a specialized workforce, would it not?

Ms. CROSS. Yes, absolutely. And I think that your question is really important to differentiate.

Let me explain. Telework is not just work done from home. Telework is an improved, authorized official worksite. What that means is, that telework, for instance, in the intelligence community could be done in different locations like SCIF satellite organizations. For instance, the joint reserve intelligence centers that are around the country can be done remotely but through geographic—

Mr. TURNER. I appreciate that you have made that point because it is important for people to understand that you are not comparing people who are at home with the intelligence community. If they are doing remote work, they are not commuting from home, they are not an absent workforce, because they are still at the workforce in government installations doing work.

Ms. CROSS. A facility.

Mr. TURNER. Thank you.

I want to turn to Tom Davis now.

Tom, the whole concept of having urban environments is a concentration of individuals and density of both capital and people. It brings together consumer spending and is a concentration. When we disperse it, we weaken our urban cores and our urban centers.

Speak for a moment again about what we are seeing and what we are doing to Washington, DC, as we are allowing people to take what is our investment of Federal Government jobs and allow them to take them home.

Mr. DAVIS. Vastly underutilized Federal buildings where we are paying rent and maintenance costs. We have seen a 20 percent-plus office vacancy rate in the city, which has lowered the city's tax base and their ability to do things.

And the Metro system, where the Federal Government is heavily invested, is all of a sudden running huge deficits because the number of riders coming in and out each day has decreased markedly just over the last few years.

Mr. TURNER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman COMER. Thank you.

The Chair recognizes Mr. Connolly.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And before I begin, if you will hold the clock, I have a unanimous consent request to enter into the record a statement by AFGE and

a statement from the Partnership for Public Service regarding this hearing.

Chairman COMER. Without objection, so ordered.

Mr. CONNOLLY. I thank the Chair.

Congressman Davis, you certainly were a champion of telework when you were Chairman and Ranking Member of this Committee, and I take your testimony—because you said we need a balanced approach—that you are not debunking the value of telework. What you are distinguishing, though, is sort of inchoate remote working that is not structured from, say, the structured telework program Ms. Cross just referenced that existed prior to the pandemic.

Mr. DAVIS. Well, and as you know, I am on the board of some private companies that have gotten returned to work, but we find a balance in each case in terms of how you recruit people, how you maintain things.

The point I would make in my testimony, though, is that the District and Federal workforce are way out of balance with what we see in other areas. You need both.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Right. Exactly.

But the delta, though, is the pandemic, because we had a telework program in place prior to the pandemic, and we were not hearing these kinds of reports of the business impact in the District of Columbia. And I just think that is an important distinction to be made.

Mr. DAVIS. That is correct.

Also, the advancements in Zoom, you know, Microsoft Teams, you see their growth and the way they are utilized throughout industry I think has also been a game changer.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Right.

I assume, Congressman Davis, that, I mean, you are looking at cumulative aggregate impacts on retail, on office leasing, on the broader economy in downtown Washington, DC, and the impact universal remote working has had.

I would assume that you would take exception to proposals to relocate mass numbers of Federal employees to other parts of the country given the fact that were that to happen, the very impacts you are decrying would be magnified in the retail sector, office leasing sector, and macro economy of the District of Columbia.

Is that not correct?

Mr. DAVIS. Well, it is certainly true for my organization.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Right.

Mr. DAVIS. And it would be true for me who has grown up and lived his life here and, like you, has spent 29 years of his political life in the region as well.

Mr. CONNOLLY. I just think that is an important point, that if we are going to be concerned about one, we have got to be concerned about the other, and both could have equal or even worse impacts on the macro economy we are concerned about.

Governor O'Malley, walk us—so the agreement that some of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle seem to be decrying that you negotiated—that was a brand-new agreement, we have never had an agreement with AFGE or other Federal employees before, you made it up out of whole cloth to pander to a union, and there was no precedent and there was no antecedent, and, in fact, you

did not inherit such an agreement that you extended—that agreement being negotiated previously in the Trump Administration.

Would that be a fair statement? How guilty are you?

Mr. O'MALLEY. Let me unpack all of that succinctly.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Do it quickly. I have got 1 minute and 46 seconds.

Mr. O'MALLEY. Thank you.

No, the duration of this contract was actually something that preceded my time at Social Security. In fact, there are three bargaining units. Two of them already had, within their contract, the telework balance.

Mr. CONNOLLY. And were they negotiated during the Trump Administration?

Mr. O'MALLEY. I believe so. Yes, sir.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Thank you. Keep going.

Mr. O'MALLEY. Oh, and the third one, with AFGE, was actually something we had terms in their contract about when we had an opportunity—we had two opportunities every year—I want to say “we,” that part was negotiated before me—every 6 months to review the telework balance and the onsite work balance in order to do our very best to improve customer service even with the staffing reductions that Congress has imposed on this agency.

And I did, in fact, change that onsite work at the headquarters components, at the regional headquarters, and also in the area components.

And for myself and my staff in the Commissioner's office, my immediate command staff, we were 5 days a week. And the Commissioner's office overall was 4 days and 1 day of telework.

Mr. CONNOLLY. I thank you for clarifying the record because I think there is a lot of disinformation about what, in fact, occurred at Social Security and its antecedent, which preceded the Biden Administration.

I yield back.

Chairman COMER. The gentleman yields back.

I will recognize myself for questions.

Mr. O'MALLEY, what concessions did you extract from the Social Security Administration union in exchange for this very generous telework entitlement? What did they agree to pay the taxpayers in return? Because they work for the taxpayers, not for you.

Mr. O'MALLEY. Yes, sir. Thank you.

They gave up \$10 to \$20 million dollars in potential exposure to the agency because of seven to 9 years of grievances that were ongoing that we had been unable to resolve, and if they had gone to trial, there was a risk that the agency could have been exposed for \$10 or \$20.

In fact, before I came into the agency, there was a settlement of \$22 million on a similar sort of case.

Chairman COMER. Would that encourage more grievances to be filed if they feel like they could be rewarded for a massive number of grievances? I mean, I am just curious.

Mr. O'MALLEY. No. Let me answer the call to your question.

Everything I did at Social Security for that urgent year that the President dispatched me there was about improving customer service. And, sir—

Chairman COMER. And it has been brought to my attention the grievances were a subset of telework.

So, Ms. Greszler, is it—

Mr. O'MALLEY. No, sir.

[Crosstalk.]

Chairman COMER. [continuing]. Healthy for collective bargaining to be weaponized in this manner where it is used primarily to bind the hands of the incoming President where this agreement was mandated or whatever through the entire next administration?

Ms. GRESZLER. Yes. I think that is an important point. There was an agreement that was in place in 2019, and changes were made to that agreement, last minute, to bake into the cake, to make that telework an entitlement.

And all that is doing is giving justification to future union grievances because now it is an entitlement. Whereas before it would have been negotiated, now you just cannot do it.

Mr. COMER. Absolutely.

Mr. O'MALLEY. That is not true.

Mr. COMER. How can we prevent this type of abuse?

Ms. GRESZLER. Well, I think that it already should be clear that this should not be allowed because the President has the duties to faithfully carry out the law, which includes insuring that telework does not diminish employee or agency performance. If that deference is not given, then I think Congress might need to amend the FSLMR, Federal Service Labor Management Relations, statute to either clarify that collective bargaining agreements cannot go beyond a Presidential administration or to ensure that if there are provisions in there that are preventing the President from carrying out their duties effectively that those provisions must be subject to revisions.

Chairman COMER. Thank you.

Mr. O'Malley, are the taxpayers getting their money's worth for this official time, this new generous benefit from being able to not have to show up in person for work? Are the taxpayers getting their money worth?

Mr. O'MALLEY. Well, sir, last year was the biggest increase in productivity that the agency had achieved since—

Chairman COMER. And who measured that productivity with your chart there?

Mr. O'MALLEY. The American people.

Chairman COMER. The American people that call my case-worker's office would have a different set of graphics for you to display.

Mr. O'MALLEY. Oh, we are definitely struggling, Congressman, because you all have reduced staffing at Social Security to 50-year low, notwithstanding that we have increased productivity and customer service across every—

Chairman COMER. Mr. O'Malley, with all due respect, nobody is buying what you are selling, if they have had to deal with the Social Security Administration.

My last question, my time is running short. Mr. Davis, your written testimony notes that the D.C. area has the highest work from home rate in the United States.

Mr. DAVIS. Significantly, of the major urban areas, yes.

Chairman COMER. Yet, many of the America's most successful companies are actually doing the opposite. There have been many stories that would cite where private companies have experimented with telework are now bringing them back to work. Shouldn't the Trump Administration be able to try different tactic than the failed one of this Biden Administration?

Mr. DAVIS. Sure. Every new administration is going to be able to look at this with new eyes on it. But I would just say, the private sector is way ahead of government on this in terms of return to work.

Chairman COMER. So, the District of Columbia is being economically devastated by the massive telework in a region that has the Nation's highest concentration of Federal office workers. Even Mayor Bowser has testified that she strongly supports the SHOW UP Act because of the devastating impact in the downtown area where it is a ghost town and all these Federal agencies, with the highly paid Federal workers with very generous benefits, I would argue more generous than most private sector companies, who are not coming to work. So, what can be done about—what does this say about the District of Columbia and the economic devastation from these policies?

Mr. DAVIS. Well, it has caused irreparable harm in terms of what their budget does, but more importantly on a regional basis and even as far as the Federal Government is concerned, what it has done to the Metro system, is it has reduced ridership significantly. So, you have the same infrastructure built to carry a lot more people into work and they are just not just coming. And the biggest drop has been among the Federal workforce which just are not using Metro to come to work because they are not coming in to work and that is a Federal problem, that is not just a D.C. problem.

Chairman COMER. Thank you.

The Chair now recognizes Mr. Lynch from Massachusetts.

Mr. LYNCH. Good morning. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman and the Ranking Member. I want to thank all the witnesses for your willingness to help the Committee with its work. A special welcome to Governor O'Malley, and my old friend, Representative Davis. Mr. Chairman, good to see you again. Thanks for your help on this issue. I know that you have a rich history here.

Just on the last point in the previous question, would the hellacious traffic situation here around D.C. induce employees to want to work from home? I am from the Boston area, we have a fair amount of traffic, but I have not seen traffic like I see here on the beltway in D.C., it is unbelievable. Would that induce, would that improve efficiency if people were not stuck in that traffic each and every day?

Mr. DAVIS. Well, I think traffic is always a factor. I paid \$30 in tolls coming in today from Vienna.

Mr. LYNCH. Wow.

Mr. DAVIS. It is at peak hours. It, when everybody is back, it can go as high as \$50. Some days it is less than that. And it is before 9:30 when they cutoff. So, there is no question from an employee point of view and a traffic point of view sending everybody back to work is going to have an impact on that. But you also have to look

at it puts more people into rail and that is really where we are hurting. I just want to focus on that, because they will come back to Congress for aid on a Metro system that is designed to carry hundreds of thousands more people than it is carrying right now because they are just not coming in.

Mr. LYNCH. Right. I do notice in my area in Boston that many of the private companies, the big banks, insurance companies, are reducing the amount of office space that they have been spending money on and they have been encouraging employees to work from home and to telework. I mean, there is an efficiency that they see in that. Would that not be the same case for some of these government agencies? I know that for example some of our postal offices and other government buildings are rented out in very high-cost areas, and there might be a reduction in cost to the taxpayer if we were to adopt that same practice.

Mr. DAVIS. Look, there is no question that with the addition of Zoom and Microsoft Teams in some of these areas the world has changed. You can be more efficient in some ways, as one previous testimony here, some of this is from the workplace itself being able to have multiple people participate in this kind of thing. My point here though is that it is way out of balance. The Federal Government is way out of balance with where the private sector has moved post COVID. At this point, it is having a huge economic impact on the region and it is a question of what is the right balance.

Mr. LYNCH. Reclaiming my time, Mr. Chairman.

I do want to point out, though, that—so, with the Federal Government we have much different responsibilities than the private sector in many cases. Seventy-one percent of the Federal workforce is in Homeland Security and Defense, right there. And so those are unique and they are not necessarily conducive to remote work.

The civilian employees who were supporting our warfighters need to be there. And they do not have jobs that are conducive to remote work. Our postal employees that sort and deliver the mail each and every single day—there is no way to do that remotely, they are stepping up. The Office of Management and Budget is saying—maybe it is OPM, Office of Personnel Management, has said that 80 percent of the hours worked by Federal employees are in person, 80 percent of those hours are in person. And, obviously, because TSA screeners, that the whole, you know, border security piece, that has all got to be done in person. So, it is a dwindling area. But also, 30 percent of our Federal employees are veterans, are veterans. So, you know, I dare say they have a work ethic that the general population does not necessarily possess, to be honest with you. And while I support government efficiency, I really do—look, there is some inefficiency here that we need to work on. What I object to is targeting Federal employees for malicious reasons to say, we are going have mass layoffs and we are going to move people around the country, you know. Only 20 percent of Federal employees work in the D.C. area. Eighty percent are California, Texas, you know, elsewhere around the country. So, I do object to some of the statements made by Mr. Ramaswamy and Mr. Musk that seem to denigrate the service and the character and integrity of some of our Federal employees.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I will yield back.

Chairman COMER. The gentleman yields. The Chair recognizes Mr. Grothman from Wisconsin.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Yes, first of all, I think there was just an unnecessary criticism of people in the workforce who are not veterans, you know, that are American workers are not good unless they are veterans and I object to that. I know there are a lot of preferences out there and we try to encourage people to hire veterans, but I do not think a black condemnation of people who are not veterans is appropriate.

Now, we will go to Mr. Martin here. You decided to run for the Chair of Democratic National Committee, correct?

Mr. O'MALLEY. Yes, sir.

Mr. GROTHMAN. And you stepped down from your role as Commissioner of the Social Security Administration. You will not have to manage the SSA employees under the November collective bargaining agreement, which you signed on behalf of the Social Security Administration, correct?

Mr. O'MALLEY. Yes, sir, from the changes that I made on February 2 to require a more onsite presence at the regional—

Mr. GROTHMAN. Somebody else will have to deal with the positives and negatives of that agreement.

Mr. O'MALLEY. I hope it keeps it on the trajectory of continuous improvement that we put it on last year, that is my hope. Everything I did there was about improving customer service.

Mr. GROTHMAN. In a recent podcast, you claimed that what we are going to experience in the next 2 years is something less than a republic, sadly. Is that your opinion?

Mr. O'MALLEY. Yes, sir.

Mr. GROTHMAN. President Trump was duly elected by the American people as a mandate to effectuate his policies. Isn't that somewhat—I do not want to say anti-Democratic—but contrary to the American republic for you as an outgoing appointee to deny the world of people and to a degree hamstringing the President's ability to honor promises to the American people?

Mr. O'MALLEY. Everything I did at Social Security was to improve customer service. As I have looked at what is being erected around the Capitol, it would appear that, unlike 4 years ago, we are actually going to have a peaceful transference of power. That is one aspect of what it means to have a republic, but there are others.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Well, I am not sure what you mean by that. But the SSA AFGC agreement altered language in section 41, section 5(c) and the last contract said management has sole discretion to change, reduce, suspend or eliminate approved telework days for any employees, for any office component, or agency wide due to operational needs. It also allowed management to, in some cases, eliminate approved telework days due to employee performance.

The November 2024 contract appears to have altered management's sole discretion to temporarily change, reduce, suspend approved telework days due to its operational needs. Doesn't that limit management's ability to monitor, you feel, employee's performance. I mean, what is the upside of that provision?

Mr. O'MALLEY. Congressman, I think you might be reading the wrong part of the agreement. It reads, if you look at the bottom of

page 1, it reads, in fact, management has sole discretion to temporarily change, reduce or suspend approved telework days for any employees, office, component or agency wide, due to operational needs. Management also has sole discretion to change, reduce, or approve telework days for any employee due to the employee's performance. And before that the first sentence says, the parties recognize that agency assigned functions in the nature of work to be performed and the type of positions can vary significantly from office to office. So that is in the agreement.

Mr. GROTHMAN. But that is still—right.

Mr. O'MALLEY. See at the bottom of page 1?

Mr. GROTHMAN. Right.

Mr. O'MALLEY. That paragraph.

Mr. GROTHMAN. It implies here.

Mr. O'MALLEY. I do not think it was implying anything. I think it was pretty clear.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Right. You suspended the ability, but it did not eliminate the ability?

Mr. O'MALLEY. No, we are not going to eliminate telework. We cannot because you have reduced our staffing to a 50-year low at an agency that people already paid for their customer service staffing.

Mr. GROTHMAN. OK. We will move on to one other thing.

I would like to show you a picture while—how many SSA employees work out of SSA headquarters?

Mr. O'MALLEY. Approximately 7,000 and shrinking. We lost 2,000 staff this year across the agency due to Congress' inability to pass a budget. That therefore puts the agency into a hiring freeze and attrition wipes out, so far, 2,000 people. So, on a normal work day, despite having about 7,000 employees, it shows in December 2023, a parking lot almost completely devoid of workers.

Mr. O'MALLEY. Yes, it is right behind you. I hope the camera catches it because that was before I got to the agency. This is a picture of that same parking lot after I got to the agency.

Mr. GROTHMAN. OK.

Mr. O'MALLEY. Because I ordered everybody back, 3 days a week, and in my Commissioner's office, 4 days.

Mr. GROTHMAN. OK. You feel—January 2025 how many processing times or how are processing times not returned to pre-pandemic levels, have they?

Mr. O'MALLEY. In some cases they have. In fact, actually for the first time in 8 years, this is the one that most of your constituents applied for, and this is the retirement benefits. We had not hit 87 percent timeliness since 2017. But we did this year. That is this right here and this is monthly. And by the way, in an example of the greatest example of openness, transparency and real-time performance management—at least for the next few days, you can see all of these metrics on Social Security's website and they are real-time.

Mr. GROTHMAN. OK.

Chairman COMER. The gentleman's time has expired.

The Chair recognizes Mr. Mfume.

Mr. MFUME. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

I would like to start with Ms. Cross. Ms. Cross, you are employed in a position where, is it fair to say, 98 to 95 percent of the workforce teleworks?

Ms. CROSS. So——

Mr. MFUME. Or is it 100 percent?

Ms. CROSS. When I was at FlexJobs, I am not an employee of FlexJobs any longer, but when I left to work for the fully remote company, FlexJobs, everyone was remote and it was and it was fully remote from its inception. So, I never met my staff at all in person when I accepted the position of vice president.

Mr. MFUME. So have you seen the benefits, obviously, of teleworking. I keep using the terms efficiency and effectiveness. Was that also the case where you were, were people at the company satisfied that they were in fact being efficient and being effective.

Ms. CROSS. Yes, and I have to say that was my first private industry role outside of government, it was eye opening. But we had implemented performance metrics like OKRs. We reviewed them monthly. We understood where the company's goals and objectives were. We were measured against that, but not by hours and not by location but rather results. Profitability, customer satisfaction, those kinds of metrics that really created and understanding of how our work was affecting the bottom line, not necessarily when and where.

Mr. MFUME. And like was said earlier, we certainly appreciate all the work and service you have done for this country in a number of different roles. I just want you to take a quick shot at trying to give me what your best thinking is. If we potentially abolish or severely limit telework in the Federal workforce, what you would say that would look like?

Ms. CROSS. I cannot imagine that we could do that entirely. But if we did do that, here is a few implications. You know, we just had a snow day, the global workplace analytics team has this wonderful telework savings calculator which estimated that the Federal Government saved about \$630ish million a day on being able to continue and operate its mission and deliver services on behalf of the American public because they did not have to shut down and stop work and pay people to sit at home and not work when weather is inclement weather that can affect people's lives and livelihood. That is one example.

Another example is what I talked about with military spouses. And the other thing is, is that the Federal Government is the Nation's largest employer. We need to keep pace with industry trends in order to create a country that inspires innovation and competitive ability and make sure that we have our marketshare operating well. To do that we need the right kind of people as well. And so, jobs are changing with technology, we need to evolve to that knowledge-based economy. Things are getting digitized. We are leveraging AI and technology and therefore people's jobs are requiring less of them to be done in a physical location and more to be portable, like, right in front of me and using your brain, which is attached to your body.

Mr. MFUME. Thank you. I want to reclaim my time, but thank you very much.

Congressman Davis, I am trying to find a way—how do we balance the fact that there is a consensus that we are not doing enough in terms of telework against—with the juxtaposition of your point that office space is increasing, that the long-term leases that are in place that the Federal Government has signed on to must, in fact, be paid. That Metro has gone from \$185 to \$25 million and that it is not just Metro, but it is the system, MARC, that affects Maryland and the system that affects north Virginia. So, where is the balance there? Is there a way to do both? That is what I am trying to find out.

