

THE GOVERNMENT  
ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE'S  
2025 HIGH RISK LIST

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HEARING  
BEFORE THE  
COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT  
AND GOVERNMENT REFORM  
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
ONE HUNDRED NINETEENTH CONGRESS  
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- \* Statement for the Record, Shared Services Leadership Coalition; submitted by Chairman Comer.
- \* Report, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs's Office of the Inspector General; "Determination of VHA's Staffing Shortages"; submitted by Rep. Lynch.
- \* Article, *Business Insider*, "Dogecoin Cocreator Says Musk Is A Grifter Who Couldn't Run Code"; submitted by Rep. Pressley.
- \* Article, *New York Times*, "DOGE Quietly Deletes 5 Biggest Spending Cuts"; submitted by Rep. Subramanyam.

*The documents listed are available at: docs.house.gov.*

### ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTS

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- \* Questions for the Record: Mr. Dodaro; submitted by Rep. Foxx.
- These documents were submitted after the hearing, and may be available upon request.*



# **THE GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE'S 2025 HIGH RISK LIST**

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**Tuesday, February 25, 2025**

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

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:36 p.m., in room 2154, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. James Comer [Chairman of the Committee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Comer, Gosar, Foxx, Grothman, Cloud, Higgins, Biggs, Mace, Fallon, Donalds, Perry, Timmons, Burchett, Greene, Burlison, Crane, Jack, McGuire, Gill, Connolly, Norton, Lynch, Khanna, Brown, Stansbury, Garcia, Frost, Lee, Crockett, Subramanyam, Ansari, Bell, Simon, Min, Pressley, and Tlaib.

Chairman COMER. This hearing of the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform will come to order. I want to welcome everyone back.

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

I now recognize myself for the purpose of making an opening statement.

Welcome to today's Oversight Committee hearing on the Government Accountability Office's 2025 High Risk List. Before we get started, I want to recognize that this will be the Comptroller General Dodaro's final time testifying on the High Risk List as he is set to retire later this year. I want to thank you, Mr. Dodaro, for your decades of service to the United States. Under your leadership, GAO has done excellent work to expose waste, fraud, abuse in the Federal Government and provide recommendations to prevent it.

At the start of each new Congress, the GAO publishes a High Risk List to update us on programs ripe for congressional oversight and action. The 38 areas on this year's report all present either a financial risk of loss of at least \$1 billion taxpayer dollars, or they present a risk involving public health or safety, delivery of essential services to Americans, national security concerns, privacy, economic growth, or the rights of citizens. These potential billions of dollars could be better utilized for lowering taxes, improving roads, or making everyday life more affordable for the American people. The average American works too hard to see tax dollars wasted. My goal with this hearing is simple: to make sure the taxpayer dol-

lars is being spent wisely and to get more of it back to Americans' pockets, where it belongs.

This list helps track the progress of deficiencies of programs so that Congress can perform oversight to promote efficient and effective use of taxpayer money. The Federal Government programs created and funded by Congress must stay true to their intended purpose, meet the stated objectives, and remain stewards of taxpayer dollars. However, year after year, bloated Federal programs managed by the Federal bureaucracy continue to fall short of their goals and are often plagued by fraud and abuse.

Despite the excellent reports by GAO each year, there continues to be rampant waste, fraud, and abuse across the Federal Government. For more than 30 years, GAO has provided Members of Congress with this report, yet familiar programs remain on this list now which were there in the very beginning. Americans are tired of the Federal Government failing its report card. The American people elected President Trump to drain the swamp and rein in the runaway bureaucracy, and President Trump is delivering on this promise.

President Trump has tasked DOGE with conducting a governmentwide audit to eliminate Washington waste. GAO's extensive reports and recommendations to the executive branch have given DOGE a strong starting point as it takes on the Federal bureaucracy. DOGE is taking note of GAO's critical work in identifying trillions of dollars lost to improper payments made by programs like Medicaid and unemployment insurance, and now DOGE is taking action to address the root causes of improper payments. DOGE has recognized GAO's reports on the need to modernize IT for a more efficient and effective Federal Government, and Elon Musk and his A team are working on solutions to make that happen. The GAO's High Risk List includes the Department of Defense's financial management. DoD, I will remind everyone, has failed audits for 7 years in a row. Under President Trump's leadership, Secretary Hegseth is going to work with DOGE to finally address this.

Now more than ever, GAO's work tells us that we need more data, more tracking of funds, more oversight and, yes, more efficiency to know exactly where taxpayer dollars are going. We are excited to work with the Trump Administration to continue our mission of cutting out waste, fraud, and abuse. I look forward to hearing from Comptroller General Dodaro on the good work GAO is doing and how this Committee and the Trump Administration could protect the American people's money from being wasted by their government. Americans want more than another report telling them about all the problems in Washington. They want action to right the ship, and that is just what President Trump, DOGE, and the Republicans in Congress are doing for the American people.

With that, I now yield to the Ranking Member Connolly for his opening statement.

Mr. CONNOLLY. I thank the Chair, and I welcome Mr. Dodaro. This is one of my favorite hearings in the calendar year, and I think it is also very important. If you really want to get at waste, fraud, and abuse, and you want to achieve efficiency, which is the ability to maximize good outcomes while minimizing waste—wast-

ed time, wasted energy, wasted money—the High Risk List of GAO is a great place to start. In fact, when this Committee has paid attention to that list, we have effectuated serious savings.

I will give the example. Information technology modernization, which I focused on in the 16 years I have been in this Committee, we have saved, according to GAO, \$31 billion. So, when we talk about efficiency and trying to achieve results for the American people, you do not do it by taking a wrecking ball to the entire structure and hope you get the bad with the good. You, in fact, take out a scalpel and you cut out the excess, you cut out the waste, and you do it in a thoughtful and reflective manner.

Unlike what the Chairman has just said, I do not believe President Trump and Elon Musk have, in fact, done that at all. They have done mass firings, mass resignations, and attempt at resignations. To fire everyone in a probationary status does not depict the good from the bad. It is, in fact, to treat everyone as the same and hope for the best, and our seed corn is being lost. We need to have talent for the future. The approach of DOGE so far, and Elon Musk in particular, actually, is injurious to the future course of skillsets needed in the Federal Government. We need higher skillsets. We had to replace a number of workers in the Federal Government who were going to retire and are eligible for retirement. Unfortunately, the approach of this Administration so far, led by Mr. Musk and DOGE, does not do that at all.

So, I am looking forward to talking about other opportunities like improper payments, which this Committee talked about for years. I believe, Mr. Dodaro, that improper payments add up to something like \$281 billion a year. If we multiply that times 10, that is almost \$3 trillion we could reduce the debt by if we got serious about dealing with improper payments. When we look at revenue owed to the Federal Government, owed to IRS, but not collected because of IRS' inability to audit and collect, that number is anywhere from \$.5 trillion to \$1 trillion a year. The last Trump Commissioner of the IRS said it was \$1 trillion a year. Well, if we took that high number and multiplied it by 10, that is \$10 trillion. That is a third of the national debt almost.

So, there are things we can do. Another one is legacy systems, which, again, GAO has talked about. They have highlighted the top 10 candidates for retirement, legacy systems of IT, which would save over \$331 million a year. The oldest legacy system, I believe you have identified, Mr. Dodaro, is 51 years old.

So, we can do productive things. We can find common ground, Democrats and Republicans, but we on this side of the aisle are never going to support a mindless wrecking ball approach to "achieving efficiency in the Federal Government." That is not how to do it. It will wreak harm in the American people, it will damage our form of government, and it is not something that will ever merit our support. I yield back.

Chairman COMER. The Ranking Member yields back. I am pleased to welcome today's witness, Comptroller General Gene Dodaro, who brings more than 50 years of experience at the U.S. Government Accountability Office and has served as head of the legislative branch Agency since 2010. The Comptroller General is serving the final year of his 15-year term. Mr. Dodaro has testified

before Congress 220 times on GAO's recommendations to improve the performance and operations of the Federal Government, leading to work that has led to over \$1 trillion in financial benefits to the American taxpayer during his tenure. Comptroller General Dodaro was influential in developing the concept and content of the High Risk List, which, over the last 15 years, has averaged financial benefits of about \$40 billion per year. Thank you for joining us. I look forward to our discussion this afternoon.

Pursuant to Committee Rule 9(g), the witness and his staff 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?

[A chorus of ayes.]

Chairman COMER. Let the record show that the witnesses answered in the affirmative. Thank you, and you all may take a seat.

We appreciate you being here today and look forward to your testimony. And I want to remind the Members of the Committee that when the Comptroller General testifies, he has his staff with him, and sometimes he will yield to his staff to answer certain questions, so that is why they were all sworn in.

Let me remind the witnesses that we have read your written statement. It will appear in full in the hearing record. Please limit your oral statement, sir, 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 would please wrap it up.

So, now I recognize Mr. Dodaro for his opening statement.

**STATEMENT OF GENE L. DODARO  
COMPTROLLER GENERAL  
U.S. GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE (GAO)**

Mr. DODARO. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Connolly, Members of the Committee. It is very good to be here today to talk about GAO's high-risk area, which focuses on fraud, waste, abuse, mismanagement, but also on broad-based transformation that is needed for a number of our programs to achieve greater efficiency and effectiveness in government. There has been some good progress since our last update. As has been mentioned, we have saved over \$760 billion over time through implementation of recommendations that have been acted on by the Congress and the Administration on the high-risk areas.

Today, I want to focus on a couple of things. One, we are adding one new area this year, and that is improving the delivery of disaster assistance. Storms are becoming more frequent and intense. In the last 10 years, the Federal Government has appropriated \$500 billion for disaster assistance. FEMA is stretched way too thin. They are managing right now over 600 disasters. Some of them go back 20 years. The system is fragmented. There are over 30 different Federal agencies involved in delivering assistance. There is confusion, overlapping regulations. We need reform in that area, and that is why we are highlighting it.



There are also opportunities to better manage the cost of the Federal Government. As has been mentioned by the Chair and Ranking Member, improper payments remains a very intractable problem. The last 6 years, there has been over \$150 billion every year in improper payments. That is not even the complete number. There are a number of programs that are not even reporting. There is \$600 billion net tax gap between the amount of taxes owed and taxes collected by the IRS. Voluntary compliance is hovering around 82–85 percent. We can do better in that area to make sure the government is getting its fair share of revenue.

There are many major acquisitions across the government, including DoD weapon systems. They are on the High List. The Department of Energy, contracting for nuclear development and cleanup of our weapons complex. These contracts are consistently overrun, over budget, and delays occur, and do not deliver on the promises. Information technology remains a governmentwide problem. It is designated a governmentwide list. Acquisitions and operations, the Government spends over \$100 billion a year. Most of that goes to maintain existing legacy systems and not to new technology, so the government is not harnessing the power.

Just to give a couple of examples, FAA has 138 air traffic control systems. Thirty-one percent of those systems are not sustainable by FAA's own amounts. There are not enough spare parts. There is not enough money. There are not enough plans. And their plans to develop many of these systems are not intended to resolve the problem for 10 or 13 years. We have got the VA electronic healthcare system. They are on their fourth try. They have spent over \$12 billion already. We have only deployed the system to 4 medical centers, another 5 in the next year, but there are 160 more to go, so these are issues.

Cybersecurity, I designated that a high-risk area across Federal Government in 1997, added a critical infrastructure protection in 2003. It is still a problem. It has grown in intensity, and the government is not acting at a pace commensurate with the evolving grave threat, not just to the Federal Government's information systems, but the critical infrastructure protection, the electricity grid, water systems, our telecommunications network, all across the 16 critical infrastructure sections of the United States.

There are many other areas on the list that deal with public health and safety, oversight of medical products. We have got drug shortages. We have got not enough inspections of drug manufacturers, food safety. The Bureau of Prisons is in significant disrepair and understaffed, and I can go into many of these areas during the discussion. But the main message here is that action and heightened attention on these issues can save billions of dollars, improve public health and safety, and also go to the heart of improving the service and the effectiveness and efficiency and a return on investment and build better trust in our government institutions.

I thank you for the opportunity to be here today and would enjoy entertaining your questions.

Chairman COMER. Thank you. I now recognize Dr. Gosar from Arizona.

Mr. GOSAR. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I extend the same thing, Mr. Dodaro. I always look to this hearing to talk to you be-

cause you have always been good to us and always been very fair. So, thank you for doing that.

If I had to highlight just one Department of the Government's efficiency accomplishment so far, it would be proving that the waste, fraud, and abuse infecting the Federal Government is not just isolated to one department. It is government wide. Since the last GAO high risk report in 2023, not a single item has been removed from that list. The Biden Administration contaminated nearly every agency and dug our Nation deeper and deeper in debt. This High Risk List includes improper Medicaid payments and extravagant DoD acquisitions to fund endless wars.

For 3 years, the Families First Coronavirus Response Act provided FMAP funding to states to continuously enroll Medicaid beneficiaries regardless of eligibility or their private insurance. According to the Kaiser Foundation, enrollment in Medicaid and CHIP grew by 23.1 million or 32.4 percent between February 2020 and April 2023, and once again, the DoD failed its seventh consecutive audit. Perhaps we should not authorize Abrams tanks and send them over to Ukraine to be instantly destroyed.

Mr. Dodaro, the High Risk List also mentions the infrastructure of the Bureau of Prisons. Bureau of Prisons is planning to close seven facilities and three satellite camps due to budget constraints. I know who is being empowered with emergency funds, ICE, who needs more detention beds. My question for you, would allowing ICE to use these BOP facilities as detention centers help generate additional revenue and expand the use of excess Federal property, perhaps even improve the infrastructure?

Mr. DODARO. We have not taken a look at that issue yet. I understand what your concerns are, and I do not know. We will be taking a look and I am sure asked to look at how ICE is using those facilities and what effect that is having, both positive and potentially negative, and we will have to see. But I am deeply concerned about the state of the prisons. They are very understaffed, and there is excessive use of overtime, and that can lead to both safety concerns for their staff as well as incarcerated individuals. Despite the First Step Act, they have not really focused on evaluating programs that are intended to help people transition back into society and not prevent recidivism from occurring and them ending back in prison shortly after their release. So, I do not know to what extent ICE using the facilities will complicate or potentially have other effects on that area, but we will look at it.

Mr. GOSAR. And to follow up on that is, if you regard this as a transfer, could you tell us how you would transfer that property too?

Mr. DODARO. Yes. I am not sure. I would have to look at the ownership of who owns the prisons.

Mr. GOSAR. Now, the report also flags that the FDA must do a better job to protect public health and improve its oversight of temporary use or "unapproved medical products like drugs, vaccines during emergencies." Question for you. In your investigation of this lack of an FDA oversight, did you uncover why the FDA approved the emergency use of the experimental COVID shot, but not ivermectin for the treatment of COVID?

Mr. DODARO. Let me ask, Jessie. Let me call our expert up in that area. It is Jess Farb. Ms. Jess Farb is managing director of our healthcare work.

Mr. GOSAR. Thanks, Jess.

Ms. FARB. Congressman, we have not looked into the use of EUAs for ivermectin or vaccines at this point. We have not been asked to do that yet by Congress.

Mr. GOSAR. Well, one of the things that we are going to have to really look at is improve FDA because there is trouble all the way around, and I think both sides can agree on that one. The report recommends the collection of tax payments for oil and gas leases to help "improve the government's fiscal position." Would you agree that funds generated from the taxes on oil and gas leases on Federal lands would help reduce the deficit?

Mr. DODARO. Yes.

Mr. GOSAR. So, let us approve some more oil and gas leases?

Mr. DODARO. No. Our finding is that it is already being produced.

Mr. GOSAR. OK.

Mr. DODARO. And the government is not collecting. There is no assurance it is collecting the amount that is already due. I am not suggesting they produce more, but for what is being produced, royalty payments are due to the government. The Interior Department systems are in kind of disarray, and it is not clear that they are collecting the revenue that is due to the government.

Mr. GOSAR. Thank you, Mr. Dodaro. I yield back.

Chairman COMER. The Chair recognizes the Ranking Member for 5 minutes.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Thank you. Mr. Dodaro, welcome back. You have been doing high risk reports to this Committee for a long time, and on the High Risk List this year, there are how many items again?

Mr. DODARO. There are 38 items.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Thirty-eight, and how many has Congress taken action on?

Mr. DODARO. There are quite a few. I mean, we took off last—

Mr. CONNOLLY. Well, quite a few is a little general.

Mr. DODARO. Well, I can ask—

Mr. CONNOLLY. Nineteen, 20?

Mr. DODARO. I would say probably 20 is a fair statement, 20.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Twenty.

Mr. DODARO. Overtime.

Mr. CONNOLLY. So, Congress has not ignored the High Risk List.

Mr. DODARO. No.

Mr. CONNOLLY. But there are some perennial favorites that keep on coming back for one reason or another, are there not?

Mr. DODARO. That is correct.

Mr. CONNOLLY. And what would be couple of examples of that?

Mr. DODARO. Well, there are some charter members who have been on since 1990.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Can I ask you to speak close to the microphone?

Mr. DODARO. Yes, sure. There are some charter members who have been on since 1990, Medicare, for example. The DoD weapon systems has been on the list since 1990. Medicaid joined in 2003 along with real property across Federal Government. As I mentioned earlier, put cybersecurity on in 1997, and so those are some

of the ones that were early additions to the list. And I want to be clear—there have been improvements in some of those areas, but they are not to the point where risk is being managed properly, and we still have opportunities to do better.

Mr. CONNOLLY. All right. If we adopted all of the recommendations GAO put forward on the High Risk List, any idea what the savings could be to the United States taxpayer?

Mr. DODARO. Over \$200 billion.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Two-hundred billion dollars a year or total?

Mr. DODARO. Total, but some of them would continue.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Right. OK.

Mr. DODARO. And that is a very conservative estimate. I think it could be more, much more.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Well, just for example, the savings from IT modernization, which has been on your High Risk List, is \$31 billion, yes. And by the way, it is a gift that keeps on giving—

Mr. DODARO. That is correct.

