

**WHAT WE HAVE HERE
IS A FAILURE TO COLLABORATE:
REVIEW OF GAO'S ANNUAL
DUPLICATION REPORT**

HEARING

BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS
AND THE FEDERAL WORKFORCE
OF THE
COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT
AND ACCOUNTABILITY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
ONE HUNDRED EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS

SECOND SESSION

JUNE 13, 2024

Serial No. 118–116

Printed for the use of the Committee on Oversight and Accountability



Available on: *govinfo.gov*
oversight.house.gov or
docs.house.gov

U.S. GOVERNMENT PUBLISHING OFFICE

56–064 PDF

WASHINGTON : 2024

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**WHAT WE HAVE HERE
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DUPLICATION REPORT**

Thursday, June 13, 2024

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY
SUBCOMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS AND THE FEDERAL
WORKFORCE

Washington, D.C.

The Subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 11:34 a.m., in room 2154, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Pete Sessions [Chairman of the Subcommittee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Sessions, Palmer, Biggs, Timmons, Burlison, Mfume, Norton, Frost, Lee of Pennsylvania, Crockett, and Tlaib.

Mr. SESSIONS. The Subcommittee on Government Operations and the Federal Workforce will come to order, and I want to welcome everybody. I apologize for our slight delay today.

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

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

I want to thank Mr. Dodaro for being here, his professionalism not only to see things that Mr. Mfume and I may thoughtfully articulate with him, we have presented to him, that we believe that is what we are here to do today, and we appreciate it.

Today's hearing on the Government Accountability Office's 2024 annual report on fragmentation, overlap, and duplication is an important process that certainly is gone through with the GAO.

Perhaps the core responsibility of this Subcommittee is to ensure the business of government is conducted as efficiently as possible. This includes ensuring agencies provide excellence in customer care. It includes ensuring agencies have guardrails in place to prevent waste, fraud, and abuse, because, in fact, it is the taxpayer that is paying for the resources that this government operates.

As we all know, not a new story, Federal programs have not always been good stewards of public funding, nor proper management, nor of the delivery of those services perhaps that were expected by a customer, but perhaps more importantly, by Congress in our intent as we laid out in law and in appropriations for this government to perform services on the American people's behalf.

And to be fair, even when Federal agencies strive for excellence, there is always room for improvement. I spent 16 years in the private sector, had over 700 employees around the state of Texas, and it is difficult to always meet through the expectation of a customer to have employees always meet those expectations. But, we will continue this conversation today and we will find out how we can get better.

Oversight in this Congress has uncovered difficult ways Federal programs have fallen short in efforts to achieve their mission on behalf of the American taxpayer. And although Mr. Mfume and I look forward to ask you questions, we want to hear your perspective.

We believe that there is an interest that your agency has, not only in the performance of taxpayer money, but also rather because we believe Federal employees too show up to work and want to gain confidence not just in the work that they do, but to perform them admirably on behalf of those who might be customers but are, perhaps more importantly, taxpayers.

We have explored how to best measure the impact of widespread telework among Federal workers to ensure that telework policies are implemented in a way that benefits the American people.

We are not sure we have heard back from agencies properly about how they want to manage that, how they want to look at the metrics, how they would develop esprit within their agencies, what things they have learned, the things which would allow us to know more about them. And this Federal Government has been lacking in its performance and communication with this Committee and Subcommittee.

We have called on the Internal Revenue Service, the State Department, Social Security Administration, and other agencies directly at the top of those organizations on a bipartisan basis to improve customer service, reduce backlogs, and overcome longstanding challenges with modernization in their information systems and the technology that they use.

We have examined the Federal response to natural disasters, including a field hearing in Florida where we saw firsthand recovery efforts from Hurricane Ian.

I must say that we believe, because the agency reported back, that they felt like that we worked with them. They felt like our feedback and our attention enabled them to hone and focus on what they believed they needed to do, perhaps that they had not been directly attaching success to those projects the way they would have wanted.