Mr. DAVIS. Of course. I mean, I think as I said before, I think, with some of these technological changes, telecommuting is going to be a part of our future. We are seeing it in the private sector.

My point here is it has been way out of balance here in terms of the government lagging where the private sector is where other urban areas is. It is hard to say what the right balance is. I think reasonable people can sit across the table. But the point is we are way out of balance right now; it is having severe economic consequences on the city.

Mr. MFUME. I would agree. I think the term reasonable people is significant here, because if we are going to get to a reasonable solution, it really does mean not just having a lot of outside voices that have not looked at this situation, suggesting that we throw the baby out with the bath water, but rather how do we find a way to make sure that we protect and enhance telework, particularly for so many employees in the Defense industry and others and how do we find a way also to balance the needs of local governments, in this case the District of Columbia with respect to its infrastructure, its rail system and everything else.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back. My time has expired.

Chairman COMER. The gentleman yields back. The Chair recognizes the Chairman of the Government Operations Subcommittee, Mr. Sessions, from Texas.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Chairman, thank you very much. And thank you for having this hearing. I think our four witnesses display amazing fact basis and I appreciate them.

Mr. Davis, good to see you, sir. The young Congressman from Virginia is a very dear friend of mine.

Governor O'Malley, thank you very much for being here today. And I think that the things that you bring to the table are important. Mr. Mfume and I, on a bipartisan basis, spent the last several years looking at not just government efficiency but the results that do not serve taxpayers well and that is what is often termed waste, fraud, and abuse. Yesterday, there was an article in *Epoch Times* from an expert who estimated that there are some \$800 billion worth of waste, fraud, and abuse that if we looked internally to the system—and you and I both know sometimes it is Medicare, sometimes its Medicaid, sometimes it is Federal employee services that we give, other times it is Social Security. I would suggest to you that I believe that, as one of the co-chairman of the DOGE Caucus that we have here, that probably what this new administration is going to do is have to spend a good deal of internal time teaching their employees and focusing them off identifying waste, fraud, and abuse. We can do it perhaps by talking about it, but it has got to

be done within the agencies. You respectfully served this great Nation as the head of Social Security, the Commissioner.

You and I engaged each other, and I provided this letter to you, going back and I am sure you may or may not recall.

Mr. O'MALLEY. No, I remember.

Mr. SESSIONS. Speaking with me.

Mr. O'MALLEY. [continuing]. I remember—the day you called me.

Mr. SESSIONS. Yes, sir. And you were very kind to call me. It was about a problem. It was not a normal run-of-the-mill answer that was needed. What somewhat concerns me is, is that I have found that government agencies are not really good at making decisions. Perhaps they serve and get information out, but they are not good at solving problems. OPM, people who retire from the Federal Government right now, it takes some 5 months before they get their paycheck. Those are the kinds of stories that need to be told instead of how efficient we are. It is solving problems that people have to make the systems run efficiently.

Mr. O'MALLEY. Yes, sir.

Mr. SESSIONS. I will tell you, I sent you a letter—not knowing you had left the agency, I sent you a letter. This is dated October 30 and you and I spoke. And you were out in the field, but I said, I am interested in a decision on this case following our phone call. It is now about December—I mean, January 15, I still have not gotten an answer back of something that was very specific that came directly to the Commissioner.

Mr. O'MALLEY. Yes, sir.

Mr. SESSIONS. And the Commissioner, from the letter I sent last week I said, I still have heard zero from the agency, zero. And I do admit you were not there. My point might be, we are tending to focus on how efficient an agency is, but we are not really focusing on the work that they need to do on two parts. No. 1, making decisions about things that might not be easy for the regular workforce to perform. And second, the \$800 billion that goes against the American taxpayer that creates some real problems. So, I just want you to know I think you provided me—I will be—it has not been announced, but I expect to be Chairman, again, of the Government Operations Workforce [sic]. And it would be my thinking on a bipartisan basis and I hope, I expressed to Mr. Mfume yesterday, I hope we get to work together again.

Mr. O'MALLEY. Thank you.

Mr. SESSIONS. We need to turn our attention to the inefficiencies, to the things that are causing a bleed of, not just taxpayer money, but the reason why it was intended that way. So, I would like to let you know I would like to get back to vet you and—I know I was given 5 minutes, but I wanted to make my point here. I think that we do have to come back to leaders like you, who express today, look, I did sign a contract but you can make any decision that is in the best interest of the business. And I will count on that because you helped sign that. And that was the spirit in which you did it. But we need to look within about solving problems and looking at this \$800 billion of waste, fraud, and abuse.

Sir, thank you. I hope that I offered a fair analysis.

Mr. O'MALLEY. Thank you.

Mr. SESSIONS. And I hope that we will get in touch with each other when this is over with.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you for this hearing. And I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. O'MALLEY. Mr. Chairman, any chance I could have 30 seconds to respond to both of those?

Chairman COMER. Go ahead.

Mr. O'MALLEY. Thank you.

Congressman, we got right on that right away. I called you that same day. This is one of those troublesome things in SSI, lots of regulations. The lady in question owned multiple cemetery plots. We suggested a workaround for that that she was not amenable to that. Mr. Klouda, who is still at the agency, is here and he should be able to run that to ground. You did on that phone call with me give me a number of your staff and that failed—obviously we did not communicate and make sure it got back to you.

Second, every 2 weeks, Mr. Chairman, we looked at fraud as part of the security stat process, how while all of them were open and livestreamed to the entire—actually your oversight committees of both parties and the SES. Fraud was closed, but we had the Office of Inspector General there and we have greatly upped our game because of an agile every 2 weeks, every 2 weeks approach, and I think you would be interested in that. Thank you.

Chairman COMER. Hopefully, the person that took the message was not working from home and did not get it to you.

The Chair recognizes Ms. Brown from Ohio.

Ms. BROWN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

First, I would like to welcome our new colleagues to the Committee. In the last Congress, this Committee was marked by division, dysfunction and dishonesty. I was hopeful this would change with the new Congress. Sadly, I cannot say I am surprised to see the same petty partisanship returning again. Let me be clear, there is important work to be done in this Committee. We could be focusing on ways to improve the lives of the American people like bringing down grocery prices, improving access to healthcare or making housing more affordable. Instead, our very first hearing is a political assault on the Federal workforce. The irony could not be more glaring. We are sitting here in front of former Commissioner O'Malley, just days after President Biden signed the Social Security Fairness Act into law. The new law removed unfair penalties that were reducing the Social Security benefits of teachers, postal workers, law enforcement officers, and other public servants for decades. This bipartisan legislation was a big win for the constituents we serve and timely implementation of law is critical to the 200,000 Ohioans who will see their monthly benefits increase by hundreds of dollars. Yet, instead of discussing this monumental win with Mr. O'Malley, my colleagues on the other side of the aisle have called him to discuss telework.

So, before I get into the topic of this hearing, Mr. O'Malley, I want to give you the opportunity to discuss the Social Security Fairness Act and what it means for former public servants.

Mr. O'MALLEY. This has been a long, lingering problem that many of you in Congress have been working on and then the legislation was finally passed in a bipartisan way. In essence, to explain

it as plainly as I can, there were a number of public employees that were allowed, on the option of their employer's—county, city, states, to essentially opt out of paying into Social Security during the time that they worked as public employees, public servants, law enforcement officers, fire fighters because on the rationale that they already had a pension—a government pension.

And in 1982—every, periodically, Congress looks at the 75-year projection of Social Security, makes adjustments so it can continue on. In 1982, one of the proposals in that compromise was to offset the pension benefit, which as some of you know has a progressive formula, to offset the benefit by an amount that they had earned in their other pension, their public pension, not Social Security. And so, this bill went into the trust fund to the tune of \$222 billion, if memory serves me correctly, in order to address that.

That also created a huge workload for the agency without another dime put to processing it. So, they are going to have 3 million underpayment cases to process. But the good news is the fire fighters, the teachers and many of those others are not going to face the shock when they are not able to put as much together for their retirement as they thought they would because a lot of times they were unaware until they applied for their benefits.

So, it was a very good thing, but the agency will struggle to get that workload out given the reduction in staffing to a 50-year low.

Ms. LEE. Thank you. Before returning to telework, I would like to make a few points. On Monday, a new President will be sworn in, a President who openly pledged to purge thousands of hard-working Federal employees and politicized the justice system.

A President known for self-dealing, abusing power and trampling on civil rights. And a President who obstructed Congress, incited violence, and sought to undermine the peaceful transfer of power. We are the oversight committee and we should be working to block and expose such dangerous abuses. Instead, we are holding a hearing today that advances the incoming President's political crusade against the Federal workforce.

I will continue to defend the hardworking servants who keep the Federal Government running and serving the American people. The Federal workforce has become more resilient, diverse, and productive over the last decade. This progress is largely due to the expansion of telework flexibilities which have empowered employees to adapt to changing demands while maintaining high levels of performance.

Telework policies have enabled thousands of Federal workers, including the almost 10,000 Federal workers in my district to seamlessly continue their essential duties, whether in office or remotely.

In short, telework flexibilities have helped government remain efficient and effective in serving the American people.

And with that, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Chairman COMER. The gentlelady yields. The Chair now recognizes Ms. Mace from South Carolina.

Ms. MACE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Martin O'Malley, I want to wish you luck in your campaign to be Chair of the Democrat National Committee. And let me just

say, I think you are the perfect candidate to chair the Democrat party, your liberal record is truly astonishing.

Mr. O'MALLEY. Thank you.

Ms. MACE. At an event in 2005, you compared a Federal budget request which cut spending to the terrorist attacks of 9/11. You raised taxes, tolls, and fees on your constituents 83 times as Governor of Maryland, including increasing sales taxes, income taxes, the gas tax. You also created an array of new taxes on services for your constituents.

Mr. O'MALLEY. And the No. 1——

Ms. MACE. I am talking. I am going to reclaim my time. I am talking right now. I have not asked you a question yet, have I? No, I have not.

Mr. O'MALLEY. No, you have not.

Ms. MACE. For your constituents, making your constituents, the people you served in Maryland, pay more.

You loved some law-breaking illegal aliens as well. You have advocated for mass amnesty for illegal aliens. My favorite part of your love for criminals in this country is you do not refer to them as illegal aliens, but instead you refer to them as new Americans. You must really hate American citizens. You must really hate our country.

In 2011, you signed a bill into law to allow illegal aliens to qualify for in-state tuition at public universities in Maryland. And the hits are going to keep on coming. In 2014, you signed a bill into law to allow illegal aliens to get Maryland drivers licenses. In 2014, you signed a bill into law to allow gender confused, sexually perverted men to use women's restrooms and locker rooms.

In other words, you forced women and under-age girls to undress in front of men. I could go on; suffice to say you are perfectly in line with the Democratic party today, emblematic of why Democrats just cannot stop losing elections. You are emblematic of why the Democratic party have no dignity and no respect for women. You are emblematic of why Democrats do not put Americans first.

Mr. O'Malley, my first question this morning, can you, a candidate to be Chair of Democrat party, define what a woman is for me today?

Mr. O'MALLEY. Madam or Congresswoman——

Ms. MACE. Can you define what a woman is?

Mr. O'MALLEY. Oh, yes

Ms. MACE. What is a woman?

Mr. O'MALLEY. You are going to ask me to define what a woman is.

Ms. MACE. Yes, I am, right now.

Mr. O'MALLEY. Well, I am talking——

Ms. MACE. You just said you could.

Mr. O'MALLEY. Yes.

Ms. MACE. Explain it to me.

Mr. O'MALLEY. I am talking to a woman right now, a distinguished woman.

Ms. MACE. What is a woman?

Mr. O'MALLEY. Like the representative.

Ms. MACE. What is a woman?

Mr. O'MALLEY. I think you are kind of denigrating the purpose of this.

Ms. MACE. You cannot define what a woman is. All right.

In an effort to be fair——

Mr. O'MALLEY. I am married to a woman.

Ms. MACE. In an effort to be fair and unbiased——

Mr. O'MALLEY. I have two daughters.

Ms. MACE. In an effort to be fair and unbiased, can you define what a man is for me?

Mr. O'MALLEY. I have two sons that are men.

Ms. MACE. OK.

Mr. O'MALLEY. Yes, I can.

Ms. MACE. I have a series of yes or no questions for the potentially future Chair of the Democratic party that cannot define—let us for the record, Mr. Chairman, he cannot define what a woman is and he cannot define what a man is.

Mr. O'MALLEY. This is——

Ms. MACE. And you expect the people of this country to follow your lead? I am a woman who has broken so many glass ceilings in my life, the first Republican woman elected to Congress from South Carolina; the first woman to ever graduate from the Citadel, the military college of South Carolina. I know what a woman is. And I am going to protect every one of them.

So, I have a series of yes or no questions for you today. One of my Democratic colleagues yesterday stated a rape victim's fear of rape was just quote, "a fantasy." Do you agree with this statement? Is a woman's fear of rape, being raped, a fantasy? Yes or no.

Mr. O'MALLEY. No, it is not a fantasy.

Ms. MACE. OK. One of Democrat colleagues yesterday stated a rape victim's fear of rape is being, quote, "dramatic." Do you agree with that statement? Fear of rape being dramatic, yes or no?

Mr. O'MALLEY. Well, it could be——

Ms. MACE. OK, cannot answer the question.

My next question, you have spoken of Democrats needing to restore credibility and learn from your failings and to quote, from you recently, to "learn from your very bad loss." Is this in reference to Democrats raising taxes on the middle class? Yes or no?

Mr. O'MALLEY. No.

Ms. MACE. Is this in reference Maryland not requiring an ID to vote in their elections?

Mr. O'MALLEY. No.

Ms. MACE. Is this in reference to coddling criminal illegal aliens?

Mr. O'MALLEY. No. I have never——

Ms. MACE. Is this in reference to starting a war on real biological women?

Mr. O'MALLEY. No.

Ms. MACE. Is this in reference to allowing men in women's bathrooms?

Mr. O'MALLEY. No.

Ms. MACE. Is this in reference to forcing women and girls to undress in front of men in the locker room?

Mr. O'MALLEY. Ah, come on.

Ms. MACE. Yes or no.

Mr. O'MALLEY. Congresswoman.

Ms. MACE. This is your party's platform. You understand what I am laying out for you? Do you understand English?

Mr. O'MALLEY. I understand what you are trying to lay out, but our party's platform is the economic security and the well-being—

Ms. MACE. Reclaiming my time.

Mr. O'MALLEY. [continuing]. Of every man, woman and child in the United States of America.

Ms. MACE. Mr. Chairman, I am going to reclaim my time.

Mr. O'MALLEY. That is our party's platform.

Ms. MACE. I am going to reclaim my time.

Chairman COMER. It is Ms. Mace's time.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Chairman, the witness should not be badgered.

Ms. MACE. Mr. Chairman, I would like to reclaim my time.

Chairman COMER. Ms. Mace?

Ms. MACE. Just yesterday, only two Democrats voted with us to protect women in sports. This is your platform. You want boys and men to women to be able to watch women undress in a locker room. So, is your big loss in reference to taking away women's achievements in sports?

Mr. O'MALLEY. I believe—

Mr. MACE. Yes or no?

Mr. O'MALLEY. No, I do not.

Ms. MACE. Is your loss in reference to allowing men to take away women's scholarships, yes or no?

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Chairman, the gentlelady's time has expired.

Ms. MACE. He took my time, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman COMER. She had about 15 seconds that rolled around, so you have time for one last question, Ms. Mace.

Mr. O'MALLEY. Think hard.

Chairman COMER. She asked the question.

Ms. MACE. You have learned nothing from your own failings when you tried to run for President as a far-left Progressive alternative to Hillary Clinton and dropped out after getting .5 of 1 percent at the Iowa Caucus. So, good luck with that Mr. DNC Chairman. I yield back.

Mr. O'MALLEY. Thank you. I appreciate your well wishes.

Chairman COMER. The gentlelady yields back.

The Chair recognizes Ms. Stansbury from New Mexico.

Ms. STANSBURY. All right. Good morning, everyone. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think we all need a deep breath after that. I want to thank our witnesses for being here today. As a former Federal employee and a former OMBer, I am always excited to have a nerdy hearing on Federal workforce issues. But I think it is important to actually be real about what this hearing is actually about.

And I think it is always important here in the Oversight Committee to pull back the curtain on kind of the bigger agenda and why these hearings get called. So, let us talk about what this hearing is and is not. I think it is important to observe that this hearing is not just about telework and work-from-home policies.

It is actually setting the stage for dismantling the Federal workforce. It is about the incoming administration and their desire to try to fire and get thousands of Federal workers to leave the Fed-

eral workforce. And it is about the restructuring of the workforce through the new DOGE Subcommittee and the executive actions that are associated with it and that was created here in this Committee yesterday. How do we know this?

Because the co-Chairs of the DOGE Task Force, Elon Musk and Vivek Ramaswamy, have been very open about telework ending as a way to get thousands of Federal employees to leave. In fact, right after the election in November, they published a thought piece in the *Wall Street Journal* which stated that telework would result in voluntary termination of Federal workers.

It is also noteworthy that one witness who is here today is from an organization that was co-founded by an author of Project 2025 and was a former Trump OMB official.

It is also noteworthy that the Majority here in the Oversight Committee actually tweeted from their own account this week that they were plotting to take down the deep state. And here we are, they are not even hiding it anymore.

It is also noteworthy that this is not just happening here in this room, but as we speak here in this room, Russell Vought, who is literally one of the architects of Project 2025, is preparing for his confirmation hearing in the Senate this afternoon. Now Mr. Vought is one of the former leaders of OMB. He is—by his own description called his own think tank the Death Star and has made it very clear that his intentions upon becoming the OMB Director is to eviscerate and dismantle the Federal workforce.

I think it is also worth noting to Mr. Vought, and to other star wars fans, that the Death Star actually has 1.7 million military personnel and almost .5 million droids and civilians working there because even Commander Tarkin and Darth Vader understood that it takes a workforce to get stuff done.

So, not unlike the Death Star, we have to be clear that there is a nefarious intention behind this hearing and what we know is coming. And Donald Trump has been very clear that he plans to sign an executive order in the coming weeks, possibly even next week, that will end work from home. So, that is what this hearing is actually about. And I want to just establish why we are fighting back.

It is not only essential to make sure that our Federal agencies, our military, our security is protected, that our workers can do their jobs, but it also is fundamental to our economy, as Mr. Davis has pointed out.

In fact, in New Mexico, we have one of the largest Federal workforces and active-duty military in the country. Twenty-two-thousand New Mexicans work for the Federal Government, for National Laboratories, our military, our Social Security Administration.

These are the hardworking people that come to work every day to proudly serve the American people, to make sure that you get your Social Security check, to make sure that you get your disability, to make sure that our national security is protected, to make sure that our public lands are protected and to make sure that our roads are paved and you can get to work, put food on the table, a roof over your head and keep this great country going. That is what our Federal workforce does every day in this country.

And we are going to fight to protect our Federal workforce every step of the way to reveal the nefarious plans that our friends across the aisle have in dismantling the Federal workforce and to protect Social Security, because we know that it is fundamental to making sure, especially that our seniors can live with dignity for the rest of their lives.

And with that, I yield back.

Chairman COMER. The gentlelady yields back.

The Chair now recognizes Dr. Foxx. But before I do, I think we all want to congratulate you, Dr. Foxx, upon your recent appointment as Chair of Rules Committee.

Ms. FOXX. Thank you, Mr. Chair, very much.

You know, I am sitting here thinking like an average American and I cannot understand how the other side thinks you are serving the American people by not having people come to work every day. The American people do not understand that, they go to work every day. Why is it that the Federal workforce is not required to go to their office and do their jobs? And for them to defend that is really mind-boggling.

Mr. O'Malley, you are an ambitious man with a long career in elected and appointed positions. I need one word answers from you. In those positions, who were you accountable to?

Mr. O'MALLEY. The people.

Ms. FOXX. Constituents, taxpayers, the President, the American people?

Mr. O'MALLEY. The American people or the people of Baltimore or the people of Maryland, to the republic.

Ms. FOXX. Well, that is what we want you to continue to do. But in the November 2024 agreement between SSA and the American Federation of Government Employees, that you signed, allows 98 percent of SSA employees to telework. Can you explain how you justified signing the agreement that will result in not even meeting the low bar of 50 percent that President Biden set out for people to come to work?

Mr. O'MALLEY. The eligibility of telework greatly preceded my arrival at the agency, Congresswoman. In fact, in the second term of President Obama's Administration he asked the agency to become leaders in the Federal Government in portable workloads. And I think we should all be grateful, because otherwise, in the pandemic, those checks would have stopped. What my agreement did was to put into the agreement actually a dialing up of onsite presence. I increased it greatly.