Mr. CONNOLLY [continuing]. If we focus on real efficiency. Are you familiar with the Taxpayer Funds Oversight and Accountability Act, previously known as the CFO Vision Act?

Mr. DODARO. Yes.

Mr. CONNOLLY. And would that make the Federal Government work better for the American people, in your opinion, if we adopted it?

Mr. DODARO. Yes. Yes. That was based upon recommendations from a GAO study where we studied the impact of the CFO Act over the 30 years of its implementation and some suggestions to make it stronger.

Mr. CONNOLLY. And does that bill also address improper payments and fraud?

Mr. DODARO. With some additional provisions added, it could and should, and I am happy to provide additional suggestions to the Committee in that regard.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Yes. Could you just talk a little bit about improper payments? Refresh our memory what we mean by “improper payments.” We do not mean the government deliberately goes out and throws money from the rooftop.

Mr. DODARO. No, that is not in the official statutory definition, and I would not support that.

Mr. CONNOLLY. For the record, neither would I.

Mr. DODARO. The official definition is, it is a payment that should not have been made or was made in the wrong amount. Some of them can actually be an underpayment. Most, however, are overpayments, probably 90 percent of them. They happen when money is given to somebody who is really not eligible to receive the benefit or the payment calculation is incorrect—

Mr. CONNOLLY. Right.

Mr. DODARO [continuing]. Or somebody submits a bill for a service that was never provided. And, of course, some of the improper payments could be fraud, and fraud is broader, and the improper payments really are only estimate of about 80 Federal programs. They are a very small subset. They should be bigger. But fraud occurs throughout the Federal Government, so fraud can occur beyond the improper payments.

Mr. CONNOLLY. Final point. It just seems to me that part of the problem with improper payments in the Federal Government is there is no sort of incentive or reward system in the Federal workforce to reward you for catching improper payments and trying to deflect them. The reward system is getting money out the door, understandably, and providing benefits and services to needy citizens. Real quickly, could you comment on that—

Mr. DODARO. Yes.

Mr. CONNOLLY [continuing]. And how we address that?

Mr. DODARO. That is exactly right. I mean, more people in the Federal agencies have gotten in trouble for not paying someone than they have from paying someone that they should not have paid, and the incentives need to be changed. The other complicating factors—many of these programs are administered through the states, so there needs to be incentives at the states. And Labor Department, for example, has offered a suggestion that there be legislation to give states the ability to keep five percent of whatever they were covering in proper payments and use it to strengthen their payment integrity processes, and I support that.

Mr. CONNOLLY. I thank the Chair.

Chairman COMER. The Chair now recognizes Dr. Foxx from North Carolina.

Ms. FOXX. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Mr. Dodaro, and we will miss you when you retire. We appreciate you.

Last year, North Carolina saw immense devastation caused by Hurricane Helene with over a 100 lives lost and nearly \$60 billion in damage. While FEMA did show up to provide aid, I give FEMA and the Federal response to Helene an overall grade of a D-plus. It is no surprise that “improving the delivery of Federal disaster assistance” was added this year to the GAO High Risk List, which states that attention is also needed to improve processes for assisting survivors. I could not agree more.

One of the biggest problems I recognized while helping constituents affected by the storms, is how FEMA’s representatives on the ground are telling people what the Agency cannot do rather than what they can do. FEMA has a lot of experience dealing with disasters, yet it seems to have learned shockingly few lessons along the way. There should be an information road map available to those affected by disasters, including what they can expect from FEMA. This road map should include how much and what kind of aid they can expect to receive, a timeline for aid, information on all available assistance, and what types of decisions will have to be made in the coming weeks, months, and years. What recommendations do you have for FEMA to “improve processes for assisting survivors?”

Mr. DODARO. I will give a couple of examples, and I will turn to Chris Currie, who is our expert in the area, and he can enumerate all these suggestions that we have.

One of the things is, we think FEMA gets involved in too many disasters. Right now, it is based on a per capita amount of \$1.86 per capita, has not been adjusted over time. So, they get involved in a lot more disasters that if they effectively evaluated the state and local ability to do it, we estimate they could be non-involved

in about 27 fewer disasters, which would help deal with this issue. So, I will turn to Chris for other examples.

Mr. CURRIE. Yes, ma'am. The way you described it, I could not agree more with. The problem is we have a system that was created to do good, but it is not helping the survivors that it is supposed to help, and your description is right on. The problem is the survivor and the community has to pull the assistance out of FEMA and undergo a very complicated process that is often fragmented across multiple agencies, and it is very confusing, and survivors get worn down, understandably. So, in terms of our recommendations, we actually have a number of options to simplify the system, but also to reform how the Federal Government provides this assistance so communities and survivors can get it quicker and more easily.

Ms. FOXX. I have a follow-up question I will send to you all because I am not going to have enough time for you to answer that, and I need to ask another question. We have worked very hard in this Committee on Postal Service reform, and we are concerned that the High Risk List notes the Postal Service lost \$16 billion in fiscal years 2023 and 2024 and has \$181 billion in debts and liabilities. The Postal Service cannot continue operating as it has with its financials in such bad shape. What suggestions do you have for us to shore up the Postal Service so it can continue to provide critical service, especially in rural communities like the ones most of us represent?

Mr. DODARO. Yes. There is a basic expectation gap between the Congress and the Postal Service, and I think that gap has to be closed. Congress wants certain delivery expectations set for the Postal Service, but there is no way they are going to generate the revenue necessary in order to meet those expectations that Congress has for it. So, I think there has to be a negotiation between Congress and the Postal Service, say, this is what we want you to do. How much can you generate? They need to keep trying to reduce their cost and they have had some success, but not a lot. And I think that is fair to ask them to reduce their cost, but at some point Congress has to say, here is what we want and here is what we are willing to help contribute to pay to keep that level of service going.

Ms. FOXX. It is my understanding that they have done not nearly enough to automate and to reduce those costs. Do you have some suggestions in that area?

Mr. DODARO. Yes. This is Dave Marroni, our director in charge of postal work.

Mr. MARRONI. So, they have made some initial steps to transform their network, but there still is a lot that remains to be done. The network is antiquated. They are in the process of trying to transform it, but there have been some problems in that transformation. In certain areas where it has been implemented, in Atlanta and Richmond, you have seen declines in service performance as the rollout was done. So, it is really important for the Postal Service to focus on what are the lessons from that so as they continue this transformation, which is really important to get at your point, it is rolled out as smoothly as possible, so you both get those gains,

and you do not get the significant hiccups that happened with the first two implementations.

Ms. FOXX. Mr. Chairman, thank you. I do want to follow up with our witnesses, particularly on the Post Office.

Chairman COMER. Absolutely.

Ms. FOXX. It affects every American, and it is very critical to us. Thank you very much.

Chairman COMER. Absolutely.

Very good. The Chair recognizes Ms. Norton from Washington, DC.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. For this year's high risk update, the Government Accountability Office found that inadequate staffing and skills gaps contributed to more than half of the Nation's highest risk challenges. Mr. Dodaro, why are Federal workers such an important part of the equation in tackling high-risk areas?

Mr. DODARO. Having the right numbers of staff with the right skills is very essential. VA healthcare is on the high risk for not providing timely and quality healthcare. There is a real shortage of mental health providers. We have veterans that need suicide care, for example. Last I checked, there were 17 veterans a day committing suicide, so we need well-qualified mental health providers just in that area alone. You need guards that are well qualified at the Bureau of Prisons. You need good people managing our nuclear weapons complex, security experts, et cetera. You need software engineers at DoD, and I could go on and on. So, these areas—and we have had strategic human capital across the Federal Government on our High Risk List since 2001.

I have been very concerned about the Federal workforce does not have the proper skills that are needed to address many of these important areas that are providing critical services to the American people and at the heart of providing public safety. For example, there are not enough inspectors at FDA to inspect foreign drug manufacturers. They only have 22 percent of the manufacturers, yet most of our drugs now come from foreign manufacturers in China and India and other countries, and we are not inspecting them the way we should.

Our food supply, 15 percent imported, but in some categories, like seafood, it is over 80 percent, fresh fruits and vegetables over half, and we do not have enough inspections being done on our food supplies either. EPA is not doing enough assessments to assess toxic chemicals before they are introduced into society. So, these are reasons that we have this issue on the High Risk List because they do not have the right people and enough skills in order to execute their mission to protect the American people.

Ms. NORTON. Well, unfortunately, Elon Musk and the Department of Government Efficiency missed the memo on when they came to power and began terrorizing the Federal workers that serve the American people day in and day out. And let us not forget that a third of these Federal workers are veterans. Instead of focusing their efforts on recruiting and retaining talented people to put their skills to work, solving the Nation's challenges, Elon Musk offered an illegal scam buyout to millions of Federal employees. That will only make the government staffing challenges worse. And

last Saturday, he was at it again, threatening on social media that all Federal workers would lose their jobs if they failed to reply to an email and report what they did last week.

Mr. Dodaro, is it a best management practice to throw around indiscriminate threats of mass firings, regardless of job duties and mission needs?

Mr. DODARO. Yes, I would not consider it a best practice, but I have spent most of my career, decades, butting heads with the bureaucracies across the government. There is a need for change, but how you do it matters, and going about it in the way that is being done now can cause some short-term problems for the government because it can create other vulnerabilities, unintended vulnerabilities. The way I have suggested in the past that this be done, is the government figure out what functions it does not want to do anymore, then you can deal with the people in those functions or ones that do not have the skills that you need anymore. But it should be done in a respectful way, and it should be done also in a way that does not hurt the Federal Government in the long term.

We need people to be coming into government. Whatever any administration decides to do with their policies and what they want the government to do, at the end of the day, they are going to need good people to be able to do it, and not enough younger people have been coming into the government with the kind of skills that are needed going forward. So, you have to be careful that you do not disincentivize people to want to give public service because public service is important to implementing any policy initiative by any administration, no matter what the policy is. I am agnostic on the policy, that is for elected officials, but I have seen good policies that do not get implemented effectively because you do not have the right people.

Chairman COMER. Very good. The gentlelady's time has expired. The Chair recognizes Mr. Higgins from Louisiana.

Mr. HIGGINS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Dodaro, thank you for your service. What a very impressive record, good sir, and you are a unique individual to have been able to make it through so many significant changes in the executive branch and in Congress. So, we thank you for your service, and I mean that.

I would like to dig into two areas in my brief 5 minutes with you, sir. One will be the Department of Defense, but before we get there, I like to talk to you more about the United States Postal Service. You mentioned that Congress should clearly identify to the United States Postal Service what we need, what we expect, and I would ask you, did we not do that in 1970 with the Postal Reorganization Act? When the Postal Service was reformed and redefined as an independent Agency and allowed great autonomy and independence from Congress, they were essentially, and I am simplifying here, and I ask you to correct me if I am wrong, good sir. But essentially, the Post Office was given great autonomy and the ability to run itself, set its own fees and the price of stamps, and establish its own financial conduct within the Postal Service. It was essentially set up as a government-owned corporation. And part of that deal, the 1970 law, required performance to deliver for the American people and a net neutral fiscal performance or a break-even fiscal performance. So, I would say that the United States



Postal Service has failed to comply with existing law, but perhaps I am oversimplifying that, and I yield to the gentleman. Would you please respond?

Mr. DODARO. Yes, sure. Absolutely. Fundamentally, structurally, your description is sound, and it was intended for the Postal Service to operate like a private entity, all right, until you run into situations where, if you are a private entity, this Postal Service facility, we want to close this Post Office in this rural area.

Mr. HIGGINS. If the gentleman will yield for a question to his comment here?

Mr. DODARO. Sure.

Mr. HIGGINS. But there was nothing in the 1970 law that prohibited the manifestation of private competition, so any reasonable corporate structure—

Mr. DODARO. Right.

Mr. HIGGINS [continuing]. Would have anticipated the manifestation of private competition. So, I would say that the Post Office was never insulated from the impact of potential private competition, nor are they at this time right now. So, why would we give them the autonomy of corporate structure without the responsibility to perform within the reasonable guidelines of corporate structure, including consideration of private competition? And I yield back to the gentleman.

Mr. DODARO. Yes. Well, there are certain areas they have competition in and certain areas they are a monopoly, First Class Mail being a classic example of the monopoly. All I am saying is that over time, as they moved to exercise their autonomy, there were certain things that Congress balked at. Closing of postal facilities was one. Moving to 5-day delivery and packages on 6 days as opposed to 6-day delivery, Congress balked on. And so that is the type of thing that I think we need to negotiate around those particular things that a private sector entity would do, but there is not an appetite for the type of changes that would occur. I will ask my expert to add on.

Mr. HIGGINS. Would you concur, and it will be my final point, and then please answer. Like, how would you assess the USPS performance regarding their mandate by law to break even for decades they have failed?

Mr. MARRONI. They are not self-sustaining. They have an unsustainable business model, which is why there needs to be a definition of what level of service going forward, as Mr. Dodaro was saying, and also some figuring out of how is the Postal Service, with those services, going to support it? Because right now, they are not financially self-sufficient. They are supposed to be.

Mr. DODARO. First Class Mail is not coming back. I mean, that is their most profitable area, is First Class Mail. It is not coming back due to email and other electronic changes, and they have not been able to cut costs fast enough to meet these services. And so, absent some additional compromise between Congress on delivery and perhaps some contribution to them or a different model for what they have. Right now, the model is not going to work, and eventually, what is going to happen is that in 5 years or so, their money that they have to pay post-retirement healthcare benefits is going to run out.

Mr. HIGGINS. It is unsustainable. Words of wisdom. Mr. Chairman, my time has expired. I yield.

Chairman COMER. Thank you. The Chair recognizes Mr. Lynch from Massachusetts.

Mr. LYNCH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Dodaro, good to see you. They tell me that you have testified over 220 times. I think Mr. Connolly and I have been there for most of them, and I just want to say how grateful I am, on behalf of the American taxpayer, for your good work. I can say that throughout your time here, you have been honest and fastidious with your reports and thorough. I would say that you have been strictly nonpartisan throughout your time, and that has been helpful as well during some tough issues. Just the fact that you are a straight shooter has helped us with our work on our end. I think, honestly, you have been a shining example of what a Federal employee, a Federal worker, and a government taxpayer watchdog should be, and so I wish you well. I am sorry that you are leaving because we need you now more than ever. I am just hoping that a little bit of Gene Dodaro rubbed off on those people sitting behind you, and I think that may be the case.

Mr. Chairman, I ask unanimous consent to submit for the record a report of the Inspector General of the Veterans Affairs Administration: "The OIG Determination of Severe Occupational Staffing Shortages at the VA, Fiscal Year 2024."

Chairman COMER. Without objection, so ordered.

Mr. LYNCH. So, Gene, if you would, we had a report that was filed by Mike Missal, who was the Inspector General for the VA until he was fired by President Trump a little about, I do not know, maybe 3 weeks ago. Anyway, he reported that the VA Health Administration, which cares for more than 9 million veterans in 1,400 healthcare facilities and 170 VA medical centers, was experiencing severe occupational staffing shortages of about 3,000 people—2,959 people—with over 82 percent of the facilities reporting severe shortages of medical officers and nurses. So, the nurses are like the Marine Corps of our health system, and especially at the VA, they do it all. Doctors take the credit, but the nurses do the work. And what did President Trump do? And Elon Musk came in and fired another thousand. That was right when they came in, which included healthcare workers, employees who process benefit claims, workers who staff the VA suicide crisis line, with record suicides among veterans. And then just yesterday, the President went back and fired an additional 1,400, so now we are down 5,400 employees at the VA. This is something we used to agree on between Republicans and Democrats. Can you offer us an assessment on how these terminations will impact veterans and their families?

Mr. DODARO. We are going to take a look at that because it is on the high-risk area, but it is not going to help the situation. We already had them listed as having shortages in those areas, and they have difficulty retaining people. I am very concerned about mental health and suicide prevention. We are looking at the crisis hotline right now at the request of the Senate. We are due to issue some reports. I will ask Jess Farb to add her views. She is our Managing Director for Healthcare and follows this carefully, but it is a reason to be concerned.

Mr. LYNCH. Yes.

Ms. FARB. Well, Congressman as——

Mr. LYNCH. Gene, you can be a little more forthcoming because you are retiring, so if you want to have at it, let me know what you think—but, ma'am, go ahead. I am sorry.

Ms. FARB. OK. Sure.

Mr. LYNCH. I apologize.

Ms. FARB. So, I would say that, obviously, VA has struggled with just making sure that veterans get timely access to healthcare. And so, not having the right number of people with the right skill sets and the right ability to treat veterans is going to affect what has already been a longstanding issue at the VA in terms of timeliness of care, as we have reported in the past, about how long veterans have waited. So, the people that schedule the appointments are very essential to making sure that veterans are able to get care, both in the VA facilities and in the community.

Mr. LYNCH. Yes. The other thing that worries me is right now, I asked the VA how much of a backlog do you have on claims, cases coming, veterans coming in, especially with the PACT Act. What is the backlog of cases at the VA because it has taken forever for people to get appointments. And they told me they had a backlog today of 250,000 cases at the VA. They just laid off an additional 2,400 people. So, I mean, can you surmise what the impact that is going to create?

Mr. DODARO. Well, it is going to create or make an already bad situation likely worse. VA handling of disability issues is also on the High Risk List. We have had it on the High Risk List for a long time, and there was a point in time, and I hope it is a little better now, but where if you went for an appeal, it takes up to 7 years to get your appeal resolved.

Mr. LYNCH. Exactly.

Mr. DODARO. People would die before they would get a decision on their disability claim area, and the PACT Act did increase their workload. Now, I have not looked specifically at what has happened, but we will as part of our work, but I know the situation was not good to begin with.

Mr. LYNCH. All right. Thank you. Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair, for your indulgence, and thank you, Mr. Dodaro.