We have urged the U.S. Postal Service leadership to take necessary action to ensure Americans have a reliable Postal Service for years to come.

Far be it from me, but we are still in those negotiations, and we will continue and not give up on behalf of not only the American people, but we will look at this on a bipartisan issue because, in fact, the Postal Service is important to us, whether you live in a city, whether you own a business, whether you are a senior citizen, or live in a rural area.

So, I am proud to say our Subcommittee, us working together, has conducted, I think, our work in a fair and bipartisan way.

We think you being here today is important. We think the issues that you will bring to bear today are not only about the bottom line of money but about the quality of service that your agency is expected to perform and deliver.

In the last 14 years, actions to address GAO's recommendations in the report taken by Congress in Federal agencies—I did not make this number up it is reported—\$667 billion in financial benefits. There were just—again, this is a report that I fully accept—\$71.3 billion in savings the past year.

Does your agency make a difference? Yes, it does. Do other agencies within the Federal Government need to listen to you and continue that work? Yes, they do.

And so today, as we spoke the other day, Mr. Dodaro, I believe this Subcommittee needs to do a better job of working with you, of us bringing agencies in and making sure they are achieving those things so that we can take the \$71 billion and turn it into a hundred billion dollars later. We need to continue our efficiency.

So, we are pleased today to have Gene L. Dodaro as a witness today, who is Comptroller General of the Government Accountability Office.

We are also pleased to have members of his senior team that flank him who also can provide additional information as I am sure they will do in notes. But, it should be a pat on the back that you give them as not just Federal employees but people who are committed to the efficiency on behalf of the American people.

So, with that said, I appreciate you being here, Gene, longtime friend, long-term fan that I am of yours.

And I yield the time to the distinguished Ranking Member of the Subcommittee, Mr. Mfume, for any message he would like to give.

The gentleman is recognized.

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

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen.

Mr. Dodaro, a special good morning to you. I want to thank you for your 51 years of service to the government. That is not just something passing in the night. It speaks to a great deal of dedication and a great deal of experience. And I want to commend you on the work over at GAO.

As the chairman said, today's hearing really does focus on the GAO's 14th annual report on duplicative programs and opportunities for cost savings, allowing us hopefully to be able to zero in on the areas where we can work together to cut waste, to encourage greater collaboration, and to serve as better stewards of the American taxpayer dollars.

In keeping with what you have just heard, I do want to say that while we have your written testimony and it will be part of the official record, please feel free as we go through this exercise to elaborate on those things that you think are very important that may not be captured in that testimony.

Promoting greater efficiency and effectiveness of all of our Federal programs, agencies, offices, and initiatives governmentwide is what this Subcommittee is about. And we take great pride in being able to make sure that we dig as deep as we can to push the envelope to get the answers to make sure that the American taxpayer, the American public is served properly.

Since the report's genesis in 2011, Congress and the agencies have fully or partially addressed almost 73 percent of all of the matters and recommendations. And, as Mr. Sessions just said, in that process there was identification of \$667 billion in financial benefits. That is no small number, and it is a great achievement.

Congress and Federal agencies have achieved these financial benefits through implementing, as you know, GAO's recommendations to eradicate duplication and fragmentation of many of our Federal programs.

Increased oversight of the Small Business Administration's Paycheck Protection Program, as an example, saved \$13 billion alone. And this Committee was in the forefront of making sure that we were able to underscore and to try to find a way to capture those funds.

As we all know, COVID forced 45 percent of those same small businesses across the country to close their doors.

The PPP authorized the SBA to distribute a record \$659 billion to help small businesses across the country to be able to continue to pay their employees.

However, as we all know, unscrupulous actors took full advantage of the crisis and went about the task of defrauding the program and defrauding the taxpayer.

The Chairman and myself and members of this Committee fought back against those instances of fraud. My own efforts here in the House included two bills, H.R. 5427 and H.R. 4666, that I cosponsored and had passed through the House just last year.