Ms. FOXX. But you never even met the 50 percent threshold that President Biden put in place, you never met that.

Mr. O'MALLEY. Well, actually—

Ms. FOXX. And I think that is such a low bar. I just do not think that this agreement that you signed serves the best interest of the taxpayers who pay for the Social Security Administration or the American people who expect their government to show up and be able to provide good service. So, I think it is an abomination that you would sign an agreement to let 98 percent of the people in the Administration stay at home and work.

Mr. O'MALLEY. That is not what I did, Congresswoman.

Ms. FOXX. Well.

Mr. O'MALLEY. That is not what I did. Ninety-eight percent were eligible for telework, but I required all of the headquarters folks and the regionals and the areas to be there 3 days a week. And ever since the pandemic ended, those field offices in each of your districts have been open 5 days a week, ever since vaccines were available, 5 days a week.

Ms. FOXX. Thank you very much.

Ms. Greszler, the Federal Government is the largest employer in the United States with about 2.2 million civilian employees. Out of this number, how many employees have a telework arrangement? And how many are remote workers?

Ms. GRESZLER. We know that 43 percent are teleworking. I believe the eligibility is in the high 50s.

Ms. FOXX. In the high 50s. So, on a typical day about what percentage of civilian Federal employees show up in their in-person workplace?

Ms. GRESZLER. That we really do not know, because the way that they are classified and the agencies have been measured.

Ms. FOXX. So, we have no way of tracking how many employees are teleworking or working in offices, is that correct?

Ms. GRESZLER. Correct.

Mr. O'MALLEY. That is not true.

Ms. FOXX. Oh, OK. In the small business or in the private sector there is no way that management could get away with not knowing exactly how many employees are teleworking or working remotely. It is inexcusable that the Federal Government does not have a reliable way to figure out where its employees are working. Something has to be done. There has to be accountability.

Mr. Davis, welcome back to your Committee. As the GAO noted in 2023, 17 of 24 major Federal agencies' headquarters in the D.C. area were less than 25 percent occupied. Ordinary Americans, small businesses and corporate America cannot afford to pay for space they barely use, let alone help the Federal Government pay for its unused space. What are the economic impacts of having so many empty Federal office buildings?

Mr. DAVIS. Well, you are paying for a service you are not receiving. Very quickly, if it continues, then you are going to have to downsize. You cannot continue on this vein.

Ms. FOXX. And from your perspective, what is the impact of telework and remote work in the D.C. area?

Mr. DAVIS. As I said before, telework can be an important part of delivering service worker satisfaction and everything else. The point here though is that it is so overdone in Washington and among Federal employees compared to where the private sector has moved and where other urban areas are, those have devastating economic impact on this region and on the Metro system in particular.

Ms. FOXX. Thank you. Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Chairman COMER. The gentlelady yields back.

Before I recognize Mr. Garcia, at the request of the witnesses, pursuant to the previous order, the Committee will stand in recess for a brief 5 minutes.

[Recess.]

Chairman COMER. The Committee will reconvene. The Chair now recognizes, for 5 minutes, the gentleman from California, Mr. Garcia.

Mr. GARCIA. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you again to our witnesses for being here. I wanted to just start—I know we were talking a lot about the Federal workforce. I served as Mayor of my hometown, Long Beach, for 8 years before I got here. And so, I am really proud of the 6,500 employees that made up our city and all their hard work. And I am also proud of our Federal workforce and of course we all know that there can always be improvements and there are always ways of looking at efficiencies and making our workforce stronger. And I think those that work on the front lines will tell you that as well.

You know, I think, unfortunately, there are some here who have tried to smear the Federal workforce and continue to bring up, I think, factually, I think, incorrect statements and certainly things that are not true about the way our workers operate here, not just in D.C. but as we know a lot of the Federal workforce is across the country. They want to justify their plans to fire thousands of people and gut critical programs by attacking the Social Security Administration and other agencies within the government.

Now this is, of course, one of our first hearings as we are opening up the new Congress. And Republicans, not surprisingly, are taking aim at the Social Security Administration. And we know that is not a coincidence.

Now I want to start with you, Commissioner O'Malley. Thank you for being here, of course, and for you work overseeing what I believe is one of the most important agencies in our entire government. Just briefly, Americans are earned their Social Security benefits. Isn't that correct?

Mr. O'MALLEY. Yes, sir.

Mr. GARCIA. Thank you. And exactly, as you know, this program has been the backbone of our society—it has given millions of people the ability to live with dignity and security. And make no mistake—you know it, we know it—there are rightwing extremists, some in Congress, that want to privatize and cut Social Security.

Now, Commissioner O'Malley, we know that Elon Musk, who at this point is essentially the co-president, has called for cutting at least \$2 trillion to Federal spending. And actually, more recently, he has actually said, well, no, it is more like \$1 trillion that I want to cut of Federal spending. Now, do you believe it is possible to reduce Federal spending by \$1 trillion without cutting Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid?

Mr. O'MALLEY. No, sir, I do not think that is mathematically possible.

Mr. GARCIA. I agree with you. And if you add up the entire discretionary Federal budget, which is everything from Head Start, to protecting our borders, our military, firefighting, Federal infrastructure. You actually only get to about \$1.7 trillion. So, even if you eliminated the Department of Education, Transportation, HUD, the FBI, all science funding, you would still need to cut Social Security, Medicare or Medicaid to reach that \$2 trillion in spending cuts.

I think it is important for everyone to understand that the real agenda here is quite dangerous, not just for the Federal workforce, not just for the Social Security Administration, but to the entire country. And that Elon Musk through his, I think insane ideas, is really calling much of the shots.

I want to show something to the Administrator [sic] and to our panelists here. These are some of the programs that we have that are essentially waiting for reauthorization from the Federal Government. Republicans are often vague about their cuts because obviously they do not want the American people to know what they really want to do.

The real plan, of course, they say, is to make sure the Federal Government is perceived as broken, Federal Government workers are all lazy. We have to break it, we have to eliminate it. In November, Elon Musk outlined his actual plan to the *Wall Street Journal* to cut about \$500 billion of programs that need to get reauthorized.

So, here are those programs right from his interview with the *Wall Street Journal*. We are looking at, essentially, the single largest program that would actually get cut, according to Elon Musk's plan, would be veterans' healthcare. It is not just veterans' healthcare at \$119 there if you are looking at all of this. We are talking about opioid treatment, the State Department, housing assistance—we are in a huge housing crisis. You are looking at NASA, cutting essentially the entire of Department of Education. And these are billions of dollars for programs that are needed for people to survive.

And so, I think it is really important as we talk about efficiency, which is what Republicans want to talk about in this hearing and others, that it is Elon Musk and his directive is to essentially cut programs and departments that would harm, whether they say the word Social Security or not, the amount of money they want to cut from the Federal Government would lead to drastic cuts to Social Security and Medicare, period.

Those are just the facts. And so, I think it is important that we talk about efficiency in the way that is honest and direct with the American people.

I also want to just say in conclusion, I think we owe a great deal of respect and admiration to those men and women that are on the front lines working across the country to help American people access their benefits, take care of our military families and provide care to veterans in our hospitals. And we should not let billionaires attack our Federal employees or the Social Security Administration. We should instead be standing up for them.

And with that, I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman COMER. The gentleman yields back.

The Chair recognizes Mr. Cloud from Texas.

Mr. CLOUD. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Certainly, we need a Federal workforce, but our job as the oversight committee and, certainly, of any official working in the Administration, should be to make sure we are returning a good ROI to the American taxpayer.

I do have some concerns on what seems to be underlying principles in some of these arguments in that there is an absurdity in

that it seems some have the view that the American people exist to support the Federal workforce as opposed to any of us serving in the public sector exists to serve the American people.

And so, I can tell you firsthand from just from the casework that we do that we have certainly seen a slowdown in responsiveness from us working cases for veterans, for Social Security, passports, and the like. Indeed, during COVID, there is a warehouse where Federal employees were paid to digitize records that are physically in a warehouse and, understandably, later in COVID they were not there.

But when we went to re-up the payment of that, Republicans tried to say, well, you are going to actually have to show-up in the warehouse and Democrats on this Committee pushed back against our provision, in a physical warehouse, to ban teleworking. It was a job that could not be done at home, and we saw that.

More notably as we enter into a second Trump Administration, I am concerned about a Federal bureaucracy that has outgrown its authority that often slow walks policies that they do not like and has, in my view, become an unconstitutional fourth branch of government.

Indeed, during the Trump Administration, and I will submit a *Bloomberg* article, "Washington Bureaucrats are Quietly Working to Undermine Trump's Agenda." In which that article found that career staff had found ways to obstruct, slow down, simply ignore their new leader, the President.

A *Washington Post* article, "Resistance from Within: The Federal Workforce has Rushed Against the Trump Agenda." They see the bureaucrats using time to their advantage and so they would slow walk different things.

I am very concerned about this, especially as we see in the recent contracting that has come from Mr. O'Malley on his way out, as he is posturing for a slot in the DNC, specifically with AFGE.

Ms. Greszler, you mentioned how taxpayer funded lobbying happens on the clock. Is that true? In your opening statement?

MS. GRESZLER. Yes, Federal employees can take official time to not do their jobs, but can then work for their unions, which includes lobbying Congress.

MR. CLOUD. Right. And I am reading from the union's page right now that says, "AFGE runs one of the largest, best political programs in AFGE history." This is their article talking about the work they did during the last Presidential election. And when I look at their endorsements from the last few elections, I see Harris, Biden, Clinton, Obama, Kerry, Gore. I am noting a trend. I do not know if anyone else is.

So, we have taxpayer funded political organizing going on, on the clock. And this is very concerning to me, and I think it should be for anyone looking for a good ROI from their taxpayer.

I want to turn, though, because there is a lot of discussion about private and public when it comes to teleworking. And there is a little bit of a difference in that, although I think there is lessons to be learned that could cross that. But in the private sector, you have immediate accountability.

And so, there are earn statements that are not met, there are productivity goals that are not met, and those who are managing

have the ability to immediately fire, make course corrections, and the like, to get rid of bad actors, poor performers, and the like.

There was an OPM study that said 8 percent of civil service managers who had poor performing employees, only 8 percent of them tried to correct them. Why is that? Because 78 percent of those who tried were effective at bringing discipline or firing bad actors.

So that is less than 2 percent, barely over 1 percent of bad actors we were able to get fired. The ability for us to deal with bad actors, which includes those abusing telework, is very difficult. Could you speak to the process of what it takes to get rid of bad actors in our Federal Government.

Ms. GRESZLER. Yes, it is already incredibly difficult, and time-consuming, and costly and that is why we see the Federal managers try it a couple of times and then they just give up on it. Even things like not giving an employee a performance-based pay increase requires setting up a performance improvement plan.

It takes 1 1/2 years to actually go through the process of trying to fire an employee and get rid of them. In fact, telework is supposed to be something that is left to management's discretion. I think that everybody here would agree that we are not going for 100 percent remote and that you can have productive telework. But the problem is when you put in place policies that get rid of the ability in management to effectively manage those telework policies and that is precisely what this new contract agreement does, it literally crosses out "each deputy commissioner will determine the number of scheduled telework days, if any, eligible positions, and percentage of employees permitted to work."

And now, it just says whatever is in place, as of now, until 2029. And so, you are stripping the ability of management to do what they need to do to make those telework policies—we can submit this into the record. It is literally crossed out.

Mr. O'MALLEY. Go for it, please. We just read a big passage of it.

Mr. CLOUD. My time is expired, but I would like to submit for the record a report from Senator Joni Ernst, "Out of Office: Bureaucrats on the Beach and in Bubble Baths but not in Office Buildings."

I yield back.

Chairman COMER. Without objection. So, ordered.

Chairman COMER. The Chair now recognizes Ms. Lee from Pennsylvania.

Ms. LEE. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

My Republican colleagues really want to kick off this Congress disparaging our Federal workers and unions with yet another hearing on telework. They seem to be convinced that you have to be physically present in an office to do your job despite all of the evidence that we have already heard against it.

From one side of their mouth they say that people need to work more, and then out of the other side, they want to limit how you can work and where you can work from. That is just plain anti-work.

So, since Republicans are so obsessed with efficiency that they created a subcommittee around it, I would love to talk about government efficiency.

I think my Republican colleagues need to face some hard truths that some workers are going to be more efficient at home.

Some are also going to get more work done or even work more hours by working from home. They waste less time, too, when they are not commuting into the office.

How are we going to talk about government efficiency while pushing for policies that keep folks from executing their jobs efficiently?

I do actually want to work on government efficiency and I think it is important, but it is not very efficient that we are probably going to do this same hearing five more times.

These attacks on these Federal workers are repetitive and nothing more than grandstanding.

You have a trifecta. You should not have anything more to complain about. So, we should be able to stop wasting time on this type of nonsense.

This hearing does nothing more than demonstrate their cruelty, and that is always been the point. They are telling us how little they view government workers and the people of the D.C. area. They are showing us how low they regard the people of D.C., whether it is because they're government workers or because they are majority Black.

Republicans are letting an unelected multibillionaire run amuck and they are attacking our government workers straight out the gate. How is that efficient?

These people want to do their jobs. They want to do their jobs well and efficiently. But every 3 weeks, we come out here and we attack what we already know is an efficient way to work.

And why do we know that? Because we have heard the testimony throughout all of this, all of the last Congress in this very Committee, testimony that told us how work-from-home policies do not impact efficiency, how allowing telework attracts diverse, higher quality candidates and talent, how it makes it easier for our veterans and our military spouses and mothers and those with disabilities to work. We have already determined over and over and over and over again that these policies are better, not worse, more efficient, not less wasteful.

I honestly do not have any questions today, because we have already heard them all. We have already had them all answered a dozen times over throughout the hearings of the 118th Congress. So, we might as well just refer this hearing straight to the DOGE Subcommittee, I agree, so that we can take this up four more times. I hope that you will join us in each of those endeavors.

Regardless of who sits in the Oval Office, we have a mandate to not run a circus over here, and day two we are failing to do that. I hope that we do better.

I yield back.

Chairman COMER. The Chair recognizes Mr. Fallon from Texas. Mr. FALLON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. O'Malley, fair to say that you are a fan of telework? You think it is better and more efficient?

Mr. O'MALLEY. I do not know that I am a fan of anything, other than improving customer service and enabling——

Mr. FALLON. So, you do not have an opinion on telework? You do not think it is better or more efficient for Federal employees?

Mr. O'MALLEY. Sometimes it is, like this one——

Mr. FALLON. Well, I do not need to see that. Sir, I do not need to see that. Sir——

Mr. O'MALLEY. It is a great story.

Mr. FALLON. Mr. Chairman, I am claiming back my time.

I have a limited amount of time, Mr. O'Malley. So, you will not say or admit that you think it is more efficient for Federal employees to work out of their kitchens, living rooms, bedrooms, on the porch, in a beanbag, rather than coming to work in a Federal building in a professional environment and provide services and value to the American taxpayer? You are not going to comment either way?

Mr. O'MALLEY. Yes, I am glad to comment. Do you want me to answer your question?

Mr. FALLON. Are you going to? Because you did not before.

Mr. O'MALLEY. Yes.

Mr. FALLON. Go ahead.

Mr. O'MALLEY. I want to answer your question.

Mr. FALLON. Knock it out. OK.

Mr. O'MALLEY. It depends on the job function. For example——

Mr. FALLON. OK. So, fair to say——

Mr. O'MALLEY. [continuing]. When it comes to——

Mr. FALLON. Five minutes, I just——

Mr. O'MALLEY. I know. When legal decision writers, which was actually approved by a Trump-appointed board——

Mr. FALLON. You would say for some Federal employees it is——

Mr. O'MALLEY. Some. Not all. But if you have to be in a field office to see people, you got to be in the field office.

Mr. FALLON. Sir, you were a—you were the Mayor of Baltimore?

Mr. O'MALLEY. Yes, sir, I was.

Mr. FALLON. Eight years. What years?

Mr. O'MALLEY. Nineteen-ninety-nine through 2007.

Mr. FALLON. And then you were Governor of Maryland?

Mr. O'MALLEY. Maryland from 2007 to 2015, yes, sir.

Mr. FALLON. OK. Did you offer such generous telework terms and benefits to the municipal employees and then your state employees during your tenure as Mayor and Governor?

Mr. O'MALLEY. No. That was all pre-COVID. I do not think any——

Mr. FALLON. So, they actually showed up for work in Maryland and in Baltimore.

Mr. O'MALLEY. Well, everybody, everyone at Social Security works 5 days a week.

Mr. FALLON. Mr. O'Malley, would you acknowledge—and I am not saying you need to agree with this—but would you acknowledge that on the campaign trail President Trump made it crystal clear his intention to bring Federal workers back to the offices and largely or mostly end telework for Federal employees?

Mr. O'MALLEY. I have heard it said. I cannot recall whether it was him or the other President, whether it was Elon Musk or President Trump.

Mr. FALLON. All right. So, I did not ask you about the snide remark. But President Trump was a candidate for the Presidency and he did acknowledge that. And there was an election on November 5, I am sure you are aware.

When did you sign the agreement with the public sector union, the American Federation of Government Employees, that allowed tens of thousands of Federal employees to continue to telework up to 3 days a week, AKA 60 percent of the time? What date was that?

Mr. O'MALLEY. I returned—I increased their onsite presence February 2—

Mr. FALLON. That is not what I asked.

Mr. O'MALLEY. [continuing]. And assigned it November 27.

Mr. FALLON. All right. I know you are an experienced politico, but that is not the question I asked. I asked what date did you ink the deal?

Mr. O'MALLEY. I told you, November 27.

Mr. FALLON. November 27?

Mr. O'MALLEY. Yes, sir.

Mr. FALLON. OK. So, 22 days after—very important word—after the November 5 election. Any reason it could not have been inked before?

Mr. O'MALLEY. Well, there was also a settlement. I had to—we were able to get from the union concessions on some grievances that had the agency exposed for millions of dollars, and that was part of it. But, as you know, people work against deadlines.

Mr. FALLON. So, coincidence that it was 3 weeks, let us say, after than before.

Mr. O'MALLEY. No, I would not say it is coincidence. I said people work against deadlines.

Mr. FALLON. Just so happened. All right.

What year does President Trump's term end? What calendar year?

Mr. O'MALLEY. It is hard to say.

Mr. FALLON. January—I knew you were going to say that.

Mr. O'MALLEY. That is up to him.

Mr. FALLON. Four years, right? January 2029.

Mr. O'MALLEY. If he chooses to serve all 4 years.

Mr. FALLON. OK. January 2029. Is that correct? Calendar year, what year?

Mr. O'MALLEY. Well, that is the term to which he was elected.

Mr. FALLON. Which is what year?

Mr. O'MALLEY. Four years after this year.

Mr. FALLON. Do you do the math on that, or do you need a calculator?

Mr. O'MALLEY. No, I do not need a calculator.

Mr. FALLON. What is it?

Mr. O'MALLEY. I assume it is 2000 and—I do not know. 2000 and—you will pardon me for hoping that he might leave sooner.

Mr. FALLON. It is not a trick question. I can help you out. 2029. Fair?

Mr. O'MALLEY. Yes, 2029, and that is the term of the collective bargaining.

Mr. FALLON. It is? No.

Mr. O'MALLEY. Which preceded me.

Mr. FALLON. The same thing? 2029?

Mr. O'MALLEY. Yes, but that preceded me, Congressman.

Mr. FALLON. Another coincidence. Wow, that is amazing.

So, here is the good news. You all may have been able to circumvent the American people's will this election cycle, but there is another election come November 2026 and the people are going to get to consider this issue.

And they have a choice. They can believe in the fiction that magically somehow it is more productive and efficient to allow public sector Federal employees who get paid by the American taxpayer to be at home—perhaps on their couch, living room, bedroom, patio, beanbag, running errands—with little to no structure, constraints, consequence or accountability; or you can believe that actually having them come to work and building a team and creating synergy with productivity and accountability is better.

Mr. O'MALLEY. That is what we did.

Mr. FALLON. So, the American people are going to have a choice, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. O'MALLEY. And that is what we did.

Mr. FALLON. I did not ask you a question, Mr. O'Malley. You are welcome to run for Congress and sit up here, but I am not asking a question. I am going to finish my remarks.

They can believe and buy the bill of goods that you are selling them, or they can believe in the reality that we are pitching them.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Chairman COMER. The gentleman yields back.

And I apologize in advance. I will hopefully be able to correctly pronounce this by the end of the 119th Congress. But Mr.——

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. Subramanyam.

Chairman COMER. Yes. You are recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. Thank you. Thank you.