Ms. MACE. [Presiding.] And generosity.

Mr. LYNCH. Generosity, yes, and indulgence.

Ms. MACE. Uh-huh. OK. Thank you. I will now recognize myself for 5 minutes.

Thank you, Comptroller General Dorado, for being with us today, and I apologize for you having to bear witness to the tantrums that unfolded in this Committee earlier today. The Oversight Committee has convened today to discuss something throwing the left into a tailspin, spending more time protesting and disrupting official proceedings than legislating, all because we are talking about cutting waste, fraud, and abuse and government mismanagement.

For decades, this was not a partisan issue. You know who championed cutting back on waste, fraud, and abuse? No other than President Obama and Joe Biden. In 2011, Obama signed Executive Order 13576 to create a Government Accountability and Transparency Board, under Joe Biden's watch, to root out waste, to root

out fraud, and to root out abuse in Federal agencies. Joe Biden himself even admitted back then, “Cutting waste, fraud, and abuse has been something Washington has talked about for decades, but now, more than ever, what the American people need is action.” But now the left has done a complete 180, claiming cutting waste, fraud, and abuse is fascist. They say it is a threat to democracy. They even say our Nation’s chief executive should not be allowed to direct or control the executive branch, or even ask an unelected bureaucrat who works for him what they did at work last week. We just want to know what are the top five things you did at the office. You should know in about 5 minutes, and if you cannot answer that question, you probably should not be employed by the Federal Government or any company or organization that would never hire you.

Their disruption has nothing to do with policy and everything to do with Trump derangement syndrome, and I fear that their disruption is pathological. It is about their need to oppose anything tied to President Trump. They would rather protect bloated bureaucracy and light our tax dollars on fire than admit he was right. So, I will repeat, they have Trump derangement syndrome, and I fear this is terminal.

Now, turning to an issue of great importance to me, as Chairwoman of the Cybersecurity, Information Technology, and Government Innovation Subcommittee. Mr. Dodaro, the 2025 High Risk List highlights serious failures in Federal cybersecurity and technology modernization, as you are, I am sure, fully aware. Federal agencies spend billions of dollars a year on software without a comprehensive or detailed understanding of what they are purchasing and how it compares to what they are already paying for. In other words, a lot of duplication. GAO has reported without improvements to IT portfolio and investment reviews, saying the Federal Government will likely continue to expand resources and IT investments that do not meet the needs of the government or the public. What steps should agencies take right now to actually understand the software they are buying instead of just throwing taxpayer dollars at it hoping for the best? What is your advice?

Mr. DODARO. Yes. I am going to turn to Carol Harris, who is our Director in Information Technology, and she can enumerate for you.

Ms. MACE. Terrific.

Ms. HARRIS. Thank you for the question. So, a number of things that can be done. First of all, with regard to IT management, I mean, we have a major issue where we have \$100 billion annually going to the IT budget across the Federal Government. Eighty percent of that money is going toward sustaining old systems, so we have to tackle legacy issues.

Ms. MACE. How old are some of these systems?

Ms. HARRIS. Some of these systems range up to even like 50 years old, so they are old and they need to be——

Ms. MACE. These are the legacy systems, right, the real old technology?

Ms. HARRIS. Correct. These are the legacy systems.

Ms. MACE. What kind of technology were they coded with?

Ms. HARRIS. With COBOL, for example, and other antiquated computer languages. And that is part of the issue, where now for these particular systems, the government is having a difficult time finding staff and knowledgeable people to actually work on these programs, because these computer languages are out of date.

Ms. MACE. After I taught myself HTML in college, because there were not college classes on how to code HTML. I consider it a real programming language—some people may not—but I learned COBOL, it was back in 1999. I worked on Y2K stuff, and, I mean, that was almost 26 years ago, 27 years ago, when I did that. The fact that we are still using it decades later. Real quickly, I only have 45 seconds left. What are some of the security and operational risks resulting from the last Administration's failure to review and manage Federal Government IT?

Ms. HARRIS. Well, when we take a look at those legacy systems, for example, because we are continuing to manage them, there are cybersecurity vulnerabilities associated with those, as well as the staffing challenges as well as just increased costs associated with maintaining these. So, the security vulnerabilities in maintaining these old systems are very real, and we have to address them, and we have made multiple recommendations. We have 700 recommendations that are still open that need to be addressed immediately.

Ms. MACE. And thank you both for your time today. I will yield back. I will now recognize Mr. Khanna for 5 minutes.

Mr. KHANNA. Thank you, Madam Chair. First, I wanted to comment on the earlier debate where Representative Grothman and Representative Greene said that some of these cuts that Musk and DOGE are making are good and making our country more efficient. And our side said, no, there are Federal workers who are being fired without cause and they are not the poor performers that they are. And I guess my question for the Chair, and I know Chair Comer is not here, is, why not have Elon Musk come before this Committee and make the case? I mean, why not have Representative Greene ask him to explain why she thinks the situation is good and have the confidence to explain that to the American public? And we can ask him questions about where we think that he has violated the law, but I do not understand what the reluctance is to have Mr. Musk come here. If you are so confident on your side that what he is doing is in the interest of the American people, why not have speech and have him here? And I hope that the Chair will consider that request.

Mr. Dodaro, I have great respect for you, and I have great respect for your service, but with due respect, this is not a time for caution in speaking out. Your predecessor, Elmer Staats, took Gerald Ford to court because Ford was not willing to comply with the Impoundment Act. This was not a decision that she made, that Staats made, but lawyers, Staats spoke out. And I want to ask you whether what you think the President is doing in pausing these payments automatically is a violation of the Impoundment Act.

Mr. DODARO. Yes, we are looking at that issue. We have already sent letters to the Administration asking them to explain their legal position to us, and we will be making rulings as to whether or not these issues violated the Impoundment Control Act or not.

Mr. KHANNA. When will you be making that?

Mr. DODARO. As soon as we can get the information from the Administration. We are following the court cases as well, so we are evaluating the court filings.

Mr. KHANNA. What if they refuse to give you the information?

Mr. DODARO. Well, we have the information that is available through the court filings of what their legal positions are for many of these issues that are subject to the litigation.

Mr. KHANNA. Would you say within 45 days, because that is the rescission. I mean, they have about 45 days. I mean, I think the automatic payments is a violation in itself.

Mr. DODARO. Well, yes, we are going to make these decisions as fast as possible. I fully intend to carry out our responsibilities under the Impoundment Control Act expeditiously and thoroughly.

Mr. KHANNA. But how about by May 1?

Mr. DODARO. I will check with my attorney, is what the people always say, but I will check. I will let you know. Yes, I am going to do it as quickly as we can, but we need to be careful and thorough because the next step for us is to go to court ourselves. I mean, under the Impoundment Control Act, if we say there is an impoundment, the money is not released within a certain period of time, we have to go to court.

Mr. KHANNA. And are you prepared to do that?

Mr. DODARO. Yes, yes, but I need to be prepared and be careful, and because I want to go there, I want to win, all right? So, we are going to do this as fast and as thoroughly as we can. We have a good track record on this area, I have a good group of attorneys, and we are going to do a thorough job.

Mr. KHANNA. So, can the American people be assured that if there are violations of the Impoundment Act in the automatic pause or in the cuts, that you will make sure that you prosecute that or take it to court and are confident that you will prevail?

Mr. DODARO. I can be confident that I will take it to its full closure. I am not going to predict what the court is going to say. I know better than that, but they have their own independent decision-making. They are making some decisions right now on these very topics, but I know and I am confident I can give the American people assurance, we will carry out our responsibilities.

Mr. KHANNA. But to all the constituents who are saying we are not doing enough, these things are getting paused, there are cuts that are happening, you can assure them that you are moving as expeditiously and taking this as seriously, that this is your top priority in making sure that you are going to uphold the Impoundment Act and take aggressive action if it is violated.

Mr. DODARO. Yes, absolutely, absolutely. I have been talking about this as soon as things started to unfold. We sent our letters over. This is very important. Now, there are a lot of factors that go into making these decisions. One is how specific Congress was in the appropriation law to begin with. We need to take that into account. This year, we are in a continuing resolution stage, so you do not have a lot of specifics for this fiscal year, whether it is now year money or not your money. There are some pauses for programmatic review. So, there are a lot of details and a lot of legal

considerations to sort through, but this is a high priority for us, and we are going to execute our responsibilities.

Mr. KHANNA. I appreciate it.

Ms. MACE. All right. I will now recognize Mr. Biggs for 5 minutes.

Mr. BIGGS. Thank you so much. It is good to see you again. Welcome back. I have a question for you with regard to the Impoundment Act. Let us say Congress appropriates \$1, but the Administration finds a way to do the same task that that dollar is supposed to go for, for 75 cents. You do not think that they are violating the Impoundment Act if they do not spend \$1, the full dollar, do you?

Mr. DODARO. Well, that is a hypothetical question. I would like to see the Federal Government spend \$1 on something. I do not think that that is going to happen, but the theory behind your question is, did they spend everything that Congress intended them to spend, and if they do not, that there is nothing wrong with that. The Impoundment Act provides a remedy for the President to submit a rescission proposal to the Congress, and the Congress has 45 days to approve it. If they do not, then they agree——

Mr. BIGGS. Right, but the process can be cumbersome is the point, then there needs to be the efficiency by doing the Rescission Act. I do not take all the time for that.

Mr. DODARO. Yes, but there is a process, yes.

Mr. BIGGS. So, in your written testimony and in your report, you say that the areas on the High Risk List include programs that represented about 80 percent of the total governmentwide reported improper payment estimate for Fiscal Year 2023. Agencies in the Department of Treasury are taking some steps to address this issue. Much more needs to be done to control billions of dollars in overpayments and prevent fraud. For example, CMS should improve the timeliness of audits to identify and recover improper payments. You also make clear that while congressional action may be necessary to eliminate issues and that interagency coordination is needed, no progress has been made on improving Medicaid program integrity since it was added in 2023.

In 2023, GAO designated the unemployment insurance system as high-risk because “unemployment insurance is administrative and program integrity challenges pose significant risk to service delivery and expose the system to significant financial losses.” Similarly, GAO has “designated Medicare as a high-risk program due to its size, complexity, effect on the Federal budget, and susceptibility to improper payments.” Further, the significant amount of Medicaid improper payments is a principal reason that GAO included Medicaid program integrity on its 2023 High Risk List as well. In Fiscal Year 2023, the estimated amount of improper payments for Medicaid reached approximately \$50.3 billion. Where is all that money going?

Mr. DODARO. Well, it is going to the wrong places. It is not quite clear. The estimates here are made based upon sampling procedures, so it is not an enumeration of all the payments. It is just for those that are in the sample that where they make the payment, they try to recover the money. For other things, it is just an estimate of statistically——

Mr. BIGGS. Yes. So, you are basing it on statistical inflation, right?

Mr. DODARO. Right.

Mr. BIGGS. So, it is impossible for you to tell how much of that is due to fraud?

Mr. DODARO. That is correct, although we have made recommendations. We did a fraud estimate.

Mr. BIGGS. And what is your fraud estimate?

Mr. DODARO. Our fraud estimate from 2018 to 2022, that 5-year period, we estimated annual losses to fraud to be between \$233 billion and \$521 billion. So, that period covered both before the pandemic and during the pandemic, which had, in my view, epic fraud during the pandemic.

Mr. BIGGS. Right. Right. Federal Medicaid spending was over \$575 billion in Fiscal Year 2023 and is expected to increase over the next decade. What is needed to better manage the program?

Mr. DODARO. You said Medicaid or Medicare? I am sorry.

Mr. BIGGS. Medicaid.

Mr. DODARO. Medicaid.

Mr. BIGGS. Yes.

Mr. DODARO. No. 1 is you need to have better control over managed care portion of Medicaid. The estimates on improper payments for Medicaid only, really, are based upon the fee-for-service portion, which is less than half of the payments now, and we have encouraged much more aggressive fashion in looking at the managed care portion. They have increased the number of audits. They are starting to find more problems, so that is No. 1.

Mr. BIGGS. OK. So, I got to move on—

Mr. DODARO. All right.

Mr. BIGGS [continuing]. Because there is just too much here—

Mr. DODARO. OK.

Mr. BIGGS [continuing]. Because you also noted that DoD has major problems as well. And so, I have introduced, once again, the Audit the Pentagon Act, which aims to increase transparency and accountability in the defense budget and imposing financial consequences, because have they ever had a clean bill of health on an audit?

Mr. DODARO. Not for the overall Department. There are some components, and I am very pleased, the last 2 years, the Marine Corps has got an unmodified clean opinion. The other services, not so much yet. Now, I noted that Secretary Hegseth has made this a priority. I am going to be communicating with him, meeting with him, to say, if you want to do this, here are the things that need to be done in order to achieve an unmodified opinion for the whole Department.

Mr. BIGGS. And I am sorry that we are out of time because I would like to hear all your Medicaid remedies as well as your DoD remedies, but I have to yield back. Thank you.

Ms. MACE. I will now recognize Ms. Stansbury for 5 minutes.

Ms. STANSBURY. Thank you, Madam Chair. Mr. Dodaro, thank you so much for being here today, and also congratulations on your soon-to-be retirement. Thank you for your service to our country.

I want to just take a couple of minutes to talk about what this hearing actually is, which is to talk about the High Risk List. I am



a former OMB'er, and we use GAO's reports at OMB to actually implement change across the Federal Government. And so, I am very acquainted with all the work of your staff. Thank you for everything that you do.

So, I want to just clarify for folks who are watching at home, the Government Accountability Office is a nonpartisan government Agency. It is part of Congress. It is part of the legislative branch. And your job is to audit, evaluate, investigate, and to provide recommendations as a congressional watchdog, both to Congress and to the executive branch, correct?

Mr. DODARO. That is correct.

Ms. STANSBURY. And what you do every year as part of your work is produce this High Risk List. And this year, the one you are presenting to us today includes 38 areas that you have identified that, as you just said in your testimony, would save money, help ensure the health and safety of the American public, and help to build trust in our Federal agencies. And I want to briefly talk about some of the things that appear on this list.

In fact, as you mentioned in your testimony, the first thing on here is the improvement of delivery of Federal disaster assistance. That is FEMA. Second is improvements in surface transportation. We have got HHS and Public Health Services, Department of the Bureau of Prison improvements. There is a bunch of DoD recommendations here about improving contracting and business practices, improving Small Business Administration, resolving Federal housing finance issues through HUD, EPA issues around environmental liability. There is National Nuclear Security on here; enforcing tax laws, including the IRS; improving certain FDA and DOI programs; improving VA service; CMS programs; and also the regulation of the financial regulatory system. And all of these things really are about the transformation of how the Federal Government provides services. And I heard you just say to Mr. Lynch as well as to Mr. Khanna, that with respect to some of the specific programs that were asked about, that the just indiscriminate elimination of funding and staffing for these programs would not only fail to actually resolve the issues that you guys have identified, but potentially make them worse. Is that correct?

Mr. DODARO. That is a possibility.

Ms. STANSBURY. Yes. So, obviously, there has been a lot of conversation today in this Committee about the actions that are being taken pursuant to DOGE by Elon Musk and these indiscriminate funding freezes that are happening, the dismantling of these programs, the hacking of Federal data, and the mass firings, and we know that there is more that are planned for this week. But unfortunately, we do not exactly know what Elon Musk has actually been up to because he wo not come to this Committee, and, in fact, our Republican colleagues have shielded him from having to appear. But he did appear over the weekend at CPAC at their political action event that was held here in the Washington area.

[Poster.]

Ms. STANSBURY. And here he is. He was wielding a chainsaw with the Argentinian leader. And I will just say, as somebody who grew up working construction, I know what two dudes who do not know what to do with the chainsaw look like. But it is also obvious

that these guys actually do not also know how to manage a Federal Government and how to address high-risk areas where we actually do need to address issues of waste, fraud, and abuse. And in fact, because I worked at OMB, I know that not only are they not addressing these issues, they are looting the Federal Government and breaking the law daily. And this recklessness has really severe consequences, as was just outlined by some of the other commentary already, but I want to know some of the human impacts.

In my district—I was just home this weekend—we heard from tribal college teachers who were fired, VA employees who are not able to help support the veterans that they work with, a colleague of mine who was told this week that his PTSD counseling would be canceled. Tribal justice programs that pay for cops had their funding frozen. I mean, the reality is, is that this guy right here, who is an unelected billionaire, is literally looting the Federal Government right now, and he has no idea what he is doing. He is not even addressing the fundamental problems that have been identified by our nonpartisan watchdog. So, I want to be clear also that the Republicans, as of today, just we took a break right before this Committee went and voted on a rule to advance a tax package that would make these cuts permanent to pay for a permanent tax break for billionaires. So, what these guys are up to is not about government efficiency. It is about looting the American people in the Treasury to pay for billionaire tax cuts. With that, I yield back.

Ms. MACE. OK. I will now recognize Mr. Cloud for 5 minutes.

Mr. CLOUD. Thank you, Chairwoman, and thank you, Commissioner, for being here. Our country, of course, is \$36 trillion in debt. The American people, if we were to ask them, and we have in the previous election, if we are to ask them if we thought the Federal Government was working for them, they would say, no, it seems like we are working for the Federal Government. Yet, we continue to hear over and over from the left that people who are coming in and doing things differently do not know how to run the government. And the argument seems to be like, well, we need people who know how to do what we have been doing, even though it has continually led to failure.

Now I have, since being a new Member here, have appreciated you coming before this Committee because for the last several years, I felt like you were maybe the best good-faith effort in helping us find waste, fraud, and abuse. The last several weeks have been very interesting as new technology tools have been brought to the table. And I find myself kind of like little quagmire here in the sense, like, I have always thought it odd that we begin counting waste, fraud, and abuse at a billion dollars, even though it is the best good-faith effort we have had. I have said a number of times, like, your report should probably be our agenda as a committee or, certainly, somebody should be doing it. In the last few weeks, so, we have seen a handful of very young people with some very specific technical skills come and seem to expose a lot that we have not been able to see through the Government Accountability Office, so we have a lot of new information at our disposal when it comes to the very specific things that we are seeing.