Hello. To reiterate what many of my colleagues have already said, as someone who represents 34,000 Federal workers, many of whom are my friends and neighbors, I can promise you that these Federal workers are smart and dedicated professionals who would probably get paid more working in the private sector but choose to serve their country.

And so, I think if you want to attract and retain great people in our military, at our agencies, and get more for our tax dollars, I do not think vilifying them is going to help us attract and retain great talent in our Federal workforce.

And some of the rhetoric I am hearing today is just—there is this assumption that teleworking Federal employees are not working at all. That is simply not true.

And I know many of them in my community who, sometimes they work 3 days a week in person, but I make that commute myself actually every day. It is about 45 minutes. I paid \$35 in tolls this morning, and many of them have to pay that same amount. It is expensive to come in. It is actually very difficult. They spend

a lot of time on the road that they could be spending working instead.

And so, I would ask Governor O'Malley, when you have had telework policies in place, is there any evidence of a significant drop-off in employee performance based on the Administration's adoption of it?

Mr. O'MALLEY. No. In fact, Congressman, we actually increased productivity this year by more on a year-over-year basis than we have at any time since 2012.

And may I just show you this quick map? I do not mean to bite into your time. But the ALJ level hearings are where people with disabilities go in front of a judge. It is an on-the-record approach.

Before COVID, all of this was in person. After COVID and the changes we had to make, we now have bandwidth on dockets all over the country. And you can see on the right-hand side that is where we began the year. Anything in dark green was 270 days.

We have not been at 270 days to process an ALJ hearing in 30 long years. In just 1 year, you see the dark green on the map, that is because of the ability of the ALJs, oftentimes other people that are called to testify, like the vocational rehab people, can all be right there.

Were it not for that ability and the Agency's ability to monitor that and do it well, we would never have gotten back, with the staffing reductions Congress has imposed on us, to a 30-year low and the fastest average processing time at the ALJ level that we have had in 30 years. That is the most compelling case.

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. That sounds like telework actually made it more productive.

Mr. O'MALLEY. Yes, sir. Telework and the internet and advances in the recording and everything else about it. Yes, sir.

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. And it sounds like telework also made the Social Security Administration a more attractive place to work. Is that correct?

Mr. O'MALLEY. You know, honestly, Congressman, the attrition rate at Social Security and the demoralization there because of the rising—can you put that back up on the easel, this one—because of the rising workloads, the attrition rate was about the worst in the agency when I was asked to go there. In fact, in the Teleservice Centers that answer the 800 number, it was a 22 percent attrition rate.

I can tell you, though, Congressman, I am deeply concerned that some would like to break this fragile agency, and that would be really, really bad for the 72 million Americans, seniors, people with disabilities, people on SSI.

We turned it around in a much better direction thanks to the good people there. But you could very well break Social Security.

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. I heard a lot about the D.C. and northern Virginia economy. I am so glad to hear that. I am glad everyone on both sides of the aisle cares about it so that when there is an effort to move agencies out later on, I will hold you to it.

But I would ask, Congressman, Mr. Chairman Davis, if we were to remove or fire Federal workers in this region, you mentioned devastating our economy. Would that devastate our economy?

Mr. DAVIS. It depends how many you are talking about, where you are going. I mean, massive firings is going to, whether it is the private sector or public sector, is going to have an effect.

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. Do you think moving agencies away from a region, as proposed by the incoming administration, would be good for our local economy?

Mr. DAVIS. Well, I do not know what they proposed. You know, even moving the FBI out of Washington, DC, has gotten a lot of controversy within the region between Maryland and Virginia and D.C. So, any time you move anything it is going to have economic consequences.

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. I think moving away agencies from our region would be a self-imposed recession, and I think firing Federal workers *en masse* would be a self-imposed recession for northern Virginia.

So, I love the concern for Metro. I love the concern for businesses in our region. I am looking forward to having that discussion and solving that. But the rhetoric coming from the Administration is really bad for our local economy.

I yield my time.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Chairman, I just have a UC request.

Chairman COMER. Sure.

Mr. CONNOLLY. I would ask unanimous consent that the article from Government Exec on the Ernst report documenting telework abuse be entered into the record.

Chairman COMER. Without objection, so ordered.

Mr. CONNOLLY. I thank the Chair.

Chairman COMER. The Chair recognizes Mr. Perry from Pennsylvania.

Oh, I am sorry, the Chair recognizes Mr. Donalds from Florida.

Mr. DONALDS. Thank you, Chairman. I appreciate that.

Ms. Greszler, is that how you pronounce your name? I got it right?

Ms. GRESZLER. Correct.

Mr. DONALDS. Can you please explain the difference between the definitions of telework and remote work?

Ms. GRESZLER. Yes. Remote work is 100 percent from a different location and can include living entirely thousands of miles away. Telework is having the ability to work anywhere from one to 5 days a week at a remote location.

Mr. DONALDS. OK. Can an agency force a Federal employee to telework? Like, similarly, can an agency force a Federal employee to show up for work?

Ms. GRESZLER. Yes. And we saw that happen during COVID-19. There was forced telework that happened. And they should have the ability to force an employee to show up to work, but when you have problematic components that are baked into the cake for the new administration that prevent, such as deputy commissioners at SSA from having that authority because of a collective bargaining agreement, that is arguably counter to the law.

Mr. DONALDS. Do you feel it is within the purview of the President of the United States to set the work schedule for Federal employees across the board?

Ms. GRESZLER. I do, and in particular telework. That is what the Telework Act of 2010 requires.

Mr. DONALDS. Ms. Cross, do you agree with that assumption, that the President of the United States has the broad authority to set work requirements for Federal employees?

Ms. CROSS. [Inaudible.]

Mr. DONALDS. You cannot think about it now, Ms. Cross. We are here. We have got to go on the fly. Do you think it is under the purview of the President to set work requirements for Federal employees, since, essentially, we, in our system of government, we have a unitary executive, and the President of the United States is the executive branch?

Ms. CROSS. Sure.

Mr. DONALDS. OK.

Mr. O'Malley, do you agree with that assessment, that the President of the United States has the unilateral authority for setting work requirements for Federal employees?

Mr. O'MALLEY. No. Under the law, he has the ability, but it is not unilaterally.

Mr. DONALDS. Mr. O'Malley—

Mr. O'MALLEY. He has to abide by the law, at least in a republic you abide by the law.

Mr. DONALDS. Mr. O'Malley, do you believe that the President of the United States is the executive branch, whether it is President Trump, President Biden, President Obama, President Bush, President Bush—Herbert Walker Bush—President Reagan? Do you believe that the President of the United States is the unitary executive and is the executive branch?

Mr. O'MALLEY. Yes, and he has to abide under the law. He has to obey the law.

Mr. DONALDS. So, you mean to tell me that the President of the United States does not have the ability to set work requirements?

Mr. O'MALLEY. I am saying that he does, but he has to do so under the terms and the rule of the law. And contract law and things contained in agreements that are negotiated under the law are things that the President has to be mindful of and should be guided by.

Mr. DONALDS. When you signed this agreement with the unions over at the Social Security Administration, did you do it purposefully to undermine President Trump on his way in the door?

Mr. O'MALLEY. No. I did it to sustain the big customer service delivery improvements that this greatly depleted agency had made in the course of the year and to try to staunch the attrition rate and the fact that so many are eligible for retirement.

You know, the reduction in staffing is really hurting a lot of seniors in every one of your districts, a lot of people with disability, a lot of our poorest people that are on SSI. I did what I did in order to better serve the American people.

Mr. DONALDS. Well, when you set this agreement, knowing that the Presidential election already had been decided, did you call Mar-a-Lago and say, "Hey, what is your opinion on this?"

Mr. O'MALLEY. No.

Mr. DONALDS. Did you ask President Biden to reach out to President Trump in the matter of transition and say, "Hey, which way

do we want the next President to be able to administer the employees that are under his purview as the unitary executive?"

Mr. O'MALLEY. I certainly did not. I worked for President Biden. He appointed me. And I was confirmed in a lopsided bipartisan margin by the Senate, and I executed the duties that I was assigned at Social Security to better serve senior citizens, better serve people on SSI, and people with disabilities. That is what I did, Congressman.

Mr. DONALDS. My counterargument to you, Mr. O'Malley, is that whether it is whatever president we are talking about, they all have the same duty to serve the seniors who were promised something on Social Security, and that mission is going to be executed regardless of party, regardless of President.

But sir, what you did was to essentially do a workaround of the incoming administration. But I am going to come back to you later.

Ms. Greszler, I am going to come back to you. You stated earlier in your testimony about we do have an issue with some of the Federal employees who are doing work, union work, on Federal Government time. Can you expound upon that?

Ms. GRESZLER. Yes.

Unfortunately, we do not have any more data on that because the Biden Administration stopped collecting that. But if you use what the Obama Administration, those figures, and convert them to today's salaries, taxpayers are paying over \$300 million per year to pay Federal employees to step away from the jobs they are hired for and to instead go do union work on taxpayers' dime.

Mr. DONALDS. Mr. Chairman, if you will oblige.

What is some of the—do you have an idea of some of the work that is being done on Federal Government time for the unions that they are a part of?

Ms. GRESZLER. That can include negotiations. It could include lobbying Congress. It can include helping employees to file grievances or unfair labor practices if they have their telework policies taken away from them.

Mr. DONALDS. Mr. Chairman, I would move that it is in the interest of this Committee—and, frankly, of the United States going forward—that we find out exactly what work is being done while employees are being paid by the Federal Government that is not within the purview of the job that they were hired to perform.

I yield back.

Chairman COMER. Absolutely.

The Chair now recognizes Ms. Ansari from Arizona.

Ms. ANSARI. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I am new to this Committee, but I can see that we are picking up this Congress right where you all left off last year, which is ignoring the data and perpetuating false narratives about Federal workers.

It is obvious that this hearing is no more than a politically driven attempt to peddle a myth about the Social Security Administration just to serve the incoming Trump Administration's billionaire-led assault on the very Federal agencies that are designed and working to serve the American people.

So, let us set the record straight. Under the Biden-Harris Administration, Social Security made dramatic improvements to its abil-

ity to deliver services to working Americans. And, incredibly, it accomplished that despite House Republicans' hell-bent refusal to give the Social Security Administration the funding that it needs to succeed.

One notable success was the Social Security Administration's launch last year of its SecurityStat initiative.

Governor O'Malley, could you tell us how SecurityStat works and how it has improved customer service at SSA?

Mr. O'MALLEY. Congresswoman, thank you.

It was one of the leading examples of the greatest use of performance management, openness, and transparency that the Federal Government has ever achieved.

So, imagine, if you will, we gathered on a regular repeating basis, not annually, like a lot of government's work, but every 2 weeks, every 2 weeks, every 2 weeks, in an agile approach where we set 2-week deadlines and we ran plays in between.

So, at the headquarters we would gather all of the deputy commissioners, the most relevant ones, not all of them, around the table, and we would look for one blessed hour at a thorny problem, like solving the problem of the huge wait time on the 1-800 number. What are the things we can do to reduce calls on the front end? What are the things we can do for first call resolution on the back end?

At the end of that hour—and all of this was based on data, on the map, all of which, again, if you go to the Social Security website, at least for the next few days, you will be able to see. I suggest you screenshot it. And then after 1 hour, we would reassemble in 10 minutes across the hall in a room that had the big letters on it: Followup room.

Then, on the next hour, we were back at it again, and we would look at the problem of overpayments and underpayments. What are the things we can do right now to reduce those?

That drove a faster cadence of action, more subregulatory changes than we had ever done before, and that is what allowed us to be able to get on top of some really thorny problems caused by the lack of staffing.

For example, the numbers of people that are waiting for their disability determinations. You can see it does not happen overnight. That backlog in disability cases had been growing for seven long years.

But by going at it every 2 weeks, every 2 weeks, with openness, transparency, and asking ourselves the question, "Does it work or does it not?" and coming back to the drawing board in 2 weeks, you can see we were able to start closing when it reached its peak.

For the last 27 weeks I was there, we were able to reduce or close more cases on the back end than we opened.

So, it is about creating a compelling scoreboard, it is about measuring performance, and it is about getting the best out of your people collaboratively, and that is what we did.

Ms. ANSARI. And, Governor O'Malley, the SSA has also dramatically reduced those wait times, I understand it is 50 percent. Is that correct?

Mr. O'MALLEY. Yes. It was at 42 1/2 minutes speed to answer at the beginning of last calendar year. Through a number of steps

every 2 weeks, every 2 weeks, and then a big cutover, which happened—it was probably the largest telecom IT cutover in Federal history given the volume that we handle of 8 million calls a month.

In September, we cut over from an underperforming clunky system and managed to achieve cost savings and also had a better system that got that speed to answer down to 12.8 minutes.

Ms. ANSARI. Wow.

Mr. O'MALLEY. Twelve-point-six, excuse me. And for the first time we are able to offer people Call Back Assist just like they get from their bank or any other customer-facing entity that they deal with in the private sector.

Ms. ANSARI. Governor O'Malley, that is a remarkable improvement. How did SSA accomplish this? Did you hire thousands of more workers to get this done?

Mr. O'MALLEY. No. It was with fewer workers. We did bring on some expert telecom people in order to manage that cutover, but they were on a contractual basis for a short period of time.

We have been shedding staff. What a lot of people in Congress do not understand is that to level fund this agency means that the agency, since its fixed costs go up by \$600 million, it has to shed \$600 million worth of staff. So that is why we have been reduced to a 50-year low.

You know, it used to be—we were talking about efficiency earlier—until the staff reductions of the last 10 years, Social Security operated on 1.2 percent overhead for benefits paid and we operated at a high level of customer service.

At that 1.2 percent, if you compare that to Allstate, Allstate operates at 19 percent overhead for benefits paid. Liberty Mutual, Liberty Biberly, operates at 23 percent overhead.

So, when we operated at 1.2 percent, it was a high level of customer service. And you all could restore that 1.2 percent if you chose to. You could take it all out of the trust fund. It would not advance the depletion date by more than 30 days. And you would not add a dime to the national debt, because people already paid for the customer service that these congressional staff reductions are now denying them.

Ms. ANSARI. Thank you.

Mr. O'MALLEY. Thank you.

Chairman COMER. The gentlelady's time is expired.

The Chair recognizes Mr. Perry from Pennsylvania.

Mr. PERRY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Greszler, how much money, if you know, is spent by the Federal Government maintaining its own office space?

Ms. GRESZLER. I believe it is about \$8 billion, plus potentially more than \$7 billion per year in the energy costs.

Mr. PERRY. Plus \$7 billion?

Ms. GRESZLER. \$8 billion is the cost of them, and then they have done some calculations associated with the energy involved in that.

Mr. PERRY. OK. As just a followup, on another committee I serve on, we got the completion of a study by the GAO that said on average 17 of 24 Federal agencies surveyed use less than 25 percent of their headquarters building capacity.

I will go to the Governor here in a minute. But I do not think this is a case where—we do not want to disparage Federal workers.

We all depend upon them. They are, I think, just like you, Governor, they want to do the right thing and serve and help the American people.

But as you cite in your written testimony, a Social Security Administration response to a letter sent by Chairman Comer, Rep. Sessions, and myself, indicated that in Fiscal Year 2023 the SSA had 1,030 employees who spent a total of over 200,000 hours and \$15 million of official time doing things like lobbying Congress.

Do you think that that should be any way restricted by the Hatch Act?

Mr. O'MALLEY. Certainly, the Hatch Act—I mean, whatever—we should all abide by the law.

Mr. PERRY. Well, I understand that, but I do not know when the—and forgive me if I do not know—I do not know when the last time you worked kind of privately, so to speak, where you took time out of your own—like you left work, did not get paid for being at work because you were not at work, and went and lobbied Congress.

Most of my bosses go to work every day and they have to lobby their Member of Congress on their time, but yet at the Federal level you get to lobby Congress on the taxpayers' time. I am just asking if you think that that is appropriate or should it be limited by the Hatch Act?

Mr. O'MALLEY. I would defer to people that are at the agency. I am not sure—I do not know that I have that letter. Did I sign it or was it signed by my predecessor?

Mr. PERRY. No. It was you, yes.

Mr. O'MALLEY. OK. All right.

Mr. PERRY. Well, let me ask you, does the collective bargaining agreement that you signed in the end of November of last year, do you think that that limits the President's ability to change any of what he might change for efficiency? You know, again, not trying to disparage Federal employees, or whatever.

But I would say this, sir. In the office that I represent, the folks that work for us, for my bosses, we do a lot of work because people cannot get answers from Social Security. I know you got a chart and so on. They cannot get answers, so we end up doing that work, and the President might want to make that more efficient.

Does the bargaining agreement that you signed preclude him from making any changes in that regard, regarding—and I am not here to disparage telework. Maybe it is more efficient. Maybe it is not. But does that preclude that?

Mr. O'MALLEY. No, it does not. And I hope that we give the President's—the incoming President's appointee a chance to actually get into Social Security and to understand the operations there and the interplay between onsite and telework.

Mr. PERRY. So, do we—Ms. Greszler, do you know if there is any standardized metric on or regular reporting across agencies to measure the efficiency of telework?

Mr. O'MALLEY. We have them.

Mr. PERRY. No. Standardized across all agencies. Like one standard so that we can compare.

Mr. O'MALLEY. I see.

Ms. GRESZLER. No.

Mr. PERRY. No, you do not know of one or there is not one?

Ms. GRESZLER. There is no standard.

Mr. PERRY. There is no standard.

So, if you do not know where you are starting from, how do you—is it a good—do you say it is a good practice to expand a practice that you do not know whether it is working or not? It may be working, but you do not know, right? Because there is no standard by which to evaluate that. Is that a fair statement?

Ms. GRESZLER. I would say it is not appropriate to expand it or to lock into place any current policies.

Mr. PERRY. OK.

Governor—

Mr. O'MALLEY. Yes, sir.

Mr. PERRY [continuing]. The GAO analysis of the first quarter of 2023, arguably you were not there yet, showed a space utilization rate at the headquarters in Maryland of Social Security at 7 percent. What was it by quarter during your time there?

Mr. O'MALLEY. I do not have that, but the Agency probably does. I can tell you that I increased onsite presence at that headquarters to mostly 3 days.

Mr. PERRY. Well, OK, but 7 percent, like, I do not know about you, that is a pretty low number. So, it does not take much.

Mr. O'MALLEY. Well, you saw the parking lot picture before I got here.

Mr. PERRY. I know you—when was that picture taken?

Mr. O'MALLEY. That was taken before I got there. That was taken in December.

Mr. PERRY. OK. Well, so that is, potentially, it is a 7 percent rate.

Mr. O'MALLEY. Yes, sir.

Mr. PERRY. So, let me ask you this in the remaining time. Whether it is 7 percent or 20 percent—

Mr. O'MALLEY. And that was the one at the higher rate.

Mr. PERRY. I get it, but it was not—it could be during this 7 percent time. You said, argued, it was before you got there.

Mr. O'MALLEY. Yes, that one.

Mr. PERRY. At what point do you think it is appropriate for the Federal Government to sell off property unutilized? Seven percent? Ten percent? Twenty percent? What percent?

Mr. O'MALLEY. We have been greatly reducing—or the Agency has been greatly reducing square footage and trying to get out of—and trying to right size what the agency should be.

Mr. PERRY. I have not seen that at all. They hang on like it is the end of the world to any—

Mr. O'MALLEY. The agency has those numbers.

Mr. PERRY. You ran the agency. At what percent utilization rate do you say we have got to sell stuff? What percent?

Mr. O'MALLEY. Actually, a lot of our stuff is leased, but we look to reduce leases whenever they come up.

Mr. PERRY. OK. What percent, sir? I am just looking for utilization.

Mr. O'MALLEY. I do not know that we have ever—

Ms. CROCKETT. Chairman—

Mr. O'MALLEY. I do not know that is what we ever looked at. We just looked at customer service and we looked at productivity—

Mr. PERRY. And we just keep every building, even though Ms. Greszler says it costs us all this money, even though nobody is in it.

Mr. O'MALLEY. No—

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Chairman—

Chairman COMER. That is the last question, but feel free to answer, Governor.

Mr. O'MALLEY. Thank you.

Some of them are owned, but very few of them—a lot of them are leases and you have to wait for them to come up. And then we look to downsize wherever we can, because it is a different environment now than it was before the lease.

Mr. PERRY. Did you downsize any when you were there?

Mr. O'MALLEY. Yes. About a million square feet.

Mr. PERRY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield.

Chairman COMER. The gentleman's time has expired.

And, Ms. Crockett, Ms. Ansari went over about a minute and 20 seconds, too, so it balanced out.

Ms. CROCKETT. [Inaudible.]

Chairman COMER. OK, I try to keep it fair, and Mr. Connolly is always elbowing me to make sure it is right.

The Chair recognizes Mr. Bell from Missouri.

Mr. BELL. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

And thank you to our guests.

It is day two for me as well. And like my distinguished colleague, Ms. Ansari, I echo her sentiments. But also, I would like to add that I think it is essential to this body's work that we restore decorum to be able to do this work.

I am encouraged when I see our Chair and Ranking Member disagree without being disagreeable. I think this type of decorum and approach is certainly something that should be utilized throughout this body consistently.

The Social Security Administration plays a crucial role in providing benefits to millions of Americans, yet it is operating on a budget that simply is not enough to meet this important mission.

My Republican colleagues are using telework as a scapegoat for their consistent underinvestment, but it will not change the fact that the real culprit is their refusal to give SSA the resources it needs. And it is critically important that we not lose sight of the human costs of that refusal.

The Social Security Administration estimates that 30,000 people lost their lives in the Fiscal Year 2023 while waiting for decisions on their disability claims.

We have to address these backlogs by investing properly in the agency. As of December 2024, my home, St. Louis, is home to over 3,000 Federal employees, and I truly believe they are the backbone of our community. If further cuts are made, we run the risk of closing essential SSA field offices, which would only add to the challenges our residents face.

Governor O'Malley, about how many field offices does SSA have and where are they located?

Mr. O'MALLEY. There are 1,211 field offices all across America, and on any given day there is always a risk that one of them might suddenly implode if too many employees with certain expertise in Title II or Title I suddenly decide to take other jobs. In fact, that happened to us in southeast Cleveland not so long ago. We just could not keep the office open because of the staffing cuts.

Mr. BELL. And, Governor O'Malley, why is it essential to SSA to have field offices?

Mr. O'MALLEY. It is essential because there are some things that we can only—people can only do in person. One of the—we talked a little earlier about fraud. Sometimes people have to come into the office to prove who they are because their bank accounts have been hit or hacked.

Some people just need that in-person service in order to apply, especially for some complex programs like disability.

So, we strive to get everybody in within 28 days if they are making a disability application, because we have learned that the sooner you get people in, the more that that speeds up the process once it starts going through the process and going to all of the state disability determinations offices.

Mr. BELL. OK. Governor O'Malley, why has SSA faced the need or potential need to close field offices?

Mr. O'MALLEY. Congressman, it is staffing. It is all staffing. I mean, if you look at that chart, you will see that because of the baby boomers, the number of beneficiaries has been climbing, climbing, climbing, and is going to continue to go up. But that red line represents the staffing, which, ever since Congress started so-called level funding the agency, the agency has lost \$600 million in staff any time that it has been level funded.

So, what used to be a very efficient provision of customer service when we were funded at 1.2 percent of benefits has now—I mean, nobody is happy with where it is right now.

We have gotten a lot better on many things. But I do not think any of us should be happy. We are funded now on less than 1 percent. And you can see it is the reduction of staffing to a 50-year low while the number of beneficiaries has doubled since what it was back in around 2000.

Mr. BELL. And just so we are clear, SSA's field offices create jobs for Americans who live in those communities. Is that correct?

Mr. O'MALLEY. Well, yes, but fewer and fewer of them.

Mr. BELL. And when SSA is forced to close its field offices, local workers lose their jobs.

Mr. O'MALLEY. Yes, sir.

Mr. BELL. Is that also correct?

Mr. O'MALLEY. Yes, sir.

Mr. BELL. So, my colleagues on the other side of the aisle are suggesting that telework, rather than a lack of sufficient funding, is to blame for the closure or potential closure of SSA field offices. Is that accurate?

Mr. O'MALLEY. No, that is not accurate. The cause of SSA's declining customer service over the last 10 years, it began before the pandemic, but the decline—it is all attributable to reduction in staffing to a 50-year low while beneficiaries continue to climb.

And even though, last year, we actually improved productivity by more in 1 year than we had since 2013, the folks, the men and women across the country in those field offices, they are not just the people that see people. They also have to process the claims and put them through.

And for the last year, they have been trying to sprint up a downward-moving escalator because of the growing workload, the declining staff, and what that does to people's morale and their ability to get the job done.

Chairman COMER. The gentleman's time is expired.

The Chair recognizes Ms. Greene from Georgia.

Ms. GREENE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. O'Malley, under your tenure the Social Security Administration failed to deliver for the American people.

On November 8 of last year, your agency announced the Appointment Focused Service, AFS, which directs field offices nationwide to require nearly all services be scheduled by appointment at local offices.

While the intent was to reduce in-person wait times, my constituents cannot get through the phone lines to even schedule an in-person appointment.

In just the last week, nearly a dozen—just last week—nearly a dozen constituents have contacted my office complaining that when they called to schedule an appointment, they were placed on hold for hours, then ultimately routed to the voicemail where no one answered and no one called them back, and this has been going on and on and on.

This is absolutely unacceptable, and the American people deserve to know the root cause of why this policy was implemented to begin with. The short answer is your telework policies.

The AFS was put in place to reduce wait times, yet the only reason the wait times were so outrageous to begin with was because there were not enough staff in the office to reduce the in-person wait times because your staff is at home, not working for the American people. It is reported that your local offices are only staffed at 20 to 30 percent on any given day.

It is kind of hard to have in-person appointments when people are not at the office.

No wonder wait times were so long. And you, Commissioner O'Malley, just signed an agreement to make that permanent for the next 4 years of President Trump's Administration, which is more failure, but that is your fault.

And by the way, Commissioner, I reached out to you last August. This is the letter that I sent to you dated August 1, 2024, requesting an in-person meeting with you to discuss some of the serious issues that my constituents in northwest Georgia are constantly having.

But you never responded to me, Mr. O'Malley. I never got a phone call. I never got a letter back. And that is clearly—maybe you were enjoying the telework policies yourself instead of doing the actual job. Or possibly it is because you were too busy drinking with the union members that you were negotiating with instead of negotiating against on behalf of the American people.

Now, Mr. O'Malley, right before you resigned as Social Security Administrator [sic], you signed an agreement with the American Federation of Government Employees on November 27, 2024.

Now, remember, 2 weeks before that, as I mentioned, you were partying with AFGE members in Florida, but you were not interested in calling me back or were even bothering to return a letter when I wanted to talk to you about very serious issues that my constituents were having.

You see, as Republicans, we fully support making sure that every single American receives their benefits from Social Security. You Democrats like to lie about us.

We are going to make sure that every single person that paid in, gets every single penny that they deserve, that they paid in, will come out back to them. That is what is important to us, actually working for the American people.

Now, Mr. O'Malley, I would like to ask you another question. Since you are very interested in being DNC Chair, you are, after all, a lifelong Democrat politician. I do not even know if you had a job in the real world, but you have been an elected politician for years.

Mr. O'MALLEY. Yes, I have had a few of them. And I ran my own law firm.

Ms. GREENE. Mr. O'Malley, you are also a Catholic, are you not? You are also a Catholic, are you not?

Mr. O'MALLEY. I am.

Ms. GREENE. Do you serve God or do you serve the Democrat Party?

Mr. O'MALLEY. I serve God and the American people.

Ms. GREENE. OK. Then, Mr. O'Malley—

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Chairman, as a Roman Catholic—

Ms. GREENE. I reclaim my time.

Mr. CONNOLLY [continuing]. I take offense at the suggestion that somebody has to choose between God and their service to country as a Catholic.

Ms. GREENE. Mr. O'Malley—I reclaim my time. I reclaim my time.

Mr. O'Malley, will you be supporting the murder of the unborn up until the day of birth like your party does? As DNC Chair, will you be supporting the murder of innocent unborn people? Is that in line with your faith in God and the Catholic Church?

Mr. O'MALLEY. I trust the judgment of women and doctors over the judgment of government.

Ms. GREENE. No, do you trust God's judgment? Do you trust God that he loves and has created every single human being? Do you support the murder of unborn children and are you going to uphold that evil practice that the Democrat Party wants to continue?

You see, abortions, over 95 percent of them, are unintended pregnancies. They use abortions as birth control. So, are you going to continue the birth control practice of murdering the unborn children as Chair of the DNC? Will that be a policy you will be supporting?

Mr. O'MALLEY. I am pro-choice and I trust the judgment of women and their doctors over the judgments of government.

Ms. GREENE. Well, thank you for letting God know where you stand with the murder of the unborn.

Mr. O'MALLEY. I talk to God every day.

Ms. GREENE. Well, you might want to talk to him a little bit more, Mr. O'Malley, because you are definitely in the wrong.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

Chairman COMER. The gentlelady yields back.

The Chair recognizes Ms. Simon from California.

Ms. SIMON. Good afternoon. And I am so thankful for being able to be here today. And I want to actually thank all of the witnesses.

I appreciate the testimony of each one of you all so greatly.

For me, this conversation actually transcends any partisan rhetoric. I mean, I think we can all agree, we can all agree that our widows, that the children of dead parents, that disabled folks, when they call the Social Security office, they want someone to answer.

We can all agree that when an elderly person goes to the Social Security office that they want to be able to talk to someone.

We can also hopefully agree that efficiency and efficacy within our Federal Government, it is the floor, that these folks work for us all.

And I come to this politics as a widow. I lost my husband more than a decade ago, and I sat with him after receiving just the most horrible news of our life, that he was going to die in a hospital room. And our little girl was about 1. One was going to college. One was going to preschool. And I sat in that hospital room for 5 hours trying to figure out, as my fingers trembled in filling out that ridiculous application, just hoping that it would go through.

Because, you see, Kevin had to leave his job. I had two babies. I am thankful, so thankful, that we got a "yes" the first time. While it took 6 months, we were approved.

Shortly after Kevin's death, we got a death benefit, and thank God for that \$600, because it was just \$200 short of the payment that it cost for the undertaker to take my love from our home on Father's Day.

Only 2 weeks after, I had to sit in the Social Security office by myself weeping with tissues, and I waited 3 hours for a wonderful woman to come greet me as I asked and begged for a death benefit for Lelah, who is now 13.

I believe in telework. I believe in efficiency. I also agree that folks need to be in their seats when they can. I actually am here to speak about disabled workers and mothers, like myself.

I was born legally blind, and I remember my mother weeping and talking daily to the Social Security offices and members of our public education system saying, "I need support and help for my little girl. She needs to learn how to read."

We, as a Committee, have to figure out how to figure it out. Whether you are working at home like that mother that I just talked about, she worked at home for many years, working for the Federal Government, working for the Veterans Administration as a pacemaker tech. She retired. She worked for 30 years. And you all know, if you work for the Veterans Administration, there have been folks for decades who have been working both in the office

and at our wonderful facilities, including Fort Miley, serving our good people.

Let us figure it out. Folks deserve the support to live and thrive, particularly the widow, particularly the disabled worker, and children who need every single opportunity to live and thrive. Our folks are dying to survive.

I had a question, but I will save us time and I will yield back.

Chairman COMER. The Chair now recognizes Mr. Burlison from Missouri.

Mr. BURLISON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. O'Malley, the AFGF, the same exact Federal union that you signed a contract with so that the SSA employees can continue to work remote until—or some of them can continue to work remote until 2029—recently decided to send its own employees, so the union decided that the employees that work for them, that they wanted them to return to work.

In fact, the new return-to-office mandate ordered by the national president, Everett Kelley, is designed to ensure that the staff is fully prepared to tackle an onslaught of Trump's policies targeting Federal workers. So, it seems that it is a directed mission by AFGF, the union, that in-person work actually is better. Would you agree?

Mr. O'MALLEY. It depends. I mean, I ordered more in-person work. I do not—I am not familiar with what their policy is, but for us, we found that at the headquarters components where people have to collaborate and work out problems, yes, there is no—I do not think there's a substitute for people being onsite.

Mr. BURLISON. But this created a dispute between the employees as well of that union, who filed a labor grievance against their own union calling the move hypocritical. Do you find that hypocritical?

Mr. O'MALLEY. I am not aware of the—I am not deeply aware. I just cannot speak to the facts of what is going on at a union.

Mr. BURLISON. Let me ask this question. Working in the private sector, most of the time—well, not most of the time. Every time a private sector business chooses which employees can work remote, often it is done based on performance. You know that the employee has high performance standards. Therefore, oftentimes the employer might reward that employee with the—high performance employees with the ability to work remote.

Is that something that is possible with the employees of the Social Security Administration?

Mr. O'MALLEY. I do not know that we ever reward employees by giving them more time to telework, but the agreement—

Mr. BURLISON. So, it is not based on performance. That is my question.

Mr. O'MALLEY. No. Actually, it is. Management—and I am reading from the much-maligned amendment—management also has sole discretion to change, reduce, or suspend telework days for any employee due to the employee's performance.

Mr. BURLISON. OK. So, is their pay influenced by any performance?

Mr. O'Malley. Well, ultimately it can be. And they also would not get the performance awards in the PACS Program that you all do

in the Federal Government that we never did in city or state government.

Mr. BURLISON. OK. So, in the private sector, I can tell you that we do things like monitor computer usage, monitor email, the frequency of opening emails, internet browsing history.

Mr. O'MALLEY. Uh-huh.

Mr. BURLISON. There is things like inactivity alerts.

Mr. O'MALLEY. Right.

Mr. BURLISON. There is social media monitoring and other things like that.

Mr. O'MALLEY. Yes.

Mr. BURLISON. Is that being done?

Mr. O'MALLEY. Yes, sir.

Mr. BURLISON. OK.

Mr. O'MALLEY. And Drew Ferguson, your recently retired colleague, can tell you about it, because he actually came to SecurityStat and saw, live, how we monitored 4,700 people that were on the phones trying to answer as quickly as possible that growing backlog. It was real-time. And if they were on a call longer—

Mr. BURLISON. And if they are not, are they fired?

Mr. O'MALLEY. Yes. They are disciplined if they are not working, certainly.

Mr. BURLISON. OK.

Ms. Greszler, my question regarding to this is we have got—you were just talking earlier about how difficult it is to fire an employee who is not performing. How difficult is it and how often does it happen compared to the private sector?

Ms. GRESZLER. It is extremely difficult. As I mentioned, it takes more than a year and a half on average to get rid of a Federal employee. The firing rates are a tiny fraction. I believe the exact statistic is in my testimony. But it just does not happen very often.

And I think that the point that needs to be made is that the telework authority needs to be with management, it cannot be taken away from them, because then when you do have problems like an SSA employee who is having his wife and his mother log on to the system to make it look like he was working while he was instead running a home business, you cannot have that accountability if it is baked into the cake that those deputy commissioners no longer have authority over the telework policy.

Mr. BURLISON. One of the other statistics that is interesting is that the level of union participation I think in the public sector is 25 percent in the Federal Government, but in the private sector it is much lower. It is lower than 10 percent. What is the reason for that?

Ms. GRESZLER. Yes. It is kind of surprising, especially considering that Federal employees cannot bargain for their pay and benefits. Part of that—

Mr. BURLISON. Who are they bargaining against?

Ms. GRESZLER. Well, and that is the irony here, and it is one of the reasons that FDR opposed Federal employees even belonging to a union, less being able to use that official time, because both sides of the table are being paid by taxpayers.

Mr. BURLISON. That is right. Both sides are being—and the taxpayers are the one getting the bill.

Ms. GRESZLER. Yes. Exactly.

Mr. BURLISON. Thank you. My time is expired.

Chairman COMER. The gentleman's time is expired.

Chair recognizes—not here. Frost. Mr. Frost. No? I am sorry, Ms. Norton from Washington, DC.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I welcome former Chair Tom Davis back to the Committee. Tom has always been a good friend of the District of Columbia and to me.

I welcome you back, sir.

This hearing is designed to denigrate Federal employees and to lay the predicate to gut the Federal workforce and to convert a significant portion of the remaining Federal civil service into political appointees.

Federal employees deserve praise for their expertise, dedication, and service, not derision. In the first 2 weeks of this Congress alone, at least four bills have been introduced to gut the Federal workforce.

For example, Senator Joni Ernst introduced the Drain the Swamp Act, which aims to relocate at least 30 percent of the employees assigned to an agency headquarters in the national capital region outside the national capital region. Her Swamp Act would relocate non-security Federal headquarters outside of the national capital region.

Congresswoman Claudia Tenney and Senator Marsha Blackburn have introduced bills to create a Federal commission to study the relocation of Federal agencies outside the national capital region.

Let me be clear what these bills and this hearing are about. They are about getting experts to quit the Federal workforce. These bills would deprive the Federal Government of expertise and experience. This will harm the services the Federal Government provides to all Americans.

Each Congress I introduce a resolution praising Federal employees and highlighting their critical work on behalf of the American people. Federal employees should be applauded for their tireless work and extensive efforts on behalf of the American people. Thousands of civil Federal servants have given their lives in the line of duty to their country.

Republicans have made it clear they want to gut the Federal workforce and the civil service system, which ensures a non-partisan, merit-based professional workforce, and turn it into a patronage system.

Instead of attacking Federal employees, this Committee should be considering bills to support the Federal workforce, such as my bill to combat Federal pay compression. This Committee can do better for the American people.

I yield back.

Chairman COMER. The gentlelady yields back.

Chair recognizes Mr. Jack from Georgia.

Mr. JACK. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And first I would like to thank each witness for testifying before this Committee today. And I would like to specifically acknowledge

and thank former Representative Davis for testifying. He chaired this Committee during the 108th/109th Congresses.

And rest assured I am not going to ask you on the record if you like this Committee room better than the original.

By my counts, I am roughly the 30th Member of Congress to ask questions of each of you, and I am grateful for your attention.

Governor O'Malley, let us start with you. For the record, were you elected to the Baltimore City Council in 1991 and reelected in 1995?

Mr. O'MALLEY. Yes, sir.

Mr. JACK. And were you elected Mayor of Baltimore in 1999 and reelected mayor of Baltimore in 2004?

Mr. O'MALLEY. Yes, sir.

Mr. JACK. And during your first term as Mayor of Baltimore, did you initiate a government program called CitiStat?

Mr. O'MALLEY. Yes, sir.

Mr. JACK. And would you mind elaborating on that program for just a moment?

Mr. O'MALLEY. Sure.

CitiStat was borrowed from CompStat in New York. It is based on four principles that grounded every conversation, and I have used that also at the state for StateStat, creating the No. 1 public schools in America 5 years in a row, and most recently at Social Security.

The tenets are timely, accurate information shared by all, rapid deployment of resources, effective tactics and strategies, and relentless followup.

Mr. JACK. Thank you.

When you campaigned for Governor in 2006, you campaigned on CitiStat's success. When you campaigned for reelection in 2010, you campaigned on CitiStat's success. And when you campaigned for President in 2016, CitiStat was one of the core programs you cited as a model for governmental success. It was one of the proudest political achievements you had.

But what I find interesting is that CitiStat mandated in-person agency meetings and interdepartmental collaboration in person—

Mr. O'MALLEY. Right.

Mr. JACK [continuing]. With members of your cabinet and yourself. And in order for CitiStat to be successful, you needed in-person meetings—

Mr. O'MALLEY. True.

Mr. JACK [continuing]. Because that is how humans have worked together for millennia.

Mr. O'MALLEY. True. And that is what we did at Social Security too.

Mr. JACK. I am one of the few Members of this Committee who actually served as a Federal employee. And I proudly worked as an employee in the executive office of the President from the very first day of President Trump's Administration to the very last day of his Administration. And at no point during those 4 years did I telework. At no point during those 4 years did my colleagues on—across the White House campus telework.

And what was the result under President Trump's leadership? Our Administration was the most successful in recent history, and

it was affirmed by the American people last November when they gave a landslide victory to President Trump and House Republicans, enabling us to have this Committee hearing today.

So, I guess my question to you is: If the model program throughout your political career that you cited as, you know, one of the things that we should strive for, for governmental success, mandated and required in-person meetings, which is how humans have worked together for millennia, why did you sign an agreement in November of last year that is in direct conflict with the core tenets of that program?

Mr. O'MALLEY. It is consistent with it because I dialed up, on February 2, the onsite requirement at the headquarters and every meeting—none of those meetings was virtual. Everybody was present. However, we did livestream them to 120 senior executive service people all across the Nation. And we allowed, for the first time ever that I am aware of in the Federal Government, our oversight committees of Congress to be able to have their staff attend and listen at every one of those. And we had OMB was able to listen as well. But it was all in-person.

So, this agreement, the amendment to the agreement, there is three unions at Social Security. The other two unions already had the telework balance, which they had achieved. One of them are the people that write decisions, like legal cases, and they were actually found to be far more productive not coming onsite than they were when they came onsite. And that was actually, I think, found by a court.