I wanted to touch on the report because, while I do think that you do good work, I was also concerned about some of the things

that I do see in the report and maybe some of the lenses that things are being interpreted through. One, for example, interest payments, and what we are paying on interest is not even mentioned, and yet it is superseding our military spending. One of the things you mentioned is strategic human capital, and all the solutions to address it have to do with basically more government, OK? We need more programs, and more training, and more—and it continues to fall into this thing that we see continually throughout the bureaucracy where the answer to failed government is more government. And sometimes that can be the case, but there is nothing addressing the fact that it takes 2 years to fire a bad employee.

We could talk about the State Department recently, a lot to come out about USAID and transgender operas overseas, and those kind of things. I did not see, and again, it is 300 pages. I might have missed it, but I did not see very much addressing the State Department. And then there was a lot concerning climate stuff, specifically when it came to connecting disaster relief to climate activity, manmade carbon, carbon creation. Connecting that to hurricanes is, at best, debatable science right now, yet the report acts as if it is established, long-held science and makes a number of recommendations for that. On the other hand, it says that we need to look at oil and gas revenues, and you actually mentioned it earlier that maybe we need more. But we are talking about \$15 billion there and maybe, what, maybe there is 10 percent we are not getting. So, we are talking \$1 billion to \$5 billion, but yet on the EV mandates, we lost \$7.5 billion dollars. That is not addressed in the report as well. So, I have some concerns about whether—we talk about it being nonpartisan. I think that is your best intention, but at the same time, with a multi-thousand people on staff, I have some concerns about the true nonpartisan nature of the report.

I do want to give you some time to address something because a lot has come up about Medicaid recently. There is a lot of fearmongering, chicken little stories, the sky is falling if we do or touch anything in Medicaid. Meanwhile, we know that if we are going to correct course on the fiscal course of our Nation, we have to address the mandatory side of things. But you give a number of things touching Medicaid that we can do, that do not actually address the people that Medicaid was affected for. In other words, we are not taking disabled people off Medicaid, where children, their needs are still being met. Could you talk about some of those ways that we can find savings for the American people do apply there?

Mr. DODARO. Yes, before I get to Medicaid, though, let me just touch on some of the things you talk about. First, on an interest on the debt, I issued a special report on the fiscal health of the Federal Government, basically saying it is on an unsustainable long-term fiscal path. I specifically call out the increase in interest on the debt, call for a plan to put the Federal Government on a more sustainable fiscal path, point out the main cost drivers, which are healthcare, demographics, and growth in interest on the debt.

Mr. CLOUD. Thank you.

Mr. DODARO. And I have also made recommendations for about a decade to try to change the approach to setting the debt ceiling, which does nothing to control the debt.

On the issue on staffing, we are not saying you need more government. We are saying Congress and the Administration said this is what we want to do, and what we are saying is, OK, you do not have the people in order to accomplish what Congress has set in statute and the Administration's priorities are. So, we are not determining the size and scope of government. That is up to the elected officials. We are saying, however you define it, it is not being implemented properly. Last on the climate issue—

Mr. CLOUD. On that point, with the change of policy that we are seeing from the Trump Administration, could we expect this report to deal with climate issues differently and oil and gas issues differently?

Mr. DODARO. Well, yes, and the climate issue, I want to be clear on that. Our only focus on the climate issue is not on what is causing it, what has changed. It is on the fiscal exposure to the Federal Government, and that is the Federal Government as an insurer. Our Flood Insurance Program is not actuarially sound. The Flood Insurance Program owes \$22.5 billion to the Treasury after the Congress has already forgiven \$17 billion. The Defense Department has been under instructions from the Congress to look at its impact on its installations domestically and internationally. The agriculture crop insurance has more than doubled over a period of time. Wildfires have expanded, and the Federal Government is fiscally exposed.

So, all we are saying is, as the fiscal guardians of the Federal Government, it is costing a lot more money, and it would be better to focus on resilience and to try to build things in up front. We are not commenting on the science of it or whatever on that area. Let me ask my colleague to talk about Medicaid because we have a lot of good suggestions.

Ms. FARB. I will try to be quick. So, we have over 65 recommendations, but there are three key ones that kind of get at program integrity in the Medicaid program, to your point, Congressman. So, looking at the budget neutrality of Medicaid demonstrations and making sure that CMS is really clear about what that means. When states experiment, we want to make sure that we are not spending more than we otherwise would have. Looking at the data behind some of the non-Federal share of payments in Medicaid. So, understanding state-directed payments to manage care plans and understanding sort of provider taxes and other things that states use to help finance their share. And then leveraging the findings of work that they can be doing with state auditors, we have made a lot of points about this. Just using the trends in the findings that the state auditors find through their audits to inform their own oversight of the program, so all areas directed at program integrity activities.

Mr. CLOUD. Thank you. Appreciate your work.

Chairman COMER. [Presiding] The Chair recognizes—let me, for a second time—then go to Mr. Garcia—and we can follow up with that.

Mr. DODARO. Yes. I was just going to say, I will submit the fiscal health report for the record for the Committee.

Chairman COMER. OK. Thank you. The Chair recognizes Mr. Garcia.

Mr. GARCIA. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I do want to appreciate the work of the GAO. I think there is an incredible work that happens there, and, of course, a lot of uncovering of waste, fraud, and abuse happens. Mr. Dodaro, I want to thank you for your important testimony. I agree there is absolutely a responsibility for us to look at ways of reducing the deficit, to actually make government more efficient. And I think that, while I served as Mayor before coming to this Committee, we worked really hard with our auditor, with our state auditor, to do just that, and so thank you for being here.

So, Mr. Dodaro, I do have some simple yes or no questions for you, which I think are important. Mr. Dodaro, do you believe that the recently firing of promoted Federal workers who are, therefore, on probationary status does anything to solve the important problems that you have raised today? Yes or no.

Mr. DODARO. Well, I agreed to, well, sworn to tell the whole truth, nothing but the truth, and the whole truth sometimes does not get reduced to a yes or no answer. And so, in that case, I think it is important to look at what functions were being provided and what was done in those cases, but it is important that the rules be followed, that there are certain personnel requirements and rules—

Mr. GARCIA. Would you say yes or no?

Mr. DODARO. The question was whether it would solve any of the problems that we identified on the High Risk List, and the answer to that question would be, it is doubtful.

Mr. GARCIA. Exactly, and I agree with you. I agree it would be a “no.” Now, what about has the GAO recommendation ever included firing FAA aircraft safety inspectors who repair air traffic control facilities?

Mr. DODARO. No.

Mr. GARCIA. No. I agree. Has the GAO ever made any recommendation on firing USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service workers who are tracking the bird flu outbreak or other outbreaks in poultry or cattle?

Mr. DODARO. I do not believe so, no.

Mr. GARCIA. Thank you. That is a “no.” Has the GAO recommended firing National Nuclear Security Administration workers who oversee our Nation’s nuclear stockpile?

Mr. DODARO. No.

Mr. GARCIA. What about firing the only locksmith at Yosemite National Park? Has the GAO ever recommended that?

Mr. DODARO. I am not sure we have ever run into the locksmith at the park.

Mr. GARCIA. And the answer to that is you have not.

Mr. DODARO. Right.

Mr. GARCIA. And so, I thank you for that because, of course, none of these have ever actually aligned with any of the recommendations that have come out of your office, but yet, they are clearly huge priorities for Elon Musk and his DOGE team. It obviously is a crusade against the government, against actually helping people across this country, and it is the hypocrisy that we are seeing today, and there are committees that I think is quite disturbing to House Democrats.

Now, Republican colleagues have spent a lot of time warning about unsustainable deficits. We know that today there is a huge vote, of course, we know, on a budget. Their budget version and bill has a \$4.5 trillion tax cut giveaway, essentially, when we should be asking the super-rich to actually pay more, and at the center of this we know is a huge cut to Medicaid. They are targeting at least \$880 billion, maybe more, in Medicaid cuts. Now, in my district alone, we have 300,000 people that are dependent on Medicaid, approximately, which is a huge amount of the community and the district. Now, nationally, 80 million people we know are on Medicaid, but it actually impacts every single district across the country, whether you are talking about Kentucky's 1st District, where 26.5 percent of the population there, 155,000 people, are dependent on Medicaid; whether it is in Ohio's 4th District, over 100,000 people depend on Medicaid, it is 15 percent of the population; whether it is in the Louisiana 3rd District, 196,000, almost 200,000 people dependent on Medicaid; or in in Georgia's 14th District, where 109,000 people, or 16 percent of the population, are dependent on Medicaid.

We know that Medicaid saves lives. These are huge numbers of people. These are folks that are colleagues of ours and the other side of the aisle, that are Members also of this Committee, and that oftentimes are here at this Committee. So, this actually has an impact to our constituents. It means elderly and disabled people will not get their healthcare, their long-term care. It actually impacts people that have real substance abuse issues.

And one other thing that people do not realize about Medicaid, there is a lot of conversation in this country about births and encouraging people to have more children. Medicaid covers 41 percent of all births in our country. Forty-one percent of U.S. births were paid for by Medicaid. And so, if this is really about supporting families and about expanding families, we should also be talking about supporting and expanding Medicaid coverage for Americans. We should be providing more coverage, not less.

And so, with that, I want to thank you again for your work, and I am hopeful that enough Republicans in today's vote will do the right thing and avoid these Medicaid cuts. With that I yield back.

Chairman Comer. The gentleman yields back. The Chair recognizes Ms. Greene.

Ms. GREENE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for being here today, Mr. Dodaro, and congratulations on your upcoming retirement.

For the past 4 years, Democrats have been in control of basically all government functions for the American people. We are at \$36 trillion in debt, and the lies are getting to be outrageous. Just listen to one of my colleagues talk about Medicaid. The truth is for people watching at home, your Medicaid benefits cannot get cut unless the Governor of your state and the state cuts your benefits. That is the real truth. Republicans here in Washington, here in Congress, we are not taking away anyone's Medicaid benefits. As a matter of fact, we are trying to cut out improper payments. We are trying to cut out fraud.

At my DOGE Subcommittee, I had a hearing just 2 weeks ago where we talked about improper payments. It is unbelievable, and

I am sure you would agree, Mr. Dodaro, that the amount of money that is being paid to dead people, to foreigners, to criminals, to terrorists, is amounting in the billions and billions of dollars every single year. That is what Democrats and Republicans should be agreeing on. We should be able to come together and say let us stop this immediately.

Another thing that I find outrageous is that Democrats under the Biden Administration passed \$7.5 billion in spending to build 500,000 electric vehicle charging stations all over the country, whether Americans wanted them or not, but only 8 of these electric vehicle charging stations even got built. I think that should have been in your top 25 list because where is that money? Honestly, where is that money? That is a great question.

Some other things that I would like to bring up to you here is, GAO estimates that total fraud in these programs for unemployment insurance, and you were just talking about it, during the pandemic is at least \$60 billion. Americans all over the country will never forget that Democrats shut our country down, shut our businesses down, people got fired, their churches was closed, all their rights were taken away. And \$60 billion from the Department of Labor, the Department of Labor has still not developed an anti-fraud strategy, even though \$60 billion is missing.

Also, the Medicare Program and scale of Medicare spending is innately high risk, with the program spending an estimated \$1 trillion in 2024. Of that, in Fiscal Year 2024, we saw roughly, I will go back to improper payments again, \$54.3 billion in improper payments, and we have Democrats crying over Elon Musk. Are you kidding me? The American people, the polling is out, 72 percent, Democrats and Republicans, support DOGE. Support it, 72 percent. They are not upset about anything that Elon Musk is doing. As a matter of fact, they are happy. They want all of these improper payments, all of this waste, they want it back.

Now, here is what is really interesting to me. Despite this significant progress made since GAO's 2023 high risk update—thank you for that—USPS remains unable to fund its services and employee obligations. That is outrageous. Private companies have to be able to fund everything they do, but the United States Postal Service still cannot do it. Now, the big one—the big one—the Department of Defense, financial management, first appeared on the High Risk List in 1995. Hey, I graduated from high school in 1992. That is a long time ago now, and it remains on this list, 28 years later. Twenty-eight years later, Congress has not fixed this. The Department of Defense has not fixed this. And last year, the Pentagon, with a budget of around \$850 billion, failed its seventh straight audit. What are we doing? What are we doing? We should be at the most bipartisan time in history where Republicans and Democrats can come together and say the American people's money is being stolen. It is being lost. It is outright treason to treat the American people this way.

Mr. Dodaro, let me ask you this question. I cannot imagine all the things you all have seen in your work. Do you disagree with the effort of DOGE?

Mr. DODARO. There is probably nobody in the government that wants the government to be more efficient and effective than we

do at the GAO, and I do, personally. That is our job to help do that, and we have worked many, many years in order to bring about those changes, so, yes. Now, there are couple of bipartisan things that you touched on that I think you and this Committee could do. One is we have recommended that they make, in order to stop paying dead people, the Social Security master death file is given to Treasury, but only for a 3-year period. They have already saved millions of dollars. Congress needs to make it permanent. You could save hundreds of billions, of millions, of dollars if that is done.

Ms. GREENE. Can I get information from your team afterward?

Mr. DODARO. Absolutely.

Ms. GREENE. OK. That would be great. What about identity verification?

Mr. DODARO. Identity verification needs to be more automated, and we have recommendations for that to occur in the unemployment insurance area. Actually, the unemployment insurance estimate on fraud we made was \$100 billion to \$135 billion.

Ms. GREENE. Wow.

Mr. DODARO. The other thing that could be done on a bipartisan basis is that the statute of limitations to go after the fraudsters needs to be extended from 5 to 10 years. Congress did it for the Paycheck Protection Program, but not for unemployment insurance. It is almost due to expire. So, if Congress does not act soon, some of the fraudsters are likely to get away because they will be outside the statute of limitation. So, those things are really important and I think should be bipartisan.

Ms. GREENE. I agree. I think my time is up. Thank you, Mr. Dodaro.

Chairman COMER. Thank you. And Ranking Member pointed out, we have gone over a little bit on the last two on our side. If someone feels the need to go over, I am keeping up with the time. So, we will make it all work out. The Chair recognizes Ms. Brown.

Ms. BROWN. Thank you. Thank you, Chairman Comer, and thank you to Mr. Dodaro for joining us today. This Administration claims to care about rooting out waste, fraud, and abuse, but the facts tell a very different story, so I just want to set the record straight. On week one, President Trump fired 17 Inspectors General. These are the folks who work on behalf of the people, Republicans and Democrats, regardless of party affiliation or who is in the White House. They are the watchdogs who root out government waste, fraud, and abuse, day in and day out. Last year they identified nearly \$100 billion in potential savings. If Donald Trump and Elon Musk cared about cracking down on waste, they would be talking to these auditors, not firing them right out of the gate.

Meanwhile, the Government Accountability Office provides cost-cutting recommendations that save taxpayers \$40 billion each year. So, if Trump was serious about efficiency, it would focus on implementing the thousands of outstanding GAO recommendations, including the 38 areas on the High Risk List, but that is not what is happening. Instead, Trump created the redundant Department of Government Efficiency, putting his billionaire campaign donor, Elon Musk, who just so happens to be a government contractor, in



charge. That is not efficiency. That is corruption dressed up as reform.

DOGE's records so far? Overstated claims, receipts that do not add up, lies about condoms in Gaza, lies about 130-year-olds on Social Security, an \$8 billion contract that was really \$8 million. Can somebody say "oops?" DOGE claims to have saved \$55 billion. Well, Rupert Murdoch's, *Wall Street Journal* crunched the numbers this weekend and found just \$2.6 billion in savings, mostly from canceled contracts and cuts in research funding for things like Alzheimer's and chronic lung disease, which brings me to my questions. Mr. Dodaro, how does the GAO define "government waste?"

Mr. DODARO. Waste is defined as extravagant spending or something that does not really add any value in terms of the government's overall accomplishment of goals.

Ms. BROWN. Thank you, and based on that definition, would eliminating the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau qualify as cutting waste or making a policy choice?

Mr. DODARO. That is basically a value judgment and a policy choice in order to do that.

Ms. BROWN. Thank you. In my district, a Federal grant to train teachers in underserved urban schools was terminated solely because it was labeled as a DEI initiative. Is this cutting waste or making a policy choice?

Mr. DODARO. Waste to one person is not waste to another person, but these are basically value judgments that are made and based on policy preferences.

Ms. BROWN. In your testimony, you mentioned that 20 of the 38 areas on the High Risk List in part are due to skills gaps or inadequate number of staff. Would indiscriminately firing probationary staff make it more or less likely that government addresses waste, fraud, and abuse?

Mr. DODARO. Yes, I answered this question earlier. I said it was doubtful.

Ms. BROWN. Doubtful. Thank you. In your testimony, it highlights that the gross tax gap, which is the difference between taxes owed and taxes paid on time. Can you remind us what the tax gap was in 2022?

Mr. DODARO. I would have to go back and take a look at what it was in 2022, but it has been about the same as a percent of the economy over time. Even though the numbers have grown as a percent of GDP, it is about the same.

Ms. BROWN. What would that percentage be?

Mr. DODARO. I would have to—

Ms. BROWN. All right. Let me just move on to my next question.

Mr. DODARO. Yes, I will provide that for the record. I have it.

Ms. BROWN. So, I am going to step out on a limb and say it is about \$700 billion a year that American taxpayers are being robbed of, roughly, and that sure sounds like a lot of waste to me. Now, would firing some 6,000 IRS workers lead to more or less of that waste?

Mr. DODARO. Yes, it depends on what their jobs are at the IRS. Basically, they need more revenue agents, they need more training, they need people for customer service. So, you would have to look

at what functions those people do and decide whether or not they are important or not.