The remaining one that had not had it incorporated into their agreement was AFGE. And once we saw the record increase in productivity this year, we incorporated that at the end of this year, before I left, into the agreement. But it does say that management has the discretion to temporarily change, reduce, or suspend approved telework for any employee, office, component, or agencywide due to an operational need.

Mr. JACK. And I know my colleague, Representative Greene, covered the timeline, but there is some semblance of suspect timing. I mean, as I understand it, you attended a conference hosted by AFGE between November 12 and 15. Three days later you announced your campaign for chairmanship for the Democratic National Committee. And just 9 days after that, you signed an agreement supported by AFGE, which, by the way, is a very powerful political entity that could be very helpful to you in your campaign for chairmanship of the DNC.

So, as my time is here expiring, I will just note that it invites a direct conflict of interest. And to me, it suggests that your motivation was out of personal, political ambition, not the oath that you swore to the American people.

Mr. O'MALLEY. It was about the deadline. And we also were able to spare the agency what might have been \$10 or \$20 million in liability. So, there were two settlements, actually, and having been a lawyer, people tend to settle things when they are up against deadlines.

And it is true that my time was expiring at Social Security. And I would always go to labor meetings whenever I could, and more than that, I went to a lot of manager meetings, too. And you can

probably find pictures of me going out for pizza or beer or watching a football game after a lot of manager meetings. I did them all summer.

Mr. JACK. With my time expiring, thank you.

And I yield back to the distinguished gentleman from Kentucky, our Chairman, Mr. Comer.

Chairman COMER. Thank you.

The Chair recognizes Mr. Frost from Florida.

Mr. FROST. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

So, the Republican attack on this Committee on telework policy and hybrid work continues from last Congress. I think this is the fifth or sixth or seventh hearing we have had on something like this.

And this abolished telework policy would cost American taxpayers billions of dollars each year and slow down operations. And I cannot help but notice that in the same Congress that this Committee is establishing a subcommittee to deliver on government efficiency, the Majority seems unable to spot efficient policies that are right in front of them.

While telework and remote work existed long before the COVID pandemic, we can now look at the data and better understand whether or not this is a policy that drives government efficiency.

Ms. Cross, how possible is it that the reason behind Republicans' push to end telework at Federal agencies is connected to maybe something a little bigger? And what I mean by this is when we look at documents like Project 2025 and we hear from a lot of those authors who are now going to be running the Federal Government, we often hear this notion of making things so unbearable for Federal workers that they quit on their own.

Is it possible that this whole effort of telework is part of a greater effort to push a massive amount of Federal employees to quit?

Ms. CROSS. Thank you for your question.

Yes, it is possible. In fact, in private industry, companies that force strict return to office mandates, it is widely recognized that those are often regarded as soft layoffs. So, it is easier for you to be able to say we are going to make it as untenable as possible. So, as you mentioned, our workers leave.

The challenge with that is often your best high performers are the ones that walk out the door because they are the ones that can more easily do it. So, there are significant implications of performance and productivity when you do.

Mr. FROST. And what kind of damage does this do to government operations like responding to wildfires, sending out Social Security checks, renewing passports or any other examples?

Ms. CROSS. Well, initially, telework, mobile work, we used to call it flexiplace. It has gone through a lot of iterations, was a component of continuity of government, continuity of operations and emergency preparedness. In fact, every year OPM collects data from Federal agencies to ensure that there are goals set, metrics set, and that they are tracking it against the ability to perform operations in unplanned events, weather storms, emergencies, potential things that we cannot predict like global pandemic.

So, for one, it will disrupt operations. For two, it will cost a lot of money. By the way, industry data says that office level occu-

pancy rates were hovering between 50 and 60 percent well before the pandemic because of the mobile nature of our jobs anyway.

Mr. FROST. You know, we have looked into this a little ourselves, and the evidence is pretty obvious. For example, DHS massively reduced the amount of real estate it had to rent between 2018 and 2023. This saved taxpayers \$1.4 billion.

DHS even said that, quote, "the goal of fewer buildings and better buildings is good for the workforce, good for DHS and the mission, and good for the taxpayer," end quote. GSA, they said that it reduced its rent bill by \$50 million in Fiscal Year 2, all while increasing productivity. And the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau said that they spent over \$35 grand per month on helping employees to get to and from work, and now it is down to about \$700 a month.

Ms. Cross, instead of abolishing it, can we actually build on hybrid policy and telework policy, remote work, to maximize government efficiency, achieve cost-savings productivity and employee well-being while at the same time, yes, looking at bad actors as well?

Ms. CROSS. Yes, 100 percent. We are seeing cost savings each and every year as it relates to reductions in transit subsidies when you are paying people that otherwise could work from an approved alternate worksite, not in a home, not on a bean bag, but an approved, authorized worksite to be able to do so in a different location.

Maybe that is a home office. Maybe it is a Federal satellite or co-working space. Maybe it is a field office location as well.

In addition to reducing office spaces, in fact, Global Workplace Analytics was here at a hearing a couple years ago and estimated that if you increased telework just by 25 percent, you could reduce \$1.7 billion in office space cost each and every year.

Mr. FROST. I appreciate you bringing this up. Eliminating massive savings and slowing productivity on its own would be bad, but the policies that our Chairman and the Republican Party wants separately would add a bunch of new costs to American taxpayers. And I think that is really something we have to keep in mind.

The notion that hybrid work means that you are not working is ridiculous. I mean, Members on this Committee, Members of Congress, adopt a hybrid work model ourselves. I encourage Members maybe try a month of no hybrid work, no interviews in your car, no interviews at home. Go into your office for every single thing you do. And I think they will find that part of what helps us be efficient in our own job is the fact that we have the choice of where we are going to do that work.

There is no real reason to label the entire Federal workforce as lazy, and this is something we should look at. But a few bad actors, we should not be able to label the entire workforce because of that.

So, thank you. I yield back.

Chairman COMER. The Chair recognizes Mr. McGuire from Virginia.

Mr. MCGUIRE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

We live in the greatest country where our rights come from God. We are born with these inalienable rights that are enshrined in the Constitution. But our Nation is a Nation in decline.

But through the grace of God, we have President Trump back in the White House. We have a majority in the U.S. Senate. We have a slim majority, but we have a majority in Congress. President Trump and I think all of us, we love all American people.

And I have got to tell you, as a veteran, if you saved my life on the battlefield, I would not care if you call yourself a Democrat, Republican, Independent, male or female, whatever. We are all Americans and we are all people.

But it seems like our country is committing suicide with policies that we are making. You know, if you had heart surgery, would you want someone who was the best doctor in the country to perform that surgery, or would you want somebody, it is I like they way they look or it is their turn or they have a different agenda.

And I bring that up because it seems like our friends on the other side are making decisions that are America last. \$36 trillion in debt is egregious, and they testified yesterday in oversight that we spend more money every day than we bring in every day. That is not sustainable.

Now, if the government was to build you a car, you would never buy it. It would cost you a million dollars. The free market has lifted—I mean, just created more opportunities in innovation than any country in history.

And Elon Musk, since you guys talk about Elon Musk, you probably saw how he launched that rocket and landed it precisely. American ingenuity for a fraction of what it cost the government to send a vehicle into space.

And if the civilian world is going back to in-office, and the largest workforce in our country, the government, is saying no, no, no, you can stay at home—we heard earlier in testimony that a gentleman—it took them 3 years to fire him, and he kept playing golf instead of doing his job.

I heard a testimony about a woman who stood up in a Zoom call and was only wearing her top.

You cannot build relationships and be effective. And you should listen to the cues of Elon Musk who is a very successful businessman. But if you do not listen to Elon Musk, listen to the direction of the private workforce. They are going back into the office.

And also, when President Trump got elected, they started getting rid of those ridiculous America last, the opposite of a meritocracy, DEI policies.

And I know we are going to do oversight. I hope we will do oversight on what happened in Los Angeles. But you hear stories where they had these meetings about how diverse they are rather than how do we make sure we have enough prevention, enough water in our tanks, and things like that.

So, my first question is for the Honorable Mr. O'Malley. Isn't it great we live in a country where a man or a woman can work hard and achieve just about anything? Do you agree with that statement?

Mr. O'MALLEY. Yes, sir

Mr. MCGUIRE. And so, these policies that we see coming from the left where you get a job based on things other than meritocracy make no sense. And when the other side wants to make policy for

President Trump before he even gets sworn into office, that go to the end of his Administration, is an example of poor leadership.

You know, a party that wants to put men in girl sports is—I mean, Trump has a mandate. He got the popular vote, and he won the electoral college. And this idea that criminals are good, police are bad, and nobody cares about the victims, there is just a whole pattern just like this idea that we do not want government employees to go back to work. It is a list of the many example of poor decisions coming from the left.

And my next question would be——

Mr. O'MALLEY. That was not a question.

Mr. MCGUIRE. Well, you answered the question. I said, do you agree with that statement, and you said you do.

The next question will be for Ms. Greszler.

Mr. O'MALLEY. Congressman, I buried 10 police officers in the line of duty. Please do not accuse me of not having respect for police officers.

Mr. MCGUIRE. Nobody said that. I said that the policies of—in my district—we talk about Laken Riley. Preventable. In my district, Campbell County, a 33-year-old illegal alien was released from prison four times because criminals are good and police are bad. No one cares about victims. And he raped a 14-year-old girl.

These illegal aliens that are coming across our border are robbing, raping, and killing the American people, and it is preventable.

We love our law enforcement. I am sure you do, as well. And I talk to law enforcement every day, and they say their hands are tied.

And what I love is that we have a President that loves our country. He loves our men and women in uniform, military and law enforcement, and I am so excited to be part of that team.

Mr. O'MALLEY. I never tied my police officers' hands in Maryland or Baltimore.

Mr. MCGUIRE. My next question is for Ms. Greszler.

Ms. Greszler, I have a question for you. What are the top reasons why Federal employees leave the agency?

Chairman COMER. And his time has expired, but, please, feel free to answer the question.

Ms. GRESZLER. Well, I think it can vary a lot by agency, but they really do not leave very often. The Federal quits rate was about 4 percent over the last decade or so compared to over 30 percent in the private sector.

Mr. O'MALLEY. That is not true.

Ms. GRESZLER. Accountability is a problem, though. That is the lowest rating on the Federal employees' viewpoint. We do not know what it is, actually, because the Biden Administration removed that really very bad rating question.

Chairman COMER. Very good. Thank you.

The Chair recognizes Ms. Randall.

Ms. RANDALL. Thank you, Mr. Chair. And thank you to all of the folks who have come to testify and the people who have been sitting and watching this Committee hearing.

You know, I am new to Congress. I served for 6 years in the Washington State legislature before coming here, and our commit-

tees were very different, I have got to say. I am not used to quite as much political theater, I think, as I have had a chance to see here in this room today and yesterday.

But I appreciate all of you public servants and experts for coming to share the answers to questions and to sit through many speeches about all range of topics, not just remote or in-person work.

You know, I represent a district that has over 27,000 Federal workers in Washington's Olympic Peninsula, a lot of them Department of Defense civilian employees. I have got Olympic National Park employees, firefighters, a whole range whose work experiences look all sorts of different ways.

You know, some who have split, unpredictable shifts week to week. Rangers in the Olympic National Park. You know, firefighters who have different duty stations. Food inspectors, people who live in really rural, remote communities but whose telework plans allow them to keep the essential offices of our government open and serve my community and my neighbors.

I also served in the legislature during COVID where we had to adapt to new remote work environments that people did not think were possible until we were able to do them.

And like you have testified, Mr. O'Malley, lots of folks were able to get service who had not previously been able to be served. I was really inspired by colleague, Ms. Simon's, comments about, you know, disabled community members.

I am an older sister to a sibling who was born with really, really complex disabilities, and it was systems like Medicaid and social security that allowed her to get the care that she needed and allowed her to live a full life and allowed my parents to be able to ensure that they did not have to make tough decisions about which bills to pay in order for Olivia to get care.

My stepdad had a really dramatic heart attack that has put him on social security and unable to work in his life, and I am so grateful to the government employees that have helped ensure that he has been able to live a full life, too.

As we think about accountability in government, government efficiency, what the right policies are, I am thinking, like I have heard so many folks on this panel say, about how it impacts our neighbors, how it impacts the folks who rely on social security, how it impacts the folks who are counting on wildfire firefighters, and how it impacts our defense readiness posture as, you know, someone who represents Naval Base Kitsap and the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard Intermediate Maintenance Facility where we, too, were able to find opportunities for telework and remote work.

Ms. Cross, I wonder if you could speak more broadly than just to the Puget Sound Naval Shipyard, which is my interest, but how important these workplace flexibility policies are to attracting, recruiting, and then retaining talent, who have many opportunities to go elsewhere to the private sector but who are choosing to stay and work for the American people.

Ms. CROSS. Thank you for the question.

Research shows on LinkedIn in their global talent trends report that work-life balance often trumps bank balance in terms of what job seekers are looking for when they are searching for jobs. In fact, studies show that job seekers are willing to forego sometimes

up to 20 percent in pay in order to find more jobs that offer more flexibility.

A lot of those reasons are because of burnout crisis, issues with mental health and well-being. Sometimes when you are dealing with being a caregiver and a working parent, which often in the sandwich generation we are seeing a lot of.

By the way, Federal workers, OPM estimated, about 65 percent of them are juggling parental care and caregiving responsibilities at the same time, not to mention the challenges when you live in rural communities.

So, around the country, rural areas, like my home state of Maine, have been dissipated by rural brain drain where highly educated, highly skilled talent had to leave and go find the jobs.

So, having the ability to have a hyper suite of different kinds of flexibilities, not just geographic location flexibility but ones that include flexible work, remote work, telework, and different kinds of work opportunities allow us to really get the best talent from wherever they are. That includes older workers, people with disabilities, caregivers, working mothers, spouses, foreign spouses, and really great, by the way, tech talent who can solve this Nation's innovation problems. We need them to come to government.

And so, if we cannot allow those jobs, and we cannot offer it as a recruitment strategy, I am not sure what is going to happen with our competitiveness.

Chairman COMER. Thank you.

The Chair now recognizes Mr. Palmer from Alabama.

Mr. PALMER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

In regard to the concerns that have been raised by my Democratic colleagues about how eliminating buildings and positions might impact the local economy, I would just like to point out that remote work has severely impacted the local economy. It is widely reported about how downtown businesses are struggling in D.C. because people are not coming downtown to work.

Ms. Greszler, one of the things that concerns me is that the Federal Government makes locality payments, and it depends on the cost of living in the city. Washington, DC. is one of the most expensive cities, one of the highest locality pays.

Have you looked into whether or not people who are working remotely now are getting the same locality pay that they were coming downtown?

Ms. GRESZLER. They are supposed to be, but the report from Senator Ernst, I believe it has been entered into the record, has a lot of information about that. And when there were some spot checks done, there were often cases where 80 percent of employees who should not be receiving that locality-based pay adjustment are, in fact, receiving it.

Mr. PALMER. That could be hundreds of millions of dollars, billions of dollars that they should not be getting because they are not working in the office.

So, Mr. O'Malley, I know you are not there anymore, but I think that is something that we might want to address in this Congress is to make sure that the pay matches the location rather than them paying these higher locality payments.

Mr. O'MALLEY. Yes, sir.

Mr. PALMER. It was also stated by one of my Democratic colleagues, he raised questions about whether or not we are actually going to be able to cut \$1.5 trillion. I forgot the exact number he said. And it just shows a lack of understanding of the problem, for one thing.

But if you just look at improper payments, Ms. Greszler, we are right at \$240 billion a year, and we are doing everything in 10-year windows. When we are talking about cutting \$2.5 trillion, or whatever the number might be, that is over 10 years.

So, if we just reduced improper payments by half, that is \$1.2 trillion plus interest. That probably gets us to that \$1.5 trillion, but it certainly gets us over halfway to the goal of the baseline of \$2.5 trillion, wouldn't you agree with that?

Ms. GRESZLER. Yes. You point out improper payments. That is something that most Americans do not realize. I think it is to the tune of about \$1,700 per household per year. It is just improper payments, money that is going to the wrong people and in the wrong amounts. And it is a complex problem, and it has to deal with people getting benefits that they were not entitled to.

Mr. PALMER. And we are borrowing every dime of that to send it out improperly.

Ms. GRESZLER. Yes. IT problems. There is widespread problems, but there are a lot of savings.

Mr. PALMER. Well, under your watch, Mr. O'Malley, in 2023, there is \$8 billion in improper payments from social security, and a lot of that had to do with the backlog due to delays. And they are either underpaid or overpaid. Most of it was overpayments of, like I said, \$8 billion. And there is \$23 billion in social security in unrecovered overpayments.

Did you make any effort to deal with that?

Mr. O'MALLEY. Yes, sir. I was not there in 2023, but that number sounds right. It is a large program.

Mr. PALMER. Well, while you were there, did you make any effort to—

Mr. O'MALLEY. Yes, sir. Every 2 weeks, we met with all the deputy commissioners. For 1 hour, we focused on the things we could do to bring down the overpayments and also to bring down the underpayments.

Mr. PALMER. How about payments to dead people? Because when I first came to Congress in 2015, this was—I believe I may have been the first Member of Congress to actually get this into the budget to deal with improper payments. And I think we were sending out around \$3 to \$5 billion a year to people who were dead. And in one case, they were sending checks to someone who would have been 130 plus years old.

Mr. O'MALLEY. I believe they have gotten better at that. However, there are instances where because of kind of the automated alerts that sometimes we see—there is occasions when payments are ceased when we wrongly, when the agency wrongly thinks that someone has died. So, that happens also. It is a large agency. It serves a lot of people.

Mr. PALMER. It is a huge issue.

I think, again, going back to the issue of remote work, I think there are sometimes when that is appropriate, but I do not think it is totally appropriate at the degree that you're doing it.

Let me ask you this quickly. The Constitution says one Congress cannot bind another Congress. Do you think it is proper that an agency or an administrator can bind a Congress or a President the way you have?

Mr. O'MALLEY. Well, sir, the term of that contract was actually, I do believe, expiring in 2029.

Mr. PALMER. I am not asking about the contract. I am asking about whether or not that is appropriate.

Let me ask you this——

Mr. O'MALLEY. It is appropriate to——

Mr. PALMER [continuing]. How much interaction did you have with President Biden during your tenure? How much interaction do you have with President Biden?

Mr. O'MALLEY. Well, I talked to the White House all the time.

Mr. PALMER. I am talking about him, though, the President.

Mr. O'MALLEY. I saw the President a few times.

Mr. PALMER. Did you find his mental acuity sufficient for the job?

Mr. O'MALLEY. I found him to be pretty sharp whenever I spoke to him.

Mr. PALMER. Then you participated in the coverup and a lie?

Mr. O'MALLEY. Excuse me?

Mr. PALMER. You participated in the coverup and lie that the President had the mental acuity to carry out the functions of the office, which, clearly, he did not.

Mr. O'MALLEY. Our headquarters was in Baltimore. I was often in the field. I spoke to the White House all the time and had the support I needed to turn around an agency whose staffing has been reduced to a 50-year low.

Chairman COMER. The gentleman's time has expired.

The Chair now recognizes Ms. Crockett from Texas.

Ms. CROCKETT. Thank you so much. And, Chairman, we may need some ADHD medicine up in here. You know, I will applaud my colleagues that understood that this was about telework and did not somehow veer off into trans children and veer off into talking about a President who will go down in history as one of the best Presidents that we have ever had in this country, and he was able to do it while we were showing up to work. But somehow, we physically showed up to the building, but we know that this was the most unproductive Congress that we had in the 118th.

So, thank God for Joe Biden who absolutely got so much done in a record amount of time. He only had the 117th where he had actual adults in the room.

And actually, in the 117th, the interesting part is that it was COVID. And guess what? They got to vote remotely, and somehow, they ended up with the Infrastructure Act. Somehow, they ended up with the Chips and Science Act. Somehow, they ended up with the first gun bill that we have had to do anything as it relates to gun violence in this country in almost 30 years.

And honestly, the list goes on, and so many of your districts are going to benefit for so long because of the work of Joe Biden. And

he only had a Congress to help him out in one term. So, God bless him.

I will also say, as we are talking about the accomplishments of the Biden-Harris Administration, rural broadband was a very real thing, and I can remember Republicans that did not vote for the rural broadband celebrating all the money that their states were going to get.

And the reason that I am going to talk about it is because while I do represent a pretty urban area now, I lived in east Texas. I also lived in western Arkansas. So, I have lived in rural America.

And one of the interesting things about rural America, and I want rural America to listen up because most Democrats are not representing very rural areas. But let me tell you whether I represented a rural area or not, I believe that as a U.S. representative, I should do what makes sense for you as citizens.

And the right thing was to make sure that we did expand broadband. You know what that meant? That meant that people in rural America who end up in towns like the one that I lived in, in Texarkana, where they rely on, say, the paper mill or they rely on the tire plants. They rely on these businesses or the chicken plant. If for some reason one of those shuts down, it shuts down the entire economy.

But by making sure that broadband was a reality there, as well as everywhere else, guess what, they can actually participate and get some of these jobs.

But let us talk about the reality of the struggles that we have when it comes to the Federal Government. Because, Lord knows, if I got out of the Federal Government, I would make more money, too.

We are missing out on a lot of talent by not trying to make sure that we are offering a competitive environment. And when we miss out on that talent, unfortunately, it is not a theoretical person that struggles. It is the real American citizen that struggles.

In fact, I think the American people are going to recognize that they do not necessarily have the best talented people that are about to run this country, and, instead, we have a lot of trivial trolls.

But I am going to move on to make sure that I can clear up something. Republicans have done a lot to perpetrate the narrative that Mr. O'Malley gave away the farm when he reached an agreement with the unions at the Social Security Administration in November 2024 to amend the existing bargaining agreement. We know that is false.

Ranking Member Connolly showed that Mr. O'Malley's shrewd bargaining tactics ceded very little in exchange for averting potentially billions in legal liability to SSA.

But let us talk about a time right when departing officials actually did give away the farm and sell out the American people for political gain.

Ms. Greszler, do you recall when then-President Trump's Acting Department of Homeland Security Deputy Secretary Ken Cuccinelli struck an 8-year agreement with the union at Immigration and Customs Enforcement on January 19, 2021, 1 day before President Biden was sworn into office?

Ms. GRESZLER. I was not aware of that.

Ms. CROCKETT. OK. All right, well, let me tell you about it.

So, Ken Cuccinelli, who, by the way, was found to be illegally appointed, essentially gave the union *de facto* control over the agency. He included a provision in the last second collective bargaining agreement that would have required the Biden Administration to secure, quote, “prior affirmative consent from the ICE union’s 7,000 members before enacting any new enforcement policies or practices.”

In addition, the agreement specifically authorized the union to reject direct orders from the President, including Mr. Biden’s orders to focus on Federal resources, on violent criminals to protect our communities.

The agreement would irrevocably block the government’s ability to challenge the authority of the ICE union for 8 years.

Unlike the deal Mr. O’Malley was able to get for the American taxpayers with his collective bargaining agreement, the Cuccinelli negotiated agreement was a blatant and egregious attempt by one administration to tie the hands of its successor. In fact, it was such a bad deal for the Americans that Tom Homan, you may know the name, Trump’s current pick for the top border security role, which is border czar, and former Acting Director of ICE proclaimed it, quote, “not good for the agency.”

I do not recall the outrage on the other side of the aisle in this Committee, though, about that agreement.

Mr. Davis or Ms. Greszler, do you remember any of our Republican Members expressing concerns about Mr. Cuccinelli to CBA?

Chairman COMER. And your time has expired.

But feel free to answer Ms. Crockett’s question.

Mr. DAVIS. I don’t know anything about it.

Ms. GRESZLER. I am not aware of it either, but I would note that they probably did not follow those rules given the mess that happened at the border.

Ms. CROCKETT. The last thing that I—

Chairman COMER. The gentlelady’s time has expired. No, you complained when somebody—you have got a UC request?

Ms. CROCKETT. Yes.

Chairman COMER. OK. OK.

Ms. CROCKETT. I am asking for unanimous consent to enter into the record a March 2021 *New York Times* article entitled “Trump’s Official Last Day Deal With Ice Union Ties Biden’s Hands.”

Chairman COMER. Without objection, so ordered.

The Chair recognizes Mr. Burchett from Tennessee.

Mr. BURCHETT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I remind the Members of the much-celebrated transportation bill that was done in about a 16-hour committee meeting done by telework. And then that bill, after it was passed, was probably something we could all live with, hold our nose maybe. It was then taken, I believe, to the Speaker’s office, rewritten with the help of some lobbyists.

In that bill, 85 percent of it was what we would say was not traditional transportation, and the rules were suspended, and we were not allowed to amend it on the Floor. I always think it is good to put things in perspective.

Mr. O'Malley, I am the 435th most powerful Member of Congress. So, when I ask my questions, everybody has already asked all the good ones. So, I would expect you to either act disgusted or puzzled at every one of my questions, all right, and be mad at me like you would somebody way back, if that is possible.

Is it true that 230,000 Federal employees work remotely?

Mr. O'MALLEY. I do not know about that, but I know at Social Security we have one of the smaller percentages. Only 1 percent work remote.

Mr. BURCHETT. As a result of this, I feel like many Federal buildings are left vacant and work output is negatively impacted. Would you say that is fair to the American taxpayer?

Mr. O'MALLEY. I know that in our instance, we drove up productivity by a record amount, and we also required more people to show up for more days of onsite.

Mr. BURCHETT. I would like to see that at some point. It is something I have not—I just really would like to see that in writing somewhere.

Would you say it is accurate that you all tried to Trump proof the Social Security Administration before leaving it to join the Democratic National Committee?

Mr. O'MALLEY. Well, I have not joined the committee yet. I am. But we did everything that we could to improve customer service during my time there, and I ordered more people back onsite in February, and we did incorporate that.

As my time there was expiring, coming to an end, we were able to get an agreement from one union that did not have it in their contract. And the term of that contract actually was something negotiated before my time.

Mr. BURCHETT. How many different unions do you deal with? I know our post office, I think, deals with maybe seven or eight.

Mr. O'MALLEY. We have three.

Mr. BURCHETT. Three?

Mr. O'MALLEY. Yes.

Mr. BURCHETT. OK.

Let me ask you this. It has been asked, but I need to know. Why did you sign an agreement with the Federal workers union that locks in telework through 2029 for SSA employees?

Mr. O'MALLEY. Two reasons. To improve customer service and to continue its improvement even with the stunning reduction of staff. We have been reduced by congressional cuts to a 50-year low in staffing even as our beneficiaries continue to rise.

The second reason was the union agreed to give up certain grievances that stretched over a 7 to 9-year period of time that had the agency in jeopardy, and that was something we were trying to get before. So, we did—it did not go backward on the increased onsite presence that I implemented there.

That also helped contribute to the record high in productivity and that is that chart. That is the highest. And this is audited and has long been audited. It was the biggest increase in productivity on a year-over-year basis, at least since 2013.

Mr. BURCHETT. OK.

Your agreement protects telework for Social Security employees through 2029. According to the Biden-Harris Administration,

58,875 Social Security employees are telework eligible. Of those employees, only 46.9 percent of them spend their time in the office.

Why did you guarantee most Social Security employees the ability to show up less than half that time?

Mr. O'MALLEY. Well, they all work 5 days a week. They are producing for the American people even though their staffing has been reduced to a 50-year low.

But in the agreement, it does say management has sole discretion to temporarily change, reduce, or suspend approved telework days for any employee, office, component, which is like a division of Social Security, or agencywide due to operational needs. And that is consistent with the language that was in the—I believe in the other two agreements, which were negotiated before my time.

Mr. BURCHETT. I do remember during COVID I remember a Democrat chairman was—called on somebody, and you could hear birds in the background. He was, obviously, on a boat. And he said, “do I hear seagulls in the background?”

And then another one was, I remember, in his boxer shorts. He did have a tie on, though. He had a shirt and tie, but when he stood up, they saw his boxer shorts. So, I always felt that showed that—I felt like telework was not as productive as we once said it was.

Mr. Davis, can you explain how the large-scale telework posture of the Federal workforce has affected your mission to make D.C. a better place? And I am out of time, so quickly.

Mr. DAVIS. Well, I will just say, it clearly hurt the tax base. It has hurt incoming revenues. It has hurt the Metro system.

Mr. BURCHETT. I remember when the Mayor of Washington came in here, and she petitioned the President to please send people back to work just because of that.

And I will say, we handle more constituent service, or we have the best constituent service in the country. I would stack my folks against anybody. And just when you are dealing with IRS or any of these other agencies, Social Security, it just takes too doggone long. You know, we are waiting 6 months to get responses from the IRS. Social Security is just continuation of continuation of continuation. And it is not working.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman COMER. Thank you.

The Chair recognizes Mr. Gill.

Mr. GILL. Thank you, Chairman Comer. Thanks for holding this hearing today.

I am excited to serve on the Oversight and Reform Committee [sic] to help eliminate fraud, waste, and abuse within the Federal Government.

I am not inherently against the concept of telework in areas where it can be effective, especially in the private sector. But I am highly skeptical of public sector unions bargaining with the American taxpayer. Unlike private sector unions, of course, in the public sector, unions do not have to worry about undermining the economic viability of any business or entity.

In other words, there is not really a limiting principle of what they can ask for. Whereas, private sector unions can only bargain so much before they run their employer out of business. Public sec-

tor unions can milk working class American taxpayers limitlessly. I think that is a serious problem, and that appears to be exactly what happened here.

In the Federal Government, telework has proven to be a really sweet deal for union bosses with working class Americans picking up the tab.

The Government Accountability Office released a report in November 2024, finding the Federal Government could not effectively track telework or its effects. For instance, the report found that teleworking could be contributing to the IRS correspondence backlog.

I can say nothing infuriates me more than knowing that a woke and weaponized IRS is taking forever to respond to my constituents back in Texas 26 because they have got employees who are relaxing at home.

I would love to see President Trump fix this. However, of course, the Biden Administration, particularly former Social Security Administrator Martin O'Malley, have done everything possible to tie his hands to allow maximum teleworking.

Former Commissioner O'Malley gave the American Federation of Government Employees a sweet deal courtesy of the taxpayer that locks in maximum teleworking until 2029, despite the fact that President Trump won in a landslide and our party, the Republican Party, has a very clear mandate to fix the chaos that the Democrats created, including in the Federal Government like right here.

As has been mentioned, former Commissioner O'Malley is also running to be the next Chairman of the DNC, and, presumably, you are courting those same union bosses that you were cutting deals with not long ago.

Mr. O'MALLEY. I do not think they have a vote.

Mr. GILL. I knew D.C. was corrupt, but that is still astounding.

I would like to begin with Ms. Greszler, and thank you for being here, by the way. We appreciate it.

You have written a lot about how Federal employees could be spending 100 percent of their time working for unions instead of the taxpayer due to actions taken by the Biden Administration. Could you elaborate on that? How does this harm the taxpayer?

Ms. GRESZLER. Well, that gives the Federal unions more leverage. They do not have to collect higher fees from their members because they are able to effectively fund their payrolls by having Federal employees work for them instead of doing the jobs that they were hire to.

And I think that we should recognize here, on both sides of the aisle, that telework can be a good thing. The problem gets down to not being able to enforce it. The Biden Administration tried to get agencies to get workers back into the office. People like Mr. O'Malley brought back their own staff. But when it comes down to the rank and the file who are the union members, you could not get them to come back.

We have acting Secretary of the Department of Labor, Julie Su, under this self-proclaimed most pro-union administration in history unable to get a deal to get workers to come back into the office 50 percent of the time, and they even said themselves, they were arguing with the union, and they said this is not something that you

should be able to negotiate over because this is tying management's hands.

So, the problem is the unions, and it is especially problematic that we are paying Federal employees to step away from their jobs to do this work.

Mr. GILL. That is right.

And can you tell us what specific actions could President Trump or Congress take to end this practice?

Ms. GRESZLER. I would argue that President Trump has the authority already under his Article II constitutional duties to be the head of the executive. But if the unions refuse to comply and to follow orders, then Congress might need to amend the statute to specify that either no CBA authorized under a prior administration can bind his hands or at least to open it up to the problematic components.

Mr. GILL. Got it.

And you pointed out that the Biden Administration removed the Office of Personnel Management's webpage documenting Federal employees' use of official time.

My Democratic colleagues love to talk about how the Biden Administration is an ethical administration. I will end with this. Just yes or no. Do you think that this action increased transparency in ethics in government or not?

Ms. GRESZLER. No. It reduced transparency.

Mr. GILL. Thank you.

I yield my time.

Chairman COMER. The gentleman yields back.

The Chair recognizes Mr. Biggs from Arizona.

Mr. BIGGS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. O'Malley, is it possible to reduce Federal discretionary spending by \$2 trillion over 10 years?

Mr. O'MALLEY. Without hurting people? I think it is——

Mr. BIGGS. It is a yes or no question. Can you do it? Can you do it?

Mr. O'MALLEY. You can, but you would hurt a lot of people.

Mr. BIGGS. So previously, you said, "No, you cannot do it." That was in answer to a question over there. But I wanted to clarify over 10 years.

Mr. O'MALLEY. Thank you.

Mr. BIGGS. Yes. And thanks for answering that question.

Mr. O'MALLEY. You could, but that would hurt a lot of people.

Mr. BIGGS. My next question for you is, can you tell me what the 2024 limitation on administrative expenses amount is that you are operating under, which—not you now, but SSA is operating under now because of the CR, et cetera?

Mr. O'MALLEY. It is in the neighborhood of \$14 billion.

Mr. BIGGS. \$14.226 billion sound right?

Mr. O'MALLEY. That sounds right.

Mr. BIGGS. Yes. And that is up over Fiscal Year 2023 but flat because of the CRs for 2024. Is that right?

Mr. O'MALLEY. It has mostly been flat for 10 years.

Mr. BIGGS. Well, actually, that is not so. It has gone up in some years as high as——

Mr. O'MALLEY. Oh, that's true. There was 1 year before I got there where you all did allow them to hire some more people.

Mr. BIGGS. If you look through it, that number has gone up every year. In fact, if you look at the——

Mr. O'MALLEY. But not as much as their expenses.

Mr. BIGGS. If you look at the administrative expenses as a percentage of total cost—and please, do not interrupt me.

Mr. O'MALLEY. Yes, sir.

Mr. BIGGS. If you look at that, you will see that even though percentage-wise it has gone down——

Mr. O'MALLEY. To below 1 percent.

Mr. BIGGS [continuing]. The last few years.

I just do not understand why you have to interrupt. You do not have to interrupt. I am asking a question—making a statement and then asking a question. And then I will let you talk then. OK?

Mr. O'MALLEY. That would be great.

Mr. BIGGS. Yes.

So, in 2023, it was overall for old age and disability, that was about one—let us see here. 1.8 percent. But nominally it went up. It went up by \$500 billion, right?

Mr. O'MALLEY. No, not——

Mr. BIGGS. Excuse me, not billion but \$500 million. I am sorry, \$500 million.

Mr. O'MALLEY. But their expenses went up by \$600 million.

Mr. BIGGS. So, from 2022 to 2023, that number went from \$6.746 billion to \$7.206 billion. Right?

Mr. O'MALLEY. I do not have the historical data in front of me. You do.

Mr. BIGGS. OK. All right. That is fine.

Mr. O'MALLEY. What I can tell you, though——

Mr. BIGGS. So, the next question is this: When we look at the percentage of hours spent by your employees remotely, that is below—do you know what the number is?

Mr. O'MALLEY. I know that we only have 1 percent that work remotely. I am no longer at the agency. I do not have the exact——

Mr. BIGGS. If you look at all of those people who are working remotely, it is fewer than half are working their hours. Fewer than half of the hours are being worked in person.

Mr. O'MALLEY. We only have 1 percent——

Mr. BIGGS. That is according to the OMB.

And I will submit that for the record, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. O'MALLEY. We only have 1 percent of the workforce working remotely.

Mr. BIGGS. Well, you want to distinguish between hybrid and working remotely, and we are talking about the number of hours, the number of hours. Less than half. I will submit that to the record. That is from OMB.

Mr. O'MALLEY. All of our employees work 5 days a week.

Mr. BIGGS. And so—once again, once again, you do not have a question in front of you. I do not know why you feel you got to do that, except for you are slick and you want to try to control things.

But the bottom line is this. I want to talk about cases in my district. We had a constituent reach out to my casework team. I have an excellent casework team. They submitted an inquiry on Sep-

tember 25, 2023. You were not there yet I guess. A response to the request came in on October 4 stating a tech would review the request and respond within the next week. But there was no response.

My team requested a follow-up on November 13, about 6 weeks after we were told we would get a response within a week. Again, nothing.

Again, on January 8, nothing. February 26, nothing. March 26, 2024, all with no response. And one more time, on April 15, 2024, before finally receiving a response on April 22, 2024.

This is typical. I know that the reason we get them is because they are having a problem, and we see all the problems. But that is typical.

And so, I know what your argument is. Your argument is that you are trying to do more with less. But I am suggesting to you—I live in Maricopa County and Pinal County, Arizona. I was trying to see on your little map where you are telling us how great things have gotten, and I was looking and I do not have your before and after picture, but what I have got is a picture that we are still way, way longer than we should be.

Mr. O'MALLEY. We can put that one up.

Mr. BIGGS. So, now I want you to deal with that. Shoot, I am out of time.

Mr. O'MALLEY. I thought I was going to get to answer a question.

Mr. BIGGS. Well, you did answer some questions. Plus, you got to interrupt a few times as well.

So, I will yield back to Mr. Chairman.

Chairman COMER. The gentleman yields back.

And without objection, we're going to enter into the record the data that you requested.

Mr. BIGGS. And also, two other UC requests, Mr. Chairman. The CRS, SSA table on limitation of administrative expenses and the document that they have supporting that. And also, a news article from Just the News called Stay-At-Home Bureaucrats.

Chairman COMER. Without objection, so ordered.

The Chair now recognizes Mr. Higgins from Louisiana.

Mr. O'MALLEY. Mr. Chairman, I acknowledge that the service levels are not what they could and should be.

Chairman COMER. OK. We will reset the clock and recognize Mr. Higgins from Louisiana.

Mr. HIGGINS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, one of the benefits of having other committee obligations and arriving at the Oversight Committee behind my colleagues is that I get to listen to all the testimony.

[Audio]

Mr. Chairman, this is Social Security. For 1 hour, 28 minutes, 25 seconds. Phone number 800-772-1213. That is the number for Social Security. This is what our elders have to listen to.

These are our elders, my man.

Mr. O'MALLEY. Yes, sir

Mr. HIGGINS. The reason they are calling—when I have a question for you, I will ask it. That is the way this works.

The reason our elders call for help is because they need help, not because they want to listen to elevator music. They want to talk

to a human being. The first 5 minutes of this on-hold for an hour and a half, Mr. Chairman, was instructions to get to various websites, which our elders have difficulty doing. I have difficulty doing it.

Our elders are frequently confused and alone, scared. They do not have, like, laptops and apps and things. They have a telephone. They want to talk to a human being. But wait. They have a local social security office they could go to, right, that is a historical model. No.

I give you Exhibit B. This is from your website or was before you ran for DNC and retired in November after negotiating this deal that you think ties the hands of the incoming executive. But we are going to defeat that in Article III. I will get into that in a minute.

But from the website, listen to this, America. Pay attention to what is happening to our elders. If you need in-person help, you must first make an appointment. You know how you make the appointment? On the telephone. You know who answers the phone? Nobody.

This is a greatly efficient Social Security Administration. All of our offices, we struggle and work so hard to care for our elders, and the No. 1 complaint is that they cannot get any answers or even anybody on the phone at Social Security.

So, I want you to know, Governor O'Malley, that I completely support your run for DNC chair. You have a certain air of elitist superiority that perfectly reflects your party, and I completely support your run. I hope you get it.

Earlier in your testimony, you stated that the contract you signed, that presumes to commit the executive branch and Federal Government through 2029 to a union agreement—in fact, they hail it at CNN as “Social Security Union Secures Telework Deal.” And it said, the deal will secure telework for SSA employees through 2029. That is the union guy to CNN.

You said it does not tie the hands of the incoming Administration. I happen to agree with you, Governor, but that is because the founders were wise enough to divide the powers of our government, and we are going to defeat the contract you signed in Article III. Watch. Watch us do it.

But in the terms of the contract, it states, the language in Article 41, Section 3, strikes the words that “the Commissioner will determine the number of scheduled telework days, if any, eligible positions, and percentages of employees permitted to telework,” and replaces it with “the Commissioner will adhere to the current number of telework days, eligible positions, and percentages of employees permitted to work telework as of the date of this agreement until October 25, 2029.”

But by some measure, you say, yes, that does not tie the hands of the incoming administration. That was your testimony about an hour and a half ago before I got on hold with Social Security that never answered.

So, let me just say man-to-man, brother, I respect you. You are standing your ground. You are here today under fire. You knew it and I appreciate that. So, man to man, you and I could probably get along pretty good.

But it is a mischaracterize of our position, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member, to say that Republican conservatives and fiscal hawks like me have a problem with Federal employees. We have a problem with Federal employees failing to perform, and we associate the failure to perform with realities that we face.