Ms. BROWN. Well, thank you. I appreciate that. And let me just clarify, high-income individuals are among the most notorious tax cheats, and these are the same people Republicans want to reward with a \$4.5 trillion tax cut at the expense of Medicaid, veterans benefits, and food assistance for children and seniors, and that is what this is really all about. DOGE is not about saving money, you all. It is about consolidating power and ensuring that the rich get richer. So, from where I sit, it looks like Trump and Elon Musk are not fighting waste. They are just ensuring that the waste benefits the wealthy. And with that, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Chairman COMER. The gentlelady yields back. The Chair recognizes Mr. Perry from Pennsylvania.

Mr. PERRY. Thanks, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Dodaro, thanks. Good to see you again. You know a lot of things about a lot of things, so, I am going to go somewhere where at least it has been bipartisan. And I hope just by talking about it, that does not destroy that, because we got a lot of work to do.

The Federal Government owns about a quarter a million buildings and structures, about 2 billion square feet of office space. A study by your Agency recently indicated 17 of the 24 agencies reviewed used 25 percent or less of their headquarters office space. Even at their high mark, of 24 Federal agencies, none of them use more than 49 percent. We got more than 11,000 acres of old unused buildings, and the American taxpayer, they are forced to pay \$2 billion a year for office space that sits empty. Eighty percent of leases are going to expire in the next 5 years. I do not know if you are looking to take a contractor job after you leave this rat race, but maybe that is something you are interested in.

GAO reported just this year that real property management was downgraded from “met” to “partially met.” Now, I think you are familiar with the thing called the USE IT Act, which we passed out of that committee. Bipartisan, not easy, but bipartisan, and alongside OMB’s benchmark, we would like to remedy the situation of \$2 billion a year for more than 11,000 acres of old, unused office space. I mean, that is more than half the size of Disney World, just like sitting there empty, but we are paying for it. You know a lot of things. What would be your recommendation to Congress and to OPM to speed up the implementation process? As you know, most of these agencies do not want to give any of it up, even though they are not using it, right, but they do not want to give any of it up. So, what do we do, each one, Congress and OMB?

Mr. DODARO. Yes, Dave Marroni is here. He did the study that you referenced. I will let him—

Mr. PERRY. All right.

Mr. DODARO [continuing]. Explain in a minute, but the one thing I would say that Congress needs to do is to make sure that there are lessons learned. Congress tried to expedite this by creating a board, and the board was to identify properties for sale. They had three rounds. It barely made a dent in anything. They were not in sync with OMB. There are no lessons learned. That is why we downgraded them. There is still not a process to dispose of Federal Real Property quickly and expeditiously. And Congress can create

that and set milestones. I think it is very good that you set benchmarks for utilization of the buildings that we keep, but we got to get rid of a lot of buildings.

Mr. PERRY. We have set the benchmarks, right?

Mr. DODARO. Yes.

Mr. PERRY. But we have agencies that cannot meet them or will not meet them or do not meet them, but they still want to hang on to them.

Mr. DODARO. Yes, but you got to get rid of some of the properties, and they could not enumerate.

Mr. MARRONI. Yes. Well, same benchmark is an important point in the law you referenced. There is also, within a year, the measurements requiring OMB and GSA to start notifying agencies if they have extra space, but I think you can do it. Once those measurements are in place, how many people are coming in to these buildings on daily basis, use those measurements to say, OK, we have extra space, and then the agencies need to expeditiously move forward.

OMB has a role there to ensure that they are setting appropriate timeframes for agencies to respond if they are not doing it on their own. Congress has a role in your oversight of the implementation of the USE IT Act. And as the Comptroller General mentioned as well, taking a look at the disposal process for once owned buildings are going into the pipeline to be gotten rid of, looking at ways to shorten it, make it less complicated. We have noted for years that it is a complex, complicated process. It takes too long.

And the reform process, the FASTA process, was an attempt to look at ways to do that. Your legislation has extended the life of FASTA, so it is an opportunity, really, to take lessons, not only on what properties can we dispose of, but how can we do it more quickly because there is a lot of extra space.

Mr. PERRY. So, are you saying it requires more legislation from us regarding the standards and the process? Is that what it requires, or can this be done by the Agency like GSA? Can they do this on their own? And even though we want them to divest, sometimes they do not, and even when we give them a timeline, the timelines keep slipping, so then what?

Mr. MARRONI. So, I think having the data now, as you know from that report for your subcommittee, prior to that, there was not even data on utilization outside of headquarters buildings, very limited to know, so it is hard to tell how much space you need if you are not actually measuring it. That legislation will now require the collection of that data for both owned and leased space throughout the country. That is what is really important, for the agencies to take a look at that data, and OMB to be there to push, to say, OK, if you are extra, if you have more than you need, start getting rid of it.

Mr. PERRY. Would it be an impoundment if OMB just said, look, you have extra, you are not utilizing, we are paying for X and we are not paying for the rest, as a forcing function?

Mr. DODARO. Yes. No, no. What I think needs to be done, there is a Federal building fund. In order to dispose of some of this property, you need to fix it up sometimes and make it available for sale.

Mr. PERRY. We did not get into the backlog of maintenance cost and all of that.

Mr. DODARO. Right, but in this case, though, Congress has been using the Federal Building fund for other purposes, so, I think we have to come to grips with, if you want to——

Mr. PERRY. Unbelievable, right, that they would do that.

Mr. DODARO. Nothing shocks me after being in this job for so long, but, I mean, we have to get in sync. And the other thing Congress ought to do is make sure that wherever the extension of FASTA is, they work in concert with OMB and GSA. Last time they were working in parallel. They were not working together.

Mr. PERRY. OK. I thank you, Chairman. I yield.

Chairman COMER. Thank you. The Chair recognizes Ms. Lee.

Ms. LEE. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Dodaro, thank you for being here today and sharing with this Committee this year's High Risk List. This, of course, is the list that the Government Accountability Office puts out every year that lays out the government programs most at risk for waste, fraud, and abuse, and recommends ways to approve them. If that sounds familiar, it is because that is what DOGE is pretending to do, but the work that GAO does is not pretend, and they produce benefits at an average of \$40 billion each year. Mr. Dodaro, your time at GAO goes back more than 50 years, as you told us. So, it is fair to say that you have a lot of experience with this list and the GAO's work, correct?

Mr. DODARO. Yes.

Ms. LEE. Thank you. I have just a few yes or no questions. Not that I do not value your judgments, yes or no questions about some of the contents of the High Risk List. One of the areas identified in this list is the need to provide veterans with better and more timely healthcare. Does your report recommend improving veteran healthcare by cutting more than one thousand jobs?

Mr. DODARO. By what?

Ms. LEE. By cutting more than one thousand jobs?

Mr. DODARO. No, it does not.

Ms. LEE. Thank you. How about the USDA? Does your report recommend firing the workers tackling the bird flu outbreak?

Mr. DODARO. No.

Ms. LEE. Another major area your list identifies is IT and cybersecurity improvement. Does your list recommend anywhere that the Federal Government start bypassing security protocols and installing outside and unvetted software?

Mr. DODARO. No.

Ms. LEE. Is cutting diversity, equity, and inclusion programs recommended anywhere in your report?

Mr. DODARO. No, we do not discuss those issues.

Ms. LEE. So, no?

Mr. DODARO. No, that is not a topic in the report.

Ms. LEE. So, it is not there?

Mr. DODARO. Right.

Ms. LEE. Thank you. Those are all actions taken by Elon Musk and DOGE wrecking crew, and it is not surprising that none of it is actually doing anything to improve waste, fraud, and abuse. It is also not surprising that none of Musk's billions in government contracts have been cut, yet none of the actions by Trump and

Musk have helped the American people. Eggs are still expensive, so expensive that Waffle House has added a surcharge, and thousands of hardworking Federal workers across the country have lost their jobs. Slashing all the funding for programs and services now is only going to lead to more inefficiencies and more costs later.

The GAO literally has a blueprint of what to do to save billions. The High Risk List is reported out every year. We have a hearing on it every year, yet Trump and Musk are ignoring these reports. Instead, they are gutting our government programs and services to root out waste and to fix our \$36 trillion debt crisis. In reality, Trump and Musk want all of us to pay for a massive \$4.5 trillion tax giveaway to the mega rich. Make no mistake, \$4.5 trillion tax giveaway is government spending, and it will balloon the deficit. If Republicans want to be serious about tackling our debt, they should start there. Start by putting the American people ahead of the pocketbooks of their billionaire elite friends.

Thank you again for your time, Mr. Dodaro. I yield back to the Ranking Member.

Mr. CONNOLLY. I thank my colleague, and I echo what she has just said. Mr. Dodaro, the Inspectors General are an important part of accountability, transparency, efficiency, and oversight of the Federal Government in a broad scope. Does firing 17 of those inspectors general help with government efficiency?

Mr. DODARO. No. I think the firing was—

Mr. CONNOLLY. Speak up, please. I cannot hear you.

Mr. DODARO. I am sorry. I am sorry. No, I think it was very unfortunate. I think we lost a lot of institutional knowledge and expertise with those firings. There were some Inspector Generals fired back in the first Trump Administration, and I issued a report talking about the importance of independent Inspectors General and recommended that the Congress add some provisions, the 30-day notice period, because the Inspector Generals also report to the Congress. They are very unique part of our government system, even though they are in the executive branch. I do not dispute the President's authority to fire them, but there should be notice of 30 days given and specific reasons for the firings, but I think it is important to have independent IGs.

Mr. CONNOLLY. It should be performance based, and there has to be cause. Otherwise, we are jeopardizing the independence of the Inspectors General. I thank my colleague for yielding.

Chairman COMER. The Chair now recognized the next Governor of Florida for 5 minutes.

Mr. DONALDS. I actually appreciate that, Mr. Chairman. Thank you. Mr. Dodaro, it is good to see you again. Thanks for being back. Since 2003, Federal agencies have reported about \$2.8 trillion in improper payments, including over the last 7 years consecutively, at a minimum, \$150 billion in each one of those years. The High Risk report mentions that the Department of Agriculture, HHS, HUD, DHS, OPM, and SBA all failed to report improper payment estimates in Fiscal Year 2023.

And to reiterate for the American people, we have seven agencies of the Federal Government that have not reported on their improper payments. And, if memory serves, the last report GAO issued had improper payments north of \$240 billion that was re-

ported. What are some of the real issues within the Federal Government for the lack of ability for these agencies to report on improper payments within their purview?

Mr. DODARO. I think there needs to be more pressure put on those agencies by the administrations that are in place, and I have talked to the prior administrations about this, and Congress needs to demand that the law be followed than they do improper payment estimates. I mean, I think it is not good management to not know how much you are paying that you should not be paying. It is not good fiscal stewardship. So, I am very disappointed they are not reporting, and I would encourage the Congress and the Trump Administration to require the reporting now.

Mr. DONALDS. I would agree with you wholeheartedly. Let me ask you the question, the agencies that did not report, some of them vary in size. Obviously, Department of Homeland Security is a major department of the Federal Government.

Mr. DODARO. Right.

Mr. DONALDS. Considering that, let us just say, for estimates sake—I do not have the report in front of me—that in Fiscal Year of 2023, improper payments were \$250 billion. If we had the estimates of those seven departments, what do you think the actual outstanding was from 2023?

Mr. DODARO. Yes, I really hesitate to guess. The one thing Congress needs to do in this area, though, the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, HHS, they cannot make an estimate unless Congress changes the law. So, they refuse to do it, saying they do not have the legal authority to require the states to give them the information they need in order make an improper payment estimate. So, Congress needs to change the statute there.

Mr. DONALDS. OK.

Mr. DODARO. And I think that is important.

Mr. DONALDS. All right. Thank you. FEMA is currently managing over 600 major disaster declarations, some of which have occurred 20 years ago. One of the GAO recommendations in this year's High Risk report is that FEMA should identify and document lessons learned related to estimating obligations for catastrophic disasters. Can you expand upon this?

Mr. DODARO. Yes. I will ask, Mr. Currie is our expert.

Mr. DONALDS. Sure. Mr. Currie? Thank you.

Mr. CURRIE. Sure. FEMA has always struggled with this because they do not know how much they are going to need in a particular year. And then when you have a catastrophic disaster season like you had last year in your home state with Helene and Milton, that throws everything off. But COVID really threw this off because FEMA did not expect to spend what it spent on COVID. At the end of this year, it is going to have spent well north of \$150 billion on COVID, and what that has done is sort of thrown all the estimates off. It has gone up over time, which affects their estimates moving forward, and they spent way more than they thought they were going to have to spend on that. And that is one of the reasons that the Disaster Relief Fund is in this constant negative situation. Actually, it is going to be \$12 billion underwater already at the end of September, even after the supplemental appropriation that you all provided it late last year.

Mr. DONALDS. Not to cut you off, but to go down this line of that we are talking about, is FEMA still having to make payments out associated with COVID-19?

Mr. CURRIE. Absolutely, they are still making payments.

Mr. DONALDS. Do you have an estimate of how much FEMA is still appropriating out because of COVID-19?

Mr. CURRIE. Last time I checked, which was at the end of February, they were upwards of \$130 billion they had paid out, and they expect to spend over \$150 billion in the fiscal year. They also told us they expect the disaster to run through the end of Fiscal Year 2026, next year, and spend almost \$180 billion on that. So, they are still reimbursing state and local governments for that.

Mr. DONALDS. OK. So, they are expected to spend another \$180 billion reimbursing state and local governments for COVID-19, and that is a stretch?

Mr. CURRIE. Sorry, another \$50 billion.

Mr. DONALDS. Another \$50 billion to take it to \$180 billion?

Mr. CURRIE. Yes, exactly.

Mr. DONALDS. OK. All right. Thank you for that. I appreciate that. I am out of my time. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman. Mr. Dodaro, thank you for your time and your service.

Chairman COMER. The Chair recognizes Mr. Subramanyam.

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. Subramanyam. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman COMER. Sorry.

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. That is OK. So, before we go on to this, someone had said earlier that we cannot cut Medicaid here in Congress, and I just want to make sure everyone knows at home that that is not true. In fact, my state, this Republican budget, which it does, would cut Medicaid benefits even a little bit. Everyone who benefited from Medicaid expansion in Virginia would actually lose that benefit, and so it would hurt us and many other states, millions of people across the country.

But moving on, thank you, Mr. Dodaro, for coming. Actually, saw in the news that DOGE had a savings dashboard online. Have you seen the savings dashboard, this website, [DOGE.gov/savings](https://www.doge.gov/savings).

Mr. DODARO. I have not. No.

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. OK. Well, I have it up here. It says, "Let's balance the budget." DOGE's total estimated savings are \$65 billion, but I would like to enter into the record this article, February 25, from the *New York Times*, "DOGE Quietly Deletes the Five Biggest Spending Cuts it Celebrated Last Week."

The subtitle is, "The cuts highlighted on an earlier version of the wall receipts contain mistakes that vastly inflated the amount of money saved." How much money do you think DOGE is actually saving? Do you have just an estimate?

Mr. DODARO. I do not know.

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. You do not really know. I do not know either. In fact, a lot of us do not know. We really want to ask them. It would be really nice if we could. Have you met with anyone at DOGE or Elon Musk?

Mr. DODARO. I have not. No.

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. OK.

Mr. DODARO. We have had a couple of our people meet with some DOGE people at the Treasury Department to talk about our audits

of the General Fund at the Treasury. Since we audit the Federal Government's financial statements, we also audit the General Fund, which is all the cash payment systems over there. They had some questions about our report. That is the extent of it so far. We have a number of requests from Congress to begin looking at their access to the systems, and we will begin that work at a number of agencies across government.

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. I have sent a lot of letters. Have they responded to any of your requests so far?

Mr. DODARO. We are just getting started.

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. You are just getting? Have you sent any actual requests to them?

Mr. DODARO. We have asked for an entrance meeting at the Treasury Department, and so we expect to—

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. What did they say?

Mr. DODARO. Well, we are in the process. As far as I know, we are not having any progress.

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. OK. I tried to get into the Treasury Department. They would not let me in, so.

Mr. DODARO. Yes, we are their auditors.

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. I guess that makes sense, but I am a Member of Congress, so that is why I was confused.

Mr. DODARO. I expect and anticipate cooperation.

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. Interesting. And so just going on, I have heard a lot that this is about addressing the Federal debt. And if you got rid of every single Federal civil servant, how much of the Federal debt would that actually pay down in—what do you think of percentage?

Mr. DODARO. Yes. The total Federal payroll is less than 10 percent of the Federal Government's expenditures. The problem with our debt is you could eliminate almost the entire discretionary part of the budget and still not really make an impact, long-term, on the deficit path that we are on right now. I mean, you are \$36 trillion in debt right now. The debt-to-GDP ratio from debt held by the public as a percent of gross domestic product this year will be 100 percent in our entire history—in our entire history. It has been 106 percent during World War II.

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. Sure.

Mr. DODARO. Absent any change in fiscal policy, by 2050, it will be over 200 percent of debt-to-GDP ratio. The only way to deal with this is to deal with the main driver, which is healthcare costs. Now, you can make inroads in terms of—

Mr. SUBRAMANYAM. But I would conclude from that then that this effort is not actually doing much, if anything, to reduce the Federal deficit, to reduce our Federal debt. In fact, it is a drop in the bucket, I would say. And now let us look at what the Federal civil servants who are being fired en mass, being targeted en mass, are actually doing. They are firing nuclear safety experts, accidentally. They are trying to call them back. They cannot even find some of their emails. They deleted all their contact info. They fired the staff researching bird flu, actually, which is very relevant today. They cut FDA, NIH, and CDC staff. Some of the high-risk projects that you are talking about, the staff that is integral to implementing a lot of your recommendations were actually fired.