You want to talk to us in person? Get an appointment. You want to get an appointment? Make a phone call. We do not answer the phone.

That failure to perform is the issue, Mr. Chairman, Mr. Ranking Member. That is our issue with the Federal Government employees, and we associate it with not showing up for work through telework.

So, let me say that those Federal employees that do not show up for work, they are going to get fired.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Mr. Chairman?

Mr. HIGGINS. I yield

Chairman COMER. The gentleman's time has expired.

The Chair recognizes Mr. Crane from Arizona.

Mr. CRANE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to everybody on the panel for showing up today and holding this hearing.

We are, obviously, here to conduct critical oversight about the inefficiencies within the Federal Government surrounding telework policy. Most Americans are aware of this practice, but for those who are not, it is basically when employees are allowed not to come into the office and they are allowed to work from home.

One of the troubling parts of the data in front of us is how even after the COVID pandemic, Federal employees were not forced to come back to work under the Biden Administration. Another troubling thing that we learned about is that Mr. O'Malley, who sits in front of us today and is the former head of Social Security, signed a contract with a labor union right before resigning. This contract, which was signed after the 2024 Presidential election, would allow 98 percent of Federal workers within Social Security workforce, nearly 60,000 people, to work remotely over the next 4 years.

This lasts the entirety of the Trump Administration, which goes completely against the American people's mandate to root out inefficiencies in Washington and become better stewards of American taxpayer money.

Clearly, Mr. O'Malley, now that he is retired, will not have to oversee or be responsible for any of the inefficiencies or lack of productivity within that agency.

Now, let us zoom out for a minute real quick. Let us look at the context of the time that we live in, where 80 percent of Americans do not trust the Federal Government. And it is exposing evidence, like we are today, that adds to the overwhelming distrust of the Federal Government and bureaucrats like Mr. O'Malley.

Let us also take a moment to recognize the economic issues that Americans are dealing with right now. Thirty-six percent of Americans are working multiple jobs to make ends meet. My constituents in Arizona are paying around 26 percent more every month for the same goods and services, compared to 2021 when President Biden took office.

Most importantly, our Federal Government is now \$36 trillion and counting in debt. So, while Americans go back to work, they also have to suffer from inefficiencies and reckless decisionmaking of bureaucrats like Mr. O'Malley.

Numerous Federal buildings here in Washington, DC. are empty. These buildings are only 25 percent occupied with the lease, electricity, and utility still being paid on the taxpayer's dime. The lights are on, but no one is home. This is costing the American taxpayer an estimated \$15 billion annually.

Now, Democrats in the hearing today will tell you that telework policies of the Federal Government in some surveys are less than counterparts in the private sector, trying to show that everything is OK, and there is nothing to see here. Well, let us be honest. That is not a fair comparison.

No. 1, it is much more difficult to fire a Federal employee if it is discovered they are gaming the system.

No. 2, Federal employees are paid by the taxpayer. Whereas private employees are not. Private companies have to be efficient and profitable to pay employees.

I am going to start my questions now.

Mr. O'Malley, I was reading through your bio. It looks like you served as member of Baltimore City Council, Mayor of Baltimore, and Governor of Maryland. You also said here today that you ran your own law firm. Is that correct?

Mr. O'MALLEY. Yes, sir.

Mr. CRANE. You are under oath today, is that correct, Mr. O'Malley, to tell the truth?

Mr. O'MALLEY. I said, yes, sir.

Mr. CRANE. OK, great.

When you owned your own law firm, Mr. O'Malley, did most of your employees work in the office or from home?

Mr. O'MALLEY. Oh, it was a very small firm.

Mr. CRANE. That is not what I asked you, sir.

Mr. O'MALLEY. I did not have any employees.

Mr. CRANE. You did not have any employees? OK.

Mr. O'MALLEY. No.

Mr. CRANE. Interesting. OK.

Mr. O'MALLEY. When I joined another firm there was a larger number of employees.

Mr. CRANE. Makes sense.

Mr. O'MALLEY. But I was not the managing partner.

Mr. CRANE. All right. Followup real quick.

So, you did not have any employees, right? That is what you just said? It was just you?

Mr. O'MALLEY. That is true. In my solo practice I did not. I was also on the city council at the time.

Mr. CRANE. OK. Let us play a hypothetical then, Mr. O'Malley, because I can clearly tell you have some commonsense, you are a smart man, or you would not be in that seat.

If you did have employees at this business that you owned, what would be the advantages of having them come into the office?

Mr. O'MALLEY. Congressman, I readily admit that is why I brought more people on campus, onsite at Social Security. I believe that the people that are managing and figuring out problems, like

how to better serve the American people with fewer and fewer staff, need to be back at the headquarters.

Mr. CLOUD. Sir, then why did you sign a contract tying President Trump's hands and really tying his hands in trying to bring back the Federal workforce so that the American taxpayers can be better represented and we can have more efficiencies for their hard-earned money?

Mr. O'MALLEY. The duration of the contract was actually something that preceded me, but what I did do was I amended it because they were the last union that did not have the balance of on-site and telework in their contract. So, I did do that and they waived also other grievances.

Mr. CRANE. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, one last statement.

I think Mr. Higgins did about as good of a job as anybody I heard pointing out how disastrous the Administration that you led has become. Holding up his phone, playing the elevator music as he called into your old agency, and he has been on hold for an hour and a half, and then showed you that if senior citizens or anybody else wants to make an appointment they have to call that same number and wait for an hour and a half.

So, I am sorry, sir, but I find it ironic and pretty sad that you come in here talking today about what a great job you have done, how efficient you have been, and how responsible you've been with the American taxpayer dollar. And because of all that, sir, I actually think you will do a great job as the DNC Chair.

Chairman COMER. The gentleman's time has expired.

The Chair recognizes Mr. Timmons from South Carolina.

Mr. TIMMONS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you all for being here today. I am last so we are almost done. And I want to apologize, going last, it is going to be hard to hit some new topics, but maybe we will hit some old ones in a different way.

As you know, this Committee has jurisdiction over the city of Washington, DC. Last Congress, my Republican colleagues and I clashed with Mayor Bowser over homelessness and crime in the city, with City Council members over the lunacy of D.C. election laws, and with officials in the Biden Administration over D.C.'s criminal-friendly criminal code, particularly as it relates to bond.

But today, miraculously, almost all of us seem to be in agreement on this one important issue: returning Federal employees to in-person work and away from work-from-home agreements, from telework.

Mr. Davis, could you briefly explain to the Committee how vital the Federal workforce is to the economy of Washington, DC.?

Mr. DAVIS. They are over 40 percent of the workforce in the city itself. Small businesses, we have had over 100 have failed under this. The buildings are empty. The downtown tax base has dropped significantly. And it is hurting not only the city's economy. A lot of small businesses, as I have said, have gone under.

But the Metro system itself, where there is a huge Federal investment, is geared to take a lot of people more to work than are going. People just are not going in because they do not have to go in.

Mr. TIMMONS. I could not agree more. While it has improved my commute time, I think that is the only good thing about it. And I will give that up if it means getting people back to work.

Ms. Greszler, could you speak to the importance of Federal employees, specifically those working for the Social Security Administration, returning to their offices?

Ms. GRESZLER. Yes. We have heard from a lot of Members today who have to take those complaints because they are not able to get through to the Social Security office, whether it is being able to get somebody on the phone or get into the office. Especially for elderly Americans who need to be able to see somebody face to face, you need to have people there.

Mr. TIMMONS. Thank you for that.

Now, some officials in the Biden-Harris Administration deliberately slowed the transition back to the office by ensuring that telework would continue for years to come.

Let me be clear: President Trump, this Committee, and countless Members on both sides of the aisle are committed to bringing Federal employees back to their offices where they belong.

City Council Chairman Phil Mendelson's representatives called the possible outcome of lawmakers' telework policies immensely consequential to the city of Washington, DC. Mayor Bowser called on President Biden to take decisive action to get most Federal workers back to the office.

Biden's Chief of Staff, Jeff Zients, sent not one but two emails to Cabinet leadership in 2023 emphasizing that aggressively increasing in-person work was a top priority for the President.

I can go on and on. It was even in the State of the Union address.

So, Mr. O'Malley, I guess my question, my first question, is could you clarify whether the telework agreement you signed with AFGE includes any clauses or provisions that would allow a future administration to terminate or modify the agreement before its expiration in 2029?

Mr. O'MALLEY. Yes, sir. Here is the part I have read several times now: Management has sole discretion to temporarily change, reduce, or suspend approved telework day(s) for any employees, office, component, or agency-wide due to operational needs.

Mr. TIMMONS. So, the next Social Security Administrator could unilaterally modify that contract?

Mr. O'MALLEY. Well, the language is in the contract and the term here is for operational needs, not out of spite or not to try to drive a mass exodus of employees, which would just drive up wait times.

Mr. TIMMONS. We could get plenty of studies to show that for operational needs it would be necessary to bring people back to work.

I guess I want to talk about the timing.

Mr. O'MALLEY. They do work 5 days a week.

Mr. TIMMONS. You know, I think certain jobs—I guess another—do you track their productivity?

Mr. O'MALLEY. Yes, sir. You would be amazed at the amount of data this agency collects and tracks. I was sharing earlier that Drew Ferguson, who is—left your company now, but he came up

and he actually saw the real-time monitoring of those folks that are on the Teleservice Center lines.

And by the way, if somebody presses the button for a call back, that is the service that is now there that was not there a few months ago. However, we are—at this time, the agency has been struggling with the increased volume from COLA.

Mr. TIMMONS. Why are there such long wait times? Congressman Higgins just said 90 minutes.

Mr. O'MALLEY. Because the staffing, Congressman, has been reduced to a 50-year low, even as the workload and the number of beneficiaries has climbed by, like, 50 percent since 2000. And that is the operational challenge.

You know, when the White House called me and asked me to go there and try to turn the agency in a better direction—which we did. It has not healed yet, it is not the level of service that any of us would want. I mean, we used to have a high level of service. But we did turn it in a better direction.

But really we need—the agency, seniors, people with disabilities need—Congress to restore the funding that has been so greatly reduced over the last 10 years that would allow an adequate number of staff, not more staff than they need, but an adequate number, in order to process the claims, answer the phones, and do those other things.

Mr. TIMMONS. I think we are going to find some efficiencies, particularly by relocating and investing in new areas of the country, to maybe address some call time issues. If there is somebody working in Hawaii they can answer phones different than if they are working in Maine.

Mr. O'MALLEY. We have 24 call centers all across the country. We just ramped up in Albuquerque, actually.

Mr. TIMMONS. Great. I am past out of time.

Mr. Chairman, thank you. I yield back.

Chairman COMER. The Chair now recognizes Mr. Langworthy from New York.

Mr. LANGWORTHY. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. And I appreciate the opportunity once again to serve on the Oversight Committee under your leadership. This is the best committee to fight to make sure that we have transparency in the people's government and address fraud, waste, and abuse. And there is no better way to start that mission in the 119th Congress than by addressing the harmful consequences of abuses of the work-at-home policies across the Federal Government.

Commissioner O'Malley, you have been asked here today because the Social Security Administration is one of the prime examples of a work-from-home policy gone wrong. While you have worked overtime to guarantee Social Security Administration employees the luxury of telework until 2029, my constituents, they are still sitting at home wondering why they have not heard a response from your employees in months and, in some cases, years.

My district staff handled nearly 400 Social Security-related cases last year, many of which stemmed from outrageous delays in simply getting a response, and that is why they turned to our office.

You and I both know this is completely unacceptable by any metric and a disservice to all of our constituents and the millions of

Americans who rely on Social Security as their main source of income.

Commissioner, Social Security data shows that processing times have not improved since Fiscal Year 2020 and have yet to return to pre-pandemic levels. Furthermore, a study by the Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research also found that telework policies have generally led to declines in productivity.

Given this, how could you believe that our constituents can expect faster responses from your offices with telework in place?

Mr. O'MALLEY. Actually, we—I have changed the policy on telework. I brought more people back to all of the nine regional headquarters, as well as to the Baltimore and Washington headquarters.

And actually, a lot of processing times have been improved. In fact, the ones that most of your constituents call for, the greatest volume is the retirement, and that one we have returned to 87 percent timely within 2 weeks. It has not been at that number for 7 years.

And then earlier—put up the map—we were showing that we reduced to the lowest level in 30 years the backlog of ALJ cases. And this, the dark green, represents 270-day processing time, and that is the first time in 30 years we have gotten it down to that. At the beginning of last year, it was 450.

But your point and the main point and what I hope we acknowledge today is that when you reduce staffing at this agency to a 50-year low, while demographics increase its customer base, as a matter of math we just have too few employees serving as many people as they need to serve.

But we are serving them better at the end of last year than we were certainly at the beginning of last year. But you could make it——

Mr. LANGWORTHY. Sir, I am not only hearing from my constituents that are struggling to get responses from your employees on the phones, but they are facing challenges with walk-in appointments.

The field offices in my district primarily serve an older population with limited access or familiarity with new technology. This appointment-only policy is creating a significant barrier to resolving their issues, and the needless extension of telework for Social Security employees only exacerbates these challenges.

Our constituents are being left out in the cold with very limited ability to walk in, speak to someone face to face, and get those Social Security concerns addressed.

Yes or no, was enforcing full 5-day office staffing at field offices, particularly in our rural areas in districts like mine, ever discussed during your negotiation with the American Federation of Government Employees.

Mr. O'MALLEY. No, we did not discuss that aspect. I was not directly involved in the negotiations. But we did, on February 2, I had a deadline where we had to look at the telework and the onsite requirements. We did not change it in the field offices. Those folks had returned 5 days a week and 2 days telework and 3 days onsite. We did not change that one, but we changed others.

And the recent thing that you mentioned about encouraging people to make appointments, when I left the agency, we were still very clear that anyone can walk in to a field office.

But just like—you know, I used to be Governor of Maryland, and most state MVAs have switched to an appointment model. That does not mean that people cannot walk in, they still can, but the appointment model allows them to spread the time.

Mr. LANGWORTHY. It makes it very difficult. Our seniors that are less, far less tech savvy are having a difficult time.

Mr. O'MALLEY. They can still walk in.

Mr. LANGWORTHY. Were any concerns raised about the challenges that less than 5 days a week of in-person staffing would pose on rural and older Americans who depend on these field offices?

Mr. O'MALLEY. Again, the field offices are open 5 days a week. They are actually open for longer hours now than they were open pre-COVID where they used to close for half a day, I think, on Wednesdays. That was before my time. So, they have been open since COVID.

Mr. LANGWORTHY. Commissioner O'Malley, my constituents, tax-paying American citizens who have paid into this system for their entire working lives, they rely on Social Security staff to address their concerns in a timely fashion, and we would not have that volume coming at us if there was not an issue.

It is plain and simple. Without a full 5-day-a-week in-person staffing, they will not be served adequately because of irresponsible telework agreements.

I am glad to see an end to this Administration that has time and again put the dictates of unelected bureaucrats before the needs of everyday, hardworking Americans. And this is why I support President Trump's forthcoming agenda and challenge to the agreement between the Social Security Administration and the AFGE. And I will continue to advocate for return-to-the-office policies across the Federal Government.

And with that, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Chairman COMER. The gentleman yields.

That concludes our questions. So, in closing, I want to thank our witnesses once again for their excellent testimony today.

I now yield to Ranking Member Connolly for some closing remarks.

Mr. CONNOLLY. I thank the Chair, and I want to thank our witnesses.

I do think that maybe the premise of this hearing for some on the other side of the aisle clearly has been disproved. Telework is neither good nor bad. It is a tool to be used to improve productivity, to recruit and retain the workforce of the future, and to try to provide more efficient services to our constituents. It works.

I believe Governor O'Malley has shown us multiple times today a productivity chart, that productivity went up, not down. Ms. Cross has testified that it can be a very creative tool without which we are at an enormous disadvantage with a huge workforce that is ready to retire and needs to be replaced with a younger generation.

If we do not get smart about the deployment of technology, including telework, we will be at a distinct disadvantage with respect to the private sector, which can compete hammer and tong.

Congressman Davis wisely said to us it has to be balanced. It is not a mindless anti-telework approach, nor is it a mindless, "Hey, let us all work wherever we want, whenever we want" approach. It has to be structured, it has to be architecture created, and it has to be, as Mr. Davis said, balanced.

I believe that Governor O'Malley must have told us multiple times, I think I counted seven, where you quoted the contractual language. That somehow did not penetrate some of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle.

You did not tie a future President's hands. In fact, there is an escape clause. Managers of the future who succeed you, if they determine that operations require it, can nullify the telework agreement. Nullify it. That is not tying anyone's hands.

And you also pointed out—again sometimes to impervious attention—that you are dealing with the lowest ratio of employees to beneficiaries in the last half century.

Mr. O'MALLEY. True.

Mr. CONNOLLY. And nonetheless productivity went up.

Mr. O'MALLEY. Driven up.

Mr. CONNOLLY. If we made more investments instead of talking about slashing government investments, we actually might improve customer service dramatically.

And that even underscores how impressive it was you were able to make those gains despite the fact that you were starved of the kind of resources you need dealing with the explosion of beneficiaries, which is only going to grow even more as our population ages over the next decade or so.

So, with that, Mr. Chairman, I think we have learned a lot in this hearing. I hope we have debunked some myths. And I hope we also can tackle real problems, working on a bipartisan basis, to try to make sure that Social Security works for every American.

I thank the Chair.

Chairman COMER. The gentlewoman yields back.

And, again, I want to thank our witnesses.

With all due respect, Mr. Ranking Member, I think you and I were at different hearings today. And I would go so far as to say I would welcome my colleagues on the other side of the aisle to go home and campaign with their constituents and brag about how much more efficient and productive the Social Security Administration has been. I think that would solve some problems that we have, because in the next election I think we would have a bigger majority and maybe be able to govern a little easier.

But at the end of the day, nobody, nobody on our side of the aisle who has caseworkers that deal with the Social Security Administration, or any other government agency in the Biden Administration for that matter, would be able to say with a straight face that any agency, especially the Social Security Administration, has become more efficient. It has become harder to get people on the phone.

And I think that when this issue has become on the forefront, and it happened, Mr. O'Malley, really when we started hearing

people in the outgoing Biden Administration say they were going to Trump-proof the Federal Government and with the signing of your contract extending the telework policies, I think people have been outraged. I think it has brought this issue to the forefront.

And the American people, who get up every day and fight the traffic, and have to get their kids to school on time and get to work on time, and work hard, and pay their taxes, when they hear about the significant percentage of Federal employees who are not having to do this, they are outraged by it. And I think that they expect Congress to do something about it.

So, I hope you received our message today: Federal workers must show up for the American people. That is why I am reintroducing the Stopping Home Office Work's Unproductive Problems Act, or the SHOW UP Act, again this Congress. The SHOW UP Act returns Federal employees' telework to no more than pre-pandemic levels.

We understand that there are always going to be certain employees who telework. We have field representatives in our offices. They have an office, but we expect them to go to city council meetings and chamber meetings and funerals and things like that. That is what a telework employee with the Federal Government does. But the majority of workers, the overwhelming majority of workers, have to work from the office.

And there is no reason why we cannot go back to pre-pandemic levels, which is what the SHOW UP Act does. That means from the day of enactment, the Federal workforce must show up to the office for work. That is what the American people want. That is what we want.

Last Congress, throughout this Committee's investigation on the Federal agency telework policy, the Biden-Harris Administration could not answer simple questions about how many Federal employees never come into the office.

And I think several times today you cited: Well, we have employees come in 3 days a week. Well, they are getting paid for 5 days a week. And there are employees in other offices that we have heard come to the office 1 day a week or 2 days a week, so they say, well, they are not teleworking because they have to come to the office every now and then. That is not the way it works. That is not the way it works in the private sector and that is not the way it should work for the Federal Government.

This and other serious problems are highlighted in a recent report prepared by the Committee Majority staff titled "The Lights Are On, But Everyone Is At Home: Why The New Administration Will Enter Largely Vacant Federal Agency Offices." So, I ask unanimous consent to enter this report into the record.

Without objection, so ordered.

I look forward to working with the incoming Trump Administration. He has been very transparent about his vision to make the Federal Government more efficient. And I think that you are going to be hearing a lot about that, especially in this Committee, which has jurisdiction over the Federal workforce, a lot over the next several months.

So, hopefully the American taxpayers will get a better return on their investment and, at the very least, the Federal workforce will have to show up for work like they do.

So, with that, and without objection, all Members will have five legislative days within which to submit materials and additional written questions for the witnesses, which will be forwarded to the witnesses.

If there is no further business, without objection, the Committee stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 2:34 p.m., the Committee was adjourned.]