And then even the website I was just talking about, this wall of receipts, they actually messed that up, too. They said that they cut about \$8 billion at ICE, but it was actually \$8 million. And then that is setting aside the fact that they gave, accidentally, perhaps, self-proclaimed racists, actually, read and write access to the critical Treasury data that includes almost every American's personal information. And so, it does not seem like this is actually very good. If they are trying to cut the deficit, if they are trying to get rid of waste, fraud, and abuse, they are doing a really bad job, it sounds like. Thank you. I yield my time.

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

Mr. BURLISON. Thank you. Thank you so much. It is good to see you again. I will be sad after you leave. You had mentioned in the previous conversation the debt-to-GDP ratio at nearly 100 percent, but according to the debt clock, at \$36 trillion, with a GDP of \$29.6 trillion, we are actually at 123 percent.

Mr. DODARO. Well, if you count, I am counting just debt held by the public. The \$36 includes debt that we owe to ourselves and intergovernmental transfers like back to Social Security and Medicare trust funds. So, you are right if you use gross debt. I am using just debt held by the public.

Mr. BURLISON. And over the next 10 years, we are planning to add another \$20 trillion, on the current spend level, correct?

Mr. DODARO. Yes. Yes.

Mr. BURLISON. So, at what point do we end up in a situation where we cannot make the interest payments?

Mr. DODARO. I think this is the big issue, and I have said that we have tremendous interest rate exposure because we borrow short-term, so we are always refinancing the debt that we had before. We never paid down any of it.

Mr. BURLISON. And rates are going up.

Mr. DODARO. And rates are going up, and that is what has happened. The interest on the debt in 2023 was \$352 billion. This year it will be a trillion. So, compound interest works well when you are saving, but not when you are borrowing.

Mr. BURLISON. Yes. And that is why, for me, the alarming number was seeing that the growth in the interest payments from last year to this year has been over \$200 billion just in the growth.

Mr. DODARO. Right.

Mr. BURLISON. So, when we are talking about a reconciliation package, if you are just going to cover the growth in the interest payments, you would need to find savings of at least \$2 trillion over the next 10 years, correct?

Mr. DODARO. Yes. Absolutely. Absolutely. This is a big problem.

Mr. BURLISON. It is a really big problem, and I would really welcome if our Democratic colleagues would recognize, this is not a Republican problem. It is not a Democrat problem. This is a math problem. This is a serious thing that I think we only have maybe a few years, a handful of years left to correct this before we end up in a debt spiral.

Mr. DODARO. Yes, absolutely, and you are also going to confront the depletion of the Social Security Trust Fund and the Medicare Part A Trust Fund—

Mr. BURLISON. In approximately 8 years——

Mr. DODARO. Yes, yes.

Mr. BURLISON [continuing]. To 11 years?

Mr. DODARO. Yes. The trustees' estimates will be out in another couple of months, and I would not be surprised if those dates are moved up a tad.

Mr. BURLISON. So, if we are having a mandatory spending conversation, and this is what my question to you is, and I think that we universally, even though we are going to be criticized as though we are trying to kick people off of Medicaid, if the goal is not to kick anybody off of Medicaid that needs it, what are the different solutions that are in our toolbox where we could eliminate improper payments? I would hope to think that Democrats are not opposed to eliminating improper payments in Medicaid, right?

Mr. DODARO. No.

Mr. BURLISON. One would hope. One would hope that they would not be opposed to finding fraudsters or people that are not supposed to be receiving the benefits, one would hope that you would want to find ways of getting the best bang for your buck within the program, and that is what I want to kind of drill down to. At the end of the day, this is the healthcare industry and the costs of healthcare that the Federal Government is having to deal with, Medicaid and Medicare, and even the insurance on the lives of the Federal workforce, correct?

Mr. DODARO. Yes.

Mr. BURLISON. So, what can we do? Have you guys seen anything that can be done that would actually have an impact in driving down healthcare costs?

Mr. DODARO. Yes. This is a compound problem because you have got healthcare costs going up faster than the economy. And you have the demographics are working against us because there are older people that are hitting the payroll. It is a combination of both things.

Mr. BURLISON. And then I wanted to, if you could answer this before my time runs out.

Mr. DODARO. Sure.

Mr. BURLISON. Within your answer, I noticed there was a study that was done in 2019. I am hoping that you have new studies that indicated when you studied the impact that PBMs had had and whether or not that the savings was actually coming back to the Federal Government and if there is new data, because at that time it was 96 percent, that was coming back in savings, so?

Ms. FARB. On the PBM issue, I am going to have to get back to you on how much. We are doing some current work in that area in terms of what we drive down. So, the way you pay for services, the responsibility of the patients for cost sharing, those are the types of things where the government could take some action. So, for example, we have had a longstanding recommendation. You all have considered this in multiple Congresses, of making sure that Medicare and other payers are paying the same for services, whether they are delivered in the physician office or in the hospital outpatient department setting. The most recent CBO score of that, which they put out——

Mr. BURLISON. Site neutrality is what you are saying?

Ms. FARB. Yes, budget neutrality, I mean, site neutrality, yes, so that the most recent score of that is \$151 billion in savings over 10 years, and that has impacts on the entire healthcare system. So, it is not even just savings within Medicare. It will have an impact on other programs as well as the private sector healthcare system. So, there are lots of examples like that of paying differently for services.

Mr. BURLISON. Can you provide those examples to me?

Ms. FARB. Yes.

Mr. DODARO. Yes, we will do that.

There is also the adjustments that are made every year between fee-for-service and Medicare and Medicare Advantage. And the legislative commission set up by the Congress, I appoint the members to this MedPAC for Medicare, one for Medicaid. In the MedPAC area, they estimate that there is overpayments being made to the managed care portion of, like, \$40 billion. And so, we have recommendations to make that a fair comparison, so we are not overpaying.

Mr. BURLISON. Thank you. I yield back.

Chairman COMER. Thank you. The Chair recognizes Ms. Ansari from Arizona.

Ms. ANSARI. Thank you. I am sorry. I thought since Representative Frost is back. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Dodaro, you said today that "there is a need for change, but how we do so matters." I could not agree with you more. We absolutely need to ensure that our government and its agencies and programs are running efficiently and free of waste so that we can deliver for the American people. We need to make sure seniors are getting their Social Security checks on time so they can pay their rent and have food on the table. But meanwhile, Elon Musk is spreading brazen lies that tens of millions of dead Americans are receiving checks, and he is going after our personal data. We need to make sure we are getting correct tax returns so that Americans depend and can respond in a timely manner, but President Trump just fired 6,700 IRS employees in the middle of tax season, as you know. And we need to ensure that Americans on Medicare continue using telehealth services, which is essential for rural communities and seniors, but the President is shutting that service down as well in April. They fired over a thousand VA employees that our veterans depend on for essential healthcare services and their hard-earned benefits. Not only that, but they enacted a hiring freeze for this Agency that already has a shortage of doctors and nurses, and I know you confirm this earlier today as well.

There has also been a lot of talk about polling from my colleagues from the other side of the aisle, so I would also like to cite recent polling on this issue. In two recent polls, when respondents were asked whether they approved or disapproved of the job that Elon Musk is doing within the Federal Government, there was a 34 percent approval compared to a 49 percent disapproval. That poll was carried between February 13 and the 18. It also found that 52 percent of Americans disapprove of Musk shutting down Federal programs that he deems unnecessary. And in another poll, only 28 percent believe that Musk's role in the government is a "good thing." So, Americans are fed up with the corruption. They

know that none of what is happening is about addressing waste, fraud, and abuse, the new buzz word. It is about saving a buck to hand off to billionaires.

So, Mr. Dodaro, thank you again for being here. A few questions for you. Do you believe that firing 6,700 IRS employees reduces waste and makes tax filing more efficient?

Mr. DODARO. No.

Ms. ANSARI. Thank you. Does the High Risk List recommend the dismantling of USAID, the Department of Education, or the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau?

Mr. DODARO. Do we recommend that? No, we have not recommended that.

Ms. ANSARI. And did Elon Musk or DOGE consult with you and your team to decide who to fire and who gets to keep their jobs?

Mr. DODARO. No.

Ms. ANSARI. So, the independent, nonpartisan office—your office—dedicated to research how the Federal Government can increase efficiency, and I have heard a lot of praise from both sides, which is deserved, the GAO is not in any way, shape, or form consulted by the Trump Administration or Elon Musk before they made sweeping decisions to fire thousands of government employees, dismantle Agencies, or overstep Congress to do so.

Mr. DODARO. The point of clarification I would make is since we are an independent, nonpartisan organization in a legislative branch, it is really not our role to be consulted on personnel decisions in the executive branch. We give advice on what kind of functions, the operations of the government, but we do not, you know, make recommendations about specific individuals and personnel decisions. That is left to them, but what we do look at is whether or not decisions like that were made in accordance with law and merit principles. And there is also the Merit Systems Protection Board, and the Office of Special Counsel, and the Fair Labor Relations Board. So, there are a number of entities within their independent agencies that are supposed to focus on the personnel process, whether people are treated fairly.

Ms. ANSARI. Thank you. That clarification is helpful. It is overall extremely alarming to me that you were not consulted in such sweeping, rapid changes that have come about. Your recommendations, as you said, many of them have been around for years and still remain an issue that we very much should be tackling. But the corruption of DOGE and Elon Musk, and to a point that has already been said, you know, if they believe what they are doing is correct and they are tackling these issues for the American people, I welcome them to come here and speak to us as well. So, thank you again so much.

Chairman COMER. The Chair now recognizes Mr. McGuire.

Mr. MCGUIRE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Mr. Dodaro, for your service, and I wish you the best in retirement.

You know our country is in big trouble, \$36 trillion in debt. We should be sounding the alarms all over the place, on both sides of the aisle, if it was \$1 trillion. If you spend more money per day in your household than you make per day, you would be out on the street. And if you were a business and you spend more than you

bring in per day, you would be out of business. If the government was a business——

Chairman COMER. Please talk into the microphone there, so that it could be recorded.

Mr. MCGUIRE. If the government was a business, it would be out of business. Again, I talk about \$36 trillion as the biggest national security issue in our country.

I heard folks on the other side of the aisle talk about DEI. If you had a list of things you would do if you wanted to destroy our country, you would have open borders, you would have 103,000 people a year die from fentanyl overdose from this Chinese chemical warfare fentanyl being produced in China and coming across our border, you would have these foreign wars, you would spend more money than you make, things that did not happen during Trump's first Administration. I heard them talk about DEI. You know what DEI stands for? Didn't Earn It. Plus, it is illegal discrimination and it destroys efficiency. Equal opportunity is OK, but equal outcome is Marxist. Instead of focusing on waste, fraud, and abuse over the last 4 years, we were focused on these divisive, woke ideologies.

When you are doing business with foreign countries, they say, you know, when we work with America's competitors, they say we want to build a bridge. They talk about building a bridge. When America comes to their town, they want to talk about these woke ideologies. It is ridiculous. And I heard it said that Trump is not serious about being efficient. Well, we talk about the fentanyl that is killing all these American people dead—103,000 a year. Well, border crosses are now down in just a short period of time, 95 percent from 2,000 border crosses per day to about 200 border crossings today. I would say that is pretty efficient.

His recruitment is up in the military, the highest it has been in 11 years. I would say that is pretty efficient. I mean, if we do not have the young men and women willing to step up and volunteer and protect our Nation, we will not have a Nation. He is also got his appointees through the Senate just about faster than any President in history. I would say that is pretty darn efficient.

And when you are \$36 trillion in debt, it is getting worse. I do not say we are at the cliff. We are over the cliff. And by the grace of God, President Trump and Elon Musk and everybody else wants to pull us back and save this country. I think every major nation in history that went under was because of bankruptcy. He got several hostages, American hostages, returned in record time. So, I would say President Trump definitely cares about efficiency. What shocks me is that the left is outraged at Elon Musk and all these people that are fighting so hard to discover waste, fraud, and abuse, and save our country, but they are not outraged at the people that committed the waste, fraud, and abuse, and that just shocks me.

I find it concerning that says 2,003 Federal agencies have reported about \$2.8 trillion in estimated improper payments. The GAO issued a biennial report the start of each Congress to identify which programs are vulnerable to fraud, waste, and abuse, and mismanagement. So, Mr. Dodaro, are there any common themes or problems that you have noticed across the high-risk areas when compiling this list in recent years?

Mr. DODARO. Yes, there are a number of areas we have been adding to the list involve multiple agencies to have to work together in order to address it, and one of them is on point to your point about fentanyl. We added drug misuse as a high-risk area because there needed to be a better national strategy that pulled together Federal departments and agencies, but also work at the state and local level, work with law enforcement, work with treatment facilities and others. And so, that is an area that that requires multiple AGs to work together, so that is one of the patterns that we have seen, you know, over time.

Mr. MCGUIRE. Well, I would say the American people, We the People, are sick and tired of being ripped off, and in just 5 weeks, DOGE, Elon Musk and his genius team, and by the way, the guy is the richest man in the world. He does not need our money. And President Trump is the only President in recent history I have ever heard of that left office with less money. Every other President has left office with more money.

But we have got to make some good decisions. Our country is in really big trouble. We talk about FEMA. Hurricane Helene impacted my district as well, and I was just struck by how farmers and volunteers all across our commonwealth and all across our Nation jumped in to help people. What are some things that we can do? Like, I have heard it proposed that some of the FEMA duties can be returned to the Governors. What do you think we can do to handle these natural disasters more efficiently?

Mr. DODARO. Yes. I think one thing would be to determine at what level, the state and local levels. They are already the first responders, and FEMA gives grants for them to be better prepared. But we have always said, well, how prepared are they? And they have never been able to tell us over time. I will let Chris Currie—

Mr. MCGUIRE. My last question, real quick.

Mr. DODARO. All right.

Mr. MCGUIRE. What is the definition of “insanity?”

Mr. DODARO. Well, the common definition is used is keep repeating the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result.

Mr. MCGUIRE. Yes. So, we have to move quickly. I do not know if you knew who Mr. Wonderful is? Kevin O’Leary, very successful businessman. He is on CNN. He is saying that DOGE should move faster than its moving. It should cut 20 percent more and then you rebuild from there because we are in drastic times. Desperate times require desperate measures. Thank you very much. I yield back.

Mr. DODARO. We will provide answers on FEMA for the record.

Chairman COMER. The Chair recognizes Mr. Frost.

Mr. FROST. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Dodaro, thank you so much for being here today. The GAO, Government Accountability Office, it is really thoughtful expert reports that help us save billions of dollars every year, and I thank you for that work and thank your staff for that work.

The GAO could not be more different than Trump and Elon Musk’s DOGE. Trump and Musk want to rip away the vital services that millions of Americans depend on. He is doing it just to

find money to give tax cuts to the richest people in this country and largest corporations in this country, many of whom pay a less effective tax rate than a lot of the teachers in my district. DOGE will save nothing for the American people, while making everything worse for us, while trying to find room to give tax cuts to the richest people in this country.

Shamefully, those cuts include cuts to our military veterans, including the nearly 32,000 veterans that I proudly represent, and I take this subject personally because I am the son of a veteran. I come from an Air Force family. How my family has been there for so long? They were in it when it was the Army Air Corps, and, so, I take this very personally. Mr. Dodaro, VA healthcare is on the GAO's High Risk List. How have staffing challenges at the VA contributed to this?

Mr. DODARO. And I will ask Ms. Farb to come up. But they have contributed to it very significantly. Jess?

Ms. FARB. I would say, you know, we talked about this a little bit earlier, in terms of scheduling appointments for veterans, both in the VA facilities and in the community, providing treatments that are needed and timely care, which VA has had problems with in the past, as we all know. So, not having the staff that they need to kind of continue on the path to making sure that veterans get timely access to quality care.

Mr. FROST. So, that is capacity issue, not enough?

Mr. DODARO. Yes. Well, not a right type. I mean, we—

Mr. FROST. Yes.

Mr. DODARO. I am very concerned about the mental health area, and they do not have enough behavioral mental health people, particularly for rural veterans.

Mr. FROST. A hundred percent.

Mr. DODARO. And the suicide prevention area is another area. You know, last I checked, there were 17 veterans a day die by suicide.

Mr. FROST. Yes.

Mr. DODARO. It is a national disgrace, in my opinion, that we are not better supporting these people, which is why I added it to the High Risk List, and so they need doctors, nurses. They need the proper care and also the proper handoff if they go to the community care process as well. So, it is an issue that we need to be very careful on how we handle and make sure it is done properly.

Mr. FROST. I 100 percent agree with you. I was actually about to ask you about the VA's need to hire more psychiatrists and psychologists, and I appreciate you bringing that up.

Mr. DODARO. Right.

Mr. FROST. You know, last week, I held a veterans town hall in my district at my local VA. There were a few hundred people that showed up. Folks came very confused, very angry and very scared. They asked questions. I have some of them down. They asked, will I lose my benefits? Who staffs DOGE? And what are they doing with my personal medical information? Will budget cuts mean that I will have longer wait times? Why is my healthcare being sacrificed to politics? These are the questions people asked me, my constituents, veterans, asked me.

Among the 18 Inspectors General that Donald Trump illegally fired, which, by the way, Congress was supposed to be notified before an IG is fired like that. Maybe about 2 hours ago, Republicans in this Committee took a vote to silence me because I said Donald Trump was engaging in grifting, but complete crickets when he breaks the law and completely circumvents Congress and does not tell us about the firing of 18 Inspectors General. How will the firing of the Inspector General of the VA make it harder to address the issues that my constituents, the veterans in my district, raised?

Mr. DODARO. I responded earlier that I thought it was unfortunate those IGs were fired. I think we lost a lot of institutional and expertise in that area. We have worked very closely with Mike Missal over the years and the other IGs. Now, they have a very talented group of people. They will soldier on, and they will continue to do the job, but it was unfortunate. And, you know, I had recommended to the Congress to make the change to require a 30-day notice and to give for-cause because the Inspector Generals do report to the Congress as well as to the head of the agency. It is a very unique responsibility and Congress should have the opportunity to engage in a dialog on that. I do not dispute the President's authority to fire them, but how it is done and follow the proper procedures, I believe, is important.

Mr. FROST. Thank you. The Orlando VA healthcare system already suffers from critical staffing shortages. I mean, the people there, who a large percentage of them are veterans themselves, are doing a great job. They are doing what they need to do, but they do not have the staff capacity necessary to be able to meet the demand, to be able to live up to our promise to people who put their lives on the line for the safety and security of this country, and that is something I take very seriously. It is something that a lot of my Republican colleagues used to take very seriously, but times change. Thank you so much and I yield back.

Chairman COMER. The Chair recognizes Mr. Gill from Texas.

Mr. GILL. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for holding this hearing today. I would like to start by addressing a few of the concerns that our colleagues have had on the other side of the aisle about the DOGE movement and Elon Musk in particular. And first, they are telling us that what DOGE and Elon Musk are doing by firing Federal workers, many of whom are not showing up to work to begin with, is somehow cruel. And I would like to say that perhaps what is actually cruel is bankrupting our country by funding a Federal workforce that is not working. What is cruel is driving up inflation by spending more money than our Federal Government has, harming working-class families across the country. What is cruel is consolidating power in an undemocratic administrative state that does not answer to anybody, apparently, if they had their way.

You know, no Federal worker has a right to work for the U.S. Government, but our children do have a birthright to inherit a country that is not bankrupt, and that is what House Republicans, and President Trump, and Elon Musk are trying to do by cutting out waste, fraud, and abuse from the Federal Government. What Elon Musk is doing is not cruelty. It is altruism, and it is the first time anybody has been able to actually rightsize our Federal budg-



et, and we should be applauding him, regardless of which side of the aisle we sit on.

I would also like to address the idea that Elon Musk and President Trump are somehow corrupt in rightsizing the Federal Government. If you want to know where the real corruption is, let us look at which side of the aisle has been benefiting from this slush fund that we have been giving out with very little accountability. It tends to be left-wing pet projects, left-wing media, like NPR and PBS, who always routinely run cover for Democrats while attacking Republicans. It is left-wing advocacy groups and NGOs that are taking our tax dollars and promoting DEI programs, and transgender gender surgeries, and girl-powered climate action, whatever that means. These are all left-wing movements that are being funded by our tax dollars. And it raises the question of how successful would the leftist political movement be in America if it were not for the fact that their whole movement is subsidized by taxpayers? That is what corruption is. And we are finding out now recently that Stacey Abrams is part of part of the grift as well.

Apparently, the EPA gave \$2 billion to a group called Power Forward Communities that was funded in late 2023 and had only reported \$100 in total revenue. Power Forward Communities had no business managing a grant that large, of course, but they were appealing for Democrats. The co-chair of Power Forward Communities is Shaun Donovan, who previously served as Barack Obama's Director of HUD and OMB. And we also know that Stacey Abrams is Senior Counsel for one of the coalition groups called Renewing America, affiliated with this. That is corruption, and that is the waste that we are trying to root out here.

They talk a lot about Elon Musk and DOGE and having access to American data. Remember, Biden let 53 unpaid researchers and students have full access to the American people's data at the IRS, and there was no outrage then. We are learning now that the Biden IRS leaked taxpayer information. We were told last year that it was only for, I say only, for 70,000 Americans. We are finding out today it was actually 405,000 Americans. That is the kind of access to data that I am concerned about, and it is being leaked to a left-wing news outlet that is partially funded by George Soros. These are the questions we should be asking and we should be raising.

They like to talk, I think disingenuously and very hyperbolically, about President Trump being a dictator. As they know, Article II of the Constitution says that the executive power shall be vested in a President of the United States of America, not in a technocratic, undemocratic, unelected, administrative state that they have been propping up for so long. We are a republic, not a European style technocracy, and that is why our country is the global leader and Europe is not, but for decades, we have watched as this administrative state has metastasized and acts with incredible leftist fervor and has no accountability. What President Trump and Elon Musk are doing is returning our country back to its democratic roots, restoring constitutional order in this country, and that is why we should be supporting them. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman COMER. The gentleman yields. The Chair now recognizes Mr. Min. Oh, OK, am I out of order? Who do I?

Mr. MIN. Oh, no, that is fine. Mr. Dodaro, thank you for joining us. Thank you for your decade——

Chairman COMER. Hold on, Mr. Min. I am sorry. Mr. Connolly, who is next?

Mr. CONNOLLY. I think Ms. Simon is next.

Chairman COMER. OK. Sorry about that.

Mr. MIN. OK.

Ms. SIMON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Ranking Member. I appreciate your testimony today, sir. And thank you, as an M.P.A. master student a few years ago, I spent an awful lot of time reading your reports and I really, really appreciate the level of professionalism that you have led, and thank you for your service.

You know, my colleague, Mr. Frost, and you talked a bit about veterans, sir, and I appreciate that. My mother served the Veteran Administration for over 35 years. You know, if you call (415) 221-4810 or in Phoenix to (602) 277-5511, or in Texas (713) 791-1441, we know now when veterans, mothers of veterans, partners of veterans, when they are calling—these are only three of many VAs in the country—folks are not going to answer the phone.

On February 14, this Administration fired over 1,000 VA workers—1,000 VA workers—so, you know, when you cut staff, you cut services. And when you cut services, these are more than just budget decisions. It is a betrayal of the American promise. Our servicemen and women deserve better. They fought in the line of fire with an understanding that when they came home, they would have efficacious health benefits, social services, mental health services. That was our promise, and it is not just in this Administration that we have broken our promise. I will say that we have not done what we should have in the past and currently in the present, but to annihilate critical staff supporting critical lives of folks who dedicated their lifespan to this country, it is a betrayal of a lexicon of America First that I am hearing every single day.

You know, sir, I do not have a question for you. Again, I am thanking you. But last week I visited an NIH-funded clinic, and I know we are not talking so much about NIH in your report, a Nobel Prize winning scientist and physician scientists on her team, and young American students have dedicated their professional careers to ending genetic diseases, like sickle cell. They are there. They have a cure. The trials have gone really, really well. They are looking at moving forward treatment for ALS and for folks who have suffered from ALS and have buried your uncles and your mothers, and your fathers, and your cousins, and your nieces, you know, the devastation of that disease.

For folks who are struggling, themselves, with dementia, you know, the devastation in the world when financially that your families have had to go through. This lab in Berkeley, California has the best and the brightest scientist, and they are facing because, again, of this effort to move efficiency, a \$37 million cut that will all but halt the research and send those students home. That is not fear mongering. That is fact.

So, for all of the patients, those who are in the operating rooms, sitting outside, waiting for your folks to come out, those folks who are care workers, sitting at home trying to figure out how you are

going to make ends meet because you cannot work because your father has devastating dementia, I want us to understand what is at play. I am not blaming anyone. What I am saying is, we are making bad decisions. Yes, we need a more efficacious government, but when you attack the sick, when you attack literally the scientists who are going to cure Americans, we are lying to the people here, those young people. I met one young man who has dedicated his life to curing cancer. He is in that lab. He does not know if he is going to be able to continue. America First looks something very different than what we are purporting here today about creating an efficacious government.

The last thing I will say, and I again, appreciate knowing a lot about your organization and while you do not provide direction necessarily to government departments when they have done staff reductions, what your Agency has done is guide directors to make those reductions using a process that is concurrent with evaluations, concurrent with making sure that there is deep communication, making sure that those employees have an exit plan that will not exacerbate homelessness in our communities. Thousands of workers have been laid off with no evaluation. We have not stayed true to our union contracts. We need to create a government that is efficacious and efficient, but this ain't it. Thank you so much. I yield my time.

Chairman COMER. The gentlelady yields back. The Chair recognizes Mr. Fallon from Texas.

Mr. FALLON. Mr. Chairman, thank you. You know, we sit here all day and we hear folks pontificating, and it is the same old broken record, and I fear that it is going to be like this for 2 years that, you know, you hear Elon Musk and you do hear fear mongering, and you do hear "billionaires," "unelected billionaires," "unelected oligarchs," blah, blah, blah. The fact of the matter is that when I was serving in the Air Force, I saw many in the middle, many Federal workers that did a fabulous job. They were gold coins for this country. Unfortunately, I saw equal, probably slightly larger, number that were a complete waste of taxpayer money. It was just not operating efficiently, and they did not have the motivations. And that is why I think even the father of modern progressivism, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, feared, and was not a fan of, public sector unions.

I want to thank you, Comptroller General Dodaro, for your years of service, half a century, dare I say, started when you were 5, you had an illustrious career, very successful one, and a decade-and-a-half in your current position, and sincerely, thank you. Also, you have done significant work with operating inefficiencies in the Federal Government. I think that you could argue, in a sense, that you were DOGE before DOGE or DOGE was cool, or at least for half the people on this Committee, cool, what have you. But the concept is not new. Long before Donald Trump ever ran for public office, you were doing your work and looking to get a lot of bang for that taxpayer buck, but that is something that should be bipartisan. It does not seem to be, unfortunately, but, you know, I am an internal optimist and we can hope for a better day tomorrow.

Do you think, sir, that the Federal Government did, does, or will operate at maximum efficiency right now?

Mr. DODARO. It does not.

Mr. FALLON. Listen, I had a small company of a hundred employees, private sector. I was making a buck. We did not operate at maximum efficiency. It would be wonderful if we could, but you cannot, and there is absolutely no way, Federal bureaucracy of millions of people. I mean, what are you finding? Was it about \$40 billion a year that you have saved?

Mr. DODARO. Yes.

Mr. FALLON. Because you are doing your work and maybe then, maybe, we could argue that oversight and accountability works looking for those efficiencies and quantifying that, and trying to organize it into an effort where we can increase the scale. It is a good thing for the country.

And I just went to Austin, Texas. I was in the Texas legislature for 8 years, in the House and the Senate, and visited with some of my colleagues and then some experts in the Inspector General's office in Texas, and they were telling us in their professional opinions and these folks have done it. One of them, Mr. Chairman, served for 25 years investigating primarily Medicaid fraud. And I asked, in your professional opinion, after a quarter century doing what you have done, of the \$50 billion that Texas spends on entitlements, what majority of that is fraud, waste, and abuse, what percentage rather, and he said, at best, 10 percent, and at worst, probably just north of 20 percent.

Mr. DODARO. Yes.

Mr. FALLON. So, just in Texas alone, we are talking about probably \$7.5 billion of money that is spent by the taxpayers, but it is not getting to the people that need it. You have got folks that lie, you know, and sometimes the honor system stuff where they are making much more income than they admit to, or you have got the fraudsters and the organized criminals that steal.

Mr. DODARO. Right.

Mr. FALLON. And they are very good at it. They are very sophisticated. And so, taking a look at it, we should not be scared of it. We should embrace it. We should run toward it and not run away from it. And not play political games or demonize the most successful, you know, human being in history in the private sector.

So, I wanted to ask you also, sir, some of these initiatives that you had with your High Risk List, well, I believe, need congressional action. What specific actions can we realistically take, you think, in the next year or two see a noticeable difference in improvement?

Mr. DODARO. Yes. One is to make permanent the use of the death master file to have Social Security give it to the Treasury Department. That is only on a pilot basis. It has already saved millions of dollars. It needs to be made permanent. We should not be paying deceased people. It took me a number of years to convince Congress to even make that a pilot program. I never thought it would be so hard to stop paying dead people, but apparently it was.

Mr. FALLON. Are they all in Chicago?

Mr. DODARO. I do not know.

Mr. FALLON. No.

Mr. DODARO. I do not think so. I think they are more spread around.

Mr. FALLON. Yes.

Mr. DODARO. But in any event, that is No. 1. No. 2 would be to extend the statute of limitations for fraud in the unemployment insurance program. It is about ready to expire at the 5-year mark. Congress should do as it did with Paycheck Protection Program and extend it for 5 more years to make it 10 years. There are hundreds of cases still being investigated that, I think, need to come to a conclusion.

Mr. FALLON. Was that for the Social Security?

Mr. DODARO. Unemployment.

Mr. FALLON. Unemployment fraud.

Mr. DODARO. Unemployment insurance fraud, extend the statute of limitations. Make site-neutral payments a reality for Medicare. If you go to a doctor who is affiliated with a hospital, Medicare pays you more than if you go to a doctor in a private practice. It costs more for co-pays for beneficiaries. CBO has already said in the next 10 years, it would save \$153 billion. I got many other ones, that I could, you know, enumerate, but those are three biggies.

Mr. FALLON. Thank you very much. We would love to get with your office on getting an extensive list, and, again, thank you for your service. Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Chairman COMER. The gentleman yields back. The Chair recognizes Mr. Min.

Mr. MIN. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Dodaro, congratulations on your retirement, and thank you for your service. I appreciate your suggestions, and as a freshman, new to your particular suggestions, these high-risk projects, but appreciate the concept.

Like some of my colleagues, I want to first just briefly talk about DOGE, the Department of Government Efficiency, which is apparently not a department, but a temporary organization with all the authorities of a department or agency, but none of the legal requirements that would otherwise apply to a department or agency.

Now temporary organizations, you may know, under Federal statute are limited to specific project or study. President Trump's executive order creating DOGE made clear that DOGE's authority was specifically limited to "data modernization." But as has been widely reported, under the leadership of Elon Musk, DOGE has far exceeded those statutory and executive order limitations. DOGE employees have taken over the Federal Payment System. They have received access to sensitive personal data for any person who has ever received a check from the Federal Government. They have frozen Federal employees out of their computer systems. They have tried to terminate agencies and programs, like the Department of Education and USAID.

So, Mr. Dodaro, I assume you are familiar with the United States Constitution?

Mr. DODARO. I am.

Mr. MIN. And so many of my GOP colleagues today were talking about Article II of the Constitution. Apparently, that was in their talking points for today. But Article I, Section 1 states that all legislative powers are reserved to the Congress of the United States. Article I, Section 9 gives us exclusive authority to appropriate money to Congress. Are you aware of any provision in the Constitu-

tion that allows the executive branch to unilaterally take away our legislative and appropriations authority?

Mr. DODARO. I am not aware of that, no.

Mr. MIN. That is right because it does not exist. Are you aware of any provision in the Constitution that allows a special government employee appointed by the President to unilaterally take away our legislative and appropriations authority?

Mr. DODARO. I do not think Constitution addresses that.

Mr. MIN. It makes clear it is our authority only. And so, what is happening right now with DOGE is unconstitutional, illegal, and I will make that clear because they are overturning laws that we passed, they are deleting agencies that we have funded and created, and they are doing so without consultation with Congress. So, I want to make that clear. Now, Elon Musk has claimed he wanted to eliminate \$2 trillion in waste from the Federal Government. Do you believe that we are going to find \$2 trillion in waste if we look through the budget?

Mr. DODARO. Not on an annual basis.

Mr. MIN. But I think he is talking annually, actually.

Mr. DODARO. Yes, that is why I say that. But no, I do not think that that is possible.

Mr. MIN. And are you aware of the size of the domestic discretionary budget, which is the focus of this hearing and basically every effort that DOGE is looking into?

Mr. DODARO. Yes.

Mr. MIN. What is that roughly?

Mr. DODARO. Let us see. It is about a third of the—

Mr. MIN. Nine hundred billion dollars sound about right?

Mr. DODARO. Yes. Yes. Yes.

Mr. MIN. OK.

Mr. DODARO. It is a little more than that, but yes.

Mr. MIN. Nine hundred 17 billion, I believe, is the exact number from the point.

Mr. DODARO. It may be a little higher than that.

Mr. MIN. OK.

Mr. DODARO. Yes.

Mr. MIN. And that is less than \$2 trillion, just so we are clear. So, we could cut everything from the domestic discretionary budget, every program, every Federal employee, and we are only a fraction of the way to \$2 trillion, right?

Mr. DODARO. Yes. Well, I mean, Social Security is over trillion. Medicare is over a trillion.

Mr. MIN. Yes.

Mr. DODARO. Interest on the debt is over a trillion.

Mr. MIN. Yes.

Mr. DODARO. Medicaid is more than halfway there.

Mr. MIN. Reclaiming my time. So, \$2 trillion then.

Mr. DODARO. Right.

Mr. MIN. Yes. I think you are suggesting this, but I just want to get to the point.

Mr. DODARO. Right.

Mr. MIN. We are looking at \$2 trillion, and we are only going to get there probably if we cut Medicaid, Social Security, Medicare. Is that about right?

Mr. DODARO. You would have to get to the big programs. You cannot cut the big dollars if you do not go to where there is spending.

Mr. MIN. That is right. And so, do you think there is \$2 trillion in waste if we look in Medicaid, Medicare, and Social Security?

Mr. DODARO. No.

Mr. MIN. OK. Do you think there is \$100 billion in waste?

Mr. DODARO. Well—

Mr. MIN. So, let me reclaim my time. Many of my House Republican colleagues have expressed their concerns about the \$36 trillion debt. I am also concerned about that. Their proposed budget would cut \$3 trillion, including for lifeline programs like Medicaid, SNAP, healthcare MET. You know, we are talking about food for hungry babies, healthcare for sick veterans, but it also adds over \$4.5 trillion in tax cuts. So, my question to you is math. If you cut \$3 trillion in spending, but also reduce revenues by \$4.5 trillion, does that increase or reduce the national debt?

Mr. DODARO. Well, according to that scenario, it would increase.

Mr. MIN. And that is exactly right. Now I want to get one last little line of questioning because many of my constituents have told me they are concerned about the waste, fraud, abuse, and mismanagement associated with the idea that one person, Elon Musk, gets to decide so many aspects of the Federal budget these days. They are concerned not only that it is illegal and unconstitutional, but that so many of his decisions seem designed to go after the agencies that have tried to regulate his businesses, his competitors. So, my last question to you is if an auditor were coming to audit something for you, but they were a major investor in one of the companies that you were looking at, would you hire them to work on that project?

Mr. DODARO. No.

Mr. MIN. All right. Thank you very much.

Mr. DODARO. We have been asked to, and we will be looking at the arrangements for those as it relates to ethics and conflict of interest.

Mr. MIN. Well, thank you very much and I, again, appreciate your service.

Mr. DODARO. Thank you.

Chairman COMER. The Chair now recognizes himself for 5 minutes. Mr. Dodaro, what are the worst programs for improper payments over the last year?

Mr. DODARO. Over the last year, it is Medicare, Medicaid, the Earned Income Tax Credit, and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, and then bringing up that would be unemployment insurance.

Chairman COMER. Medicare, Medicaid, and SNAP. The 2025 High Risk report, like the previous reports, continues to paint an alarming picture of the extent of improper payments, those issues facing Medicare and Medicaid. That I think we agree, and I know the American people agree, that we should not be giving payments to people or businesses improperly. So, last year, Medicare improperly paid roughly \$51 billion in Medicaid, improperly paid about \$50 billion. That is over a \$100 billion. So, why do these programs continue to have such massive issues with improper payments year

after year, because GAO's released report estimated between \$233 billion and \$521 billion, that is half a trillion, was lost annually due to fraud between 2018 and 2022. But Medicare and Medicaid, in particular, \$100 billion in the last year. Why does this happen?

Mr. DODARO. Yes. Well, I think you have a need for better provider screening. In other words, you know, letting providers in there and you have a need for better enrollment screening. This has been a consistent problem, particularly in the Medicaid area, yes, in that area. Now, during the pandemic, for 3 years, everybody who was eligible at the beginning was deemed eligible throughout to the end of the national emergency. So, I do not even think the recent numbers, as big as they are, are the full amount of improper payments. So, there needs to be more rigorous screening and more attention on managed care portion, and more auditing there of both of them.

Chairman COMER. So, during COVID, when the Federal Government lost its mind, and that spanned two Administrations, people were put on Medicaid without proper screening and things like that, supposed to be temporarily?

Mr. DODARO. Right.

Chairman COMER. It is supposed to be a temporary safety net program, and what has happened is it has become an entitlement. And one of the things that we are proposing in the budget reconciliation bill is not cutting Medicare and Medicaid, like my colleagues on the other side of the aisle, it is trying to reform Medicare and Medicaid to where there are no improper payments. We recognize the fact that you have been writing about this for years. The problem is not getting any better. People got on Medicaid during COVID, supposed to be temporarily, but they are still on there.

Mr. DODARO. Right.

Chairman COMER. They are still on there. They are not supposed to be in there. Hardworking taxpaying Americans have to pay for their health insurance, and there are people that are gaming the system getting on Medicare and Medicaid. That is who we are looking at in this budget reconciliation bill. That is what President Trump and DOGE are looking at. This is not something that we made up. This is not something that we pulled out of the air. You all have been writing about this for years, and we recognize there is a problem. But the fear, people say, well, why hasn't Congress done anything? This is why. The way they are acting.

People know that Social Security is being skimmed. People know that unemployment is being skimmed. People know in this chamber that Medicare and Medicaid is being skimmed, but they wait. They wait for one person, and it is always a Republican, to be bold enough to say we need to look at this and we need to stop these improper payments. We need to stop the waste, fraud, abuse, and mismanagement. And then the Democrats go, oh my God, they are going to cut, they are going to cut, the Republicans are going to cut, and then they get their constituents all fired up. They say, oh, Elon Musk is going to steal your Social Security check, and nothing gets done.

We are serious about it. The President has a mandate. We appreciate the work that you and your staff has done identifying the High Risk List. But one reason that people in both parties, for nu-



merous Congresses, have refused to even look at Medicare and Medicaid fraud, is because they knew that somebody would try to score political points and spook the elderly people that need Medicare, the children that need Medicaid, the children that need SNAP. They will not face the reality that people have been added to the rolls that should not be on the rolls. There are people ineligible. There are providers in all 50 states that are abusing the system. And it is going to take someone bold, it is going to take a Congress with the backbone to do something about it.

And I will conclude by saying this. We do not want to cut benefits for children. We do not want to cut benefits for the elderly and the truly needy. We want to look at the system and get rid of the waste, fraud, and abuse. That is what DOGE is about. That is what President Trump campaigned on. And that is what I hope at least the Majority party in here is committed to get his back and try to do that because the American people are fed up. They have lost confidence in government.

And just as Ms. Greene said that an overwhelming majority of people approve of what the objectives of DOGE are, but it is going to be up to Congress to get it done. I think we are seeing tonight during this hearing, there are some people that are going to obstruct and kick and try to score political points, and there are some that are serious, they have rolled up their sleeves, and, hopefully, we will get something done.

So, thank you for your High Risk report, and hopefully, this Congress and this Administration will have the backbone to do something about this heist of the American taxpayer dollars. So, thank you. My time has expired.

I now recognize Ms. Pressley, I guess, or Ms. Crockett. Who is next? Ms. Pressley.

Ms. PRESSLEY. Thank you. Thank you to the Comptroller General for being here today. I am grateful for your service, and you are a great reminder of the ways in which government does benefit people every day, but they are often unaware. Congress has a duty to ensure that government operates efficiently, effectively, and in the public interest. For any elected official, constituent services are our bread and butter.

I know long before I was an elected official, I worked as a constituent services advocate, a Social Security liaison, advocating for our most vulnerable. If your grandfather cannot get an appointment at the VA or if your mom is stuck on hold with the Social Security Administration for hours, you should be angry and we should be fixing it. But instead of fixing it, the Trump Administration has turned over the keys to an unelected billionaire, Elon Musk, through the so-called Department of Government Efficiency, or DOGE. Mr. Dodaro, can you define—just so we are operating with the same understanding and comprehension here—can you define government efficiency?

Mr. DODARO. Well, efficiency is getting the best possible outcome with the least amount of resources.

Ms. PRESSLEY. Right. It is not about slashing budgets for the sake of headlines while weakening the very services that keep people safe, fed, and housed. True efficiency is about making government work better for the people, protecting the rights, strength-

ening essential services, and ensuring tax dollars go to the public good, not private profits. By that standard, DOGE is not here to serve anyone other than Elon Musk. But let us take a step back. History is important. Mr. Dodaro, do you know how the term, “DOGE,” came about?

Mr. DODARO. Not particularly.

Ms. PRESSLEY. Well, it came from an internet meme featuring a Shiba Inu dog that went viral on Reddit, and that meme led to the creation of Dogecoin, a joke cryptocurrency, eventually caught the attention of none other than Elon Musk in 2019. More than 5 years ago, Elon Musk started tweeting about DOGE, making jokes and using the cryptocurrency for profit. He was not interested in government efficiency. He only cared about making money. That is why the actual creator of Dogecoin said that Elon “was and always will be a grifter.”

Mr. Chair, I ask unanimous consent to enter into the record this article titled, “Dogecoin Co-Creator Calls Elon Musk a Grifter Who Had Trouble Running Basic Code.”

Chairman COMER. Without objection, so ordered.

Ms. PRESSLEY. Talk about did not earn it. So, here we are in 2025, and Elon Musk is still using DOGE to make money. This time, instead of pumping up a joke currency for his own profits, he is using a meme-inspired agency to launch a hostile takeover of the Federal Government.

DOGE has recklessly fired FAA employees and attacked the Agency all while Musk’s own aerospace business benefits from regulatory rollbacks, make it makes sense. DOGE dismantled the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, a watchdog agency that returned \$21 billion to victims of fraud when he heard it was planning to investigate his company. And just last week in a moment of stunning incompetence, the Administration frantically tried to un-fire hundreds of employees they had to let go the day before. Why? Because those employees were overseeing our nuclear stockpile. Those employees were managing the bird flu outbreak. Those employees were providing not-nice-to-have, but essential must-have services that all of our constituents rely on.

Mr. Dodaro, do firing workers and then trying to un-fire them sound like government efficiency to you?

Mr. DODARO. It is not a best practice.

Ms. PRESSLEY. Sure, it does not to me. What kind of efficiency makes people hungrier? What kind of efficiency makes people poorer? What kind of efficiency makes people less safe? If Trump and Musk truly wanted to make government better than they would turn to the actual efficiency experts at the Government Accountability Office, but this was never about efficiency. Just like the DOGE meme, the lives of hardworking families are a joke to them. I will not stand for it. I know my colleagues will not either, and we will continue to fight for a government rooted in real efficiency, one that works for everyone, not just for billionaires. I yield back.

Chairman COMER. The Chair now recognizes Ms. Tlaib.

Ms. TLAIB. Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you so much. For me, it is really ridiculous that we are sitting here today listening actually to this incredibly thoughtful presentation and report from you about all the ways we can make government work better for our

families, but tomorrow, my Republican colleagues are actually going to ignore all of that. They are going to ignore all of your thoughtful and very investigative, thorough report of looking how we can serve our communities better.

And so, it is alarming to me because I do not know if you know this, Mr. Dodaro, like, our phones have been off the hook of people just, increased anxiety, fear of what is going to happen, many parents who have special needs children who just cannot imagine Medicare and health services are being cut. Another person who has access to Affordable Care Act is saying, I cannot believe they are thinking about allowing that to increase. I think it averaged by \$600.

I understand from your report, some of the biggest challenges in delivering for our families, for the people that we represent here, stems from staffing shortages, right? And skill gaps that make it very difficult to be effective in delivering disaster assistance. I believe your report said about responding to public health emergencies and keeping groceries safe to eat, food, safe to eat. Is that correct?

Mr. DODARO. That is correct. Twenty of the 38 areas are on there, in part, because of skill gaps and shortages.

Ms. TLAIB. So, you are talking about we do not have enough people?

Mr. DODARO. In some cases, that is true, but in most cases, it is having the right skills necessary to do it.

Ms. TLAIB. That is right.

Mr. DODARO. It is both. It is both.

Ms. TLAIB. I mean, for me, a lot of my colleagues talk about, like, oh, Elon Musk is about making more money. I actually think he just likes experimenting, and he is experimenting with us, the American people. It is like a huge experiment and a game or something of that sort. I mean, 1 day they turn the lights off in one department, the next day they turn it back on. I mean, we are talking about, like, Head Start programs that did not even get access to the portal until, I think, this past week, and these are folks that are offering services already, right? They already rendered the services and they are trying to get reimbursed by us. So, do you think, I mean, this Elon Musk experiment of indiscriminately firing hundreds of thousands of Federal employees working on these key issues will make a positive impact in addressing some of these life and death challenges?

Mr. DODARO. Yes. I think there is a need for more efficiency in government. I want to be clear about that, and I do think——

Ms. TLAIB. Yes, I agree. They should start with the Pentagon budget, but OK.

Mr. DODARO. Yes. Well, it is across the board in government. I think you can be more efficient, but you have to approach it in a more thoughtful, deliberative process.

Ms. TLAIB. But, Mr. Dodaro, do not you think they are hiding behind efficiency? They are saying it is efficiency, but it is irresponsibility. It is chaotic.

Mr. DODARO. Yes, it is not my job to decide, though, as I told you, but I do not——

Ms. TLAIB. Mr. Dodaro, one day they say, OK, all these folks are fired. The next day they say, OK, you can come back.

Mr. DODARO. Well, as I said, that is not a good practice. Well, the good part about it is they recognized it and they brought them back right away, but they—

Ms. TLAIB. Yes, but even when they try to turn the lights back on, it is flickering.

Mr. DODARO. I think you need to take a more deliberate process. The one thing I have learned—I have been auditing the Federal bureaucracy for 50 years—that you need to find out what is the reason why things are the way they are before you change it. Usually, there is a good reason, but not often, but you need to know the answer to that question before you start making changes. Otherwise, you have unintended consequences.

Ms. TLAIB. I mean, do you know what they did today?

Mr. DODARO. No, I have been here all day.

Ms. TLAIB. No, because I think it is important, but you know what they did today? They let go 28 veteran workers. So, John Dingell VA in Detroit, it is a veteran hospital. They let go 28 employees. I called, I said, what did they do? Like, I asked a simple question. I do not know if they are doing that. What did they do? Do you know what they did? Most of them were the people that worked in cleaning the surgical equipment. Do you know that we had an audit of the VA? You know about this, right?

Mr. DODARO. Yes.

Ms. TLAIB. And people died.

Mr. DODARO. We did the audit.

Ms. TLAIB. Mr. Dodaro?

Mr. DODARO. Yes.

Ms. TLAIB. People die in the John Dingell VA Hospital because we did not have people cleaning the surgical equipment. Yes or no.

Mr. DODARO. Yes.

Ms. TLAIB. So, they just let go all these people. So, you are telling me my veterans are going to go under a knife, and we do not know if somebody is cleaning the surgical equipment?

Mr. DODARO. This was a particular problem with colonoscopy.

Ms. TLAIB. How is that efficiency? He is experimenting with the lives of our constituents and our residents. He should come here voluntarily—they will not allow us to subpoena him—and answer our questions. What are the reasons behind you letting go, again, essential services? That is not efficiency. It is irresponsible. It is almost negligent. It is chaos.

Mr. Dodaro, your service is welcomed because we believe we want to be effective in delivering for our families, we do, but this is not the way to do it. And I really do thank you for your service. I know it is a long way, and it must be so frustrating. God, watching this last few weeks must be just unbelievable for you. For us, hearing our residents in tears has been painful. So, thank you all. Thank you.

Mr. DODARO. Thank you.

Chairman COMER. The Chair recognizes Ms. Crockett.

Ms. CROCKETT. Thank you so much. And Mr. Dodaro, I am going to pick up where my colleague left off by, No. 1, thanking you for your service. I mean, I do not really know if they would have been

trying to push you out, too, because it seems like anybody that knows what their job is gets pushed out. So, congrats on your retirement, and I am hoping that you have sunnier days ahead.

But Ms. Talib just went through a series of things that she feels like this is other than efficiency, and I have a term for what I believe is going on. I think it is just downright cruel. I think that you have people that literally do not have a heart. They are telling us that, oh, no, no, we are going to run the Federal Government like a business. Well, let me talk to you about the people that are allegedly running this business because the Federal Government ain't a business. But let me clarify. If it was, I do not want to run like the President has run businesses.

The President, it is my understanding, has filed bankruptcy six times. We do not have that luxury in the United States of America. But even when we start to think about Elon Musk, right now, as it relates to Tesla, the sales are down. As it relates to X, he has never made a profit since he bought X. In fact, the value of X is 75 percent lower than it has ever been. So, if I am going to go look for somebody to run a business, I am going to look for someone who is going to run one successfully. And before people start screaming and yelling about, well, he is a billionaire, yes, when you know the right people and they will just give you money, then you can become a billionaire too, and maybe 1 day all of us will have that kind of access. But until then, I want to talk about the fact that congressional Republicans again, as has been stated, they do not care about government efficiency no more than they care about government services and programs that constituents rely on. And just like Elon is hiding from this Committee, Republicans are now hiding from their constituents.

Under the current Republican budget proposal, 166,000 people in the Chairman's district could lose their Medicaid benefits, including more than 70,000 children. The same for the Chairwoman of the DOGE Subcommittee: under the current budget proposal, 120,000 people in her district could lose Medicaid benefits, including 75,000 children. This is what efficiency looks like to Republicans, selling out their own constituents to pass tax cuts for their billionaire donors and friends, and rather than taking GAO's recommendations and discussing how Congress can help make Federal employees and agencies more efficient, effective, and support it, they are firing probationary Federal employees, which, again, in my opinion, has led to planes actually falling out of the sky, but nevertheless, which is crazy because no one has been more unproductive than the Republicans on the Oversight Committee.

Nevertheless, Mr. Dodaro, of the 38 high-risk areas in GAO's 2025 report, more than half are due in part to staffing or skills gaps, which you have already discussed. In your written testimony to the Committee, you stated, "When we have seen progress on high-risk issues, it is typically involved three essential elements: congressional action or oversight, commitment from top leaders at agencies, and active involvement by the Office of Management and Budget." In your opinion, has Congress done enough to ensure the mass indiscriminate purging of Federal workforce does not "impede the government from cost effectively serving the public and achieving desired results?" Yes or no.

Mr. DODARO. Well, I talked before about telling the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Sometimes it is not a yes or no. I think Congress should get more engaged and proactive in this area. I have always encouraged administrations in the past to consult Congress in making some changes. Many of these things deal with laws that Congress passed, and I think Congress needs to get more active.

Ms. CROCKETT. I agree. We need to do our constitutional duty, which is to conduct oversight. So again, I am inviting Elon or anybody else that is a member of DOGE to come through and we can have a conversation. In fact, I am not aware of any recommendations that really go beyond just cutting those services that people need. There has not been any talk about cutting any of Elon's contracts, though, not a one, not that I am aware of. Maybe you are aware of it, but you are aware that Elon has been getting money from the Federal Government for a number of years, correct?

Mr. DODARO. Yes.

Ms. CROCKETT. OK. And it is my understanding that he has not made a recommendation to cut any of his money as we are trying to save money and save this country. At the end of the day, what I am going to say is that we had the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration open five investigations on Tesla for complaints of unexpected braking, loss of steering control, and crashes while cars were in self-driving mode. And Tesla tried to block at least two rulings from the National Labor Relations Board, punishing Elon for tweeting that factory workers would lose stock options if they joined a union. This is a problem. Can you at least tell me that you agree, that you understand what a conflict of interest is, and that Elon—

Mr. DODARO. I am well aware of what a conflict of interest is, and we have been asked by the Congress to take a look at this situation, and we will.

Ms. CROCKETT. Well, I appreciate that, and with that, Mr. Chair, I will yield.

Chairman COMER. The gentlelady yields back. That concludes our questioners.

In closing, I want to thank our witness, Mr. Dodaro, for your testimony today. Thank you for your many years of service. I want to thank your staff once again for your input today as well.

With that, and without objection, all Members have 5 legislative days within which to submit materials and additional written questions for the witnesses, which will be forwarded to the witnesses.

Chairman COMER. If there is no further business, without objection, the Committee stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 5:44 p.m., the Committee was adjourned.]