At the agency level, the SBA implemented an oversight plan, including an automated screening system, to identify potentially ineligible fraudulent applicants or recipients, leading to billions of dollars in cost savings, again, for the taxpayer.

This year's report identified 112 new matters and recommendations in 42 new topic areas for Congress or Federal agencies to improve the efficiency and the effectiveness of our government.

These recommendations span across departments and branches of the government, calling on both the Congress and agencies to rise to the occasion to take additional action toward ensuring that the government works better for all people and to do so as quickly as possible.

As we consider methods to reduce unnecessary spending, I think it is important to point out that the House is voting this week to fund the Department of Defense with probably two different vehicles for the second week in a row. And I mention that because over the past 14 years GAO has identified \$197 billion in ways to cut costs at DOD.

Notably, DOD still has the highest number of open duplication cases and the highest number of cost-saving recommendations that have not been fully implemented.

The Department of Defense has a history of challenges with its financial management systems and business processes, internal controls, and financial reporting.

And to that extent, sir, the GAO noted that DOD in particular should, "improve oversight of its financial management systems allowing for more informed investment decisions which could result in cost savings and a clean audit opinion."

I understand, members of this Committee also understand, the importance of funding our military to protect democracy at home and abroad. However, we must really work to eliminate and not exacerbate duplicative efforts to ensure our Nation and our troops get the greatest value out of every dollar spent.

So, Mr. Dodaro, this report is a critical service to the Congress. We appreciate it. It gives all of us a chance to develop a third eye and to look deeper into how we are doing what we do and to ask the deeper questions: are we doing it as best as we can?

The GAO, traditionally, has been an important ally to the Subcommittee's work in increasing the effectiveness and the efficiency of the Federal Government.

I look forward to hearing more of your testimony before the Subcommittee. I want to thank you again for your 51 years of service.

And I would yield back to the Chairman.

Mr. SESSIONS. I want to thank the gentleman, my colleague, Mr. Mfume, for not only his comments but also his professional viewpoint that permeates, as well as my viewpoint, it permeates his minority members who take time, who care very much about the success of our government.

I am pleased today to introduce today's witness, Comptroller General Gene Dodaro, who brings more than 50 years of experience at the Government Accountability Office.

As Comptroller General for the past 14 years, Mr. Dodaro has overseen the development of issues of hundreds of reports and testimonies that are given to Congress every year. Efforts that ultimately help to identify mitigation and mitigate fraud, waste, and abuse in Federal programs. And today we will hear about duplication also.

He has testified before Congress each of those years dozens of times to provide nonpartisan insights into some of the most pressing Federal oversight.

I must suggest too—and Mr. Mfume believes this, because I do too—the balance, the devotion, and the dedication to service to this great Nation, Mr. Dodaro, is truly to be something that is a model that other Federal agencies and other Federal employees should be following, and we think you head that list.

Thank you for being here.

Pursuant to Committee Rule 9(g), the witnesses may—or the witness, as you are, Mr. Dodaro, please rise, stand, raise your right hand, and I will—we do have others that will be giving testimony. I have heard that, but I did not know for sure who they are.

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?

Let the record reflect that the witnesses, each of them, have answered in the affirmative.

I want to thank each of you for being here today. And I think the importance of what we are doing here today reminds me that the witnesses are necessary and needed because of the scope of what we intend to do today.

Before we get started, I want to acknowledge—and, Mr. Mfume, I do not know if you have knowledge of students—but we have students that are attending today from Texas A&M University and

Stephen F. Austin State University who are here to not only see how government works, but to see the importance of testimony of what information is given to Congress. And so, I want to thank those students who are here.

Yes, sir.

Mr. MFUME. Could they identify themselves by just holding up their hands?

Mr. SESSIONS. Yes. It is these—I see one, two—or there we have got at least two of them—oh, somebody which I cannot see—three of them.

Mr. MFUME. OK.

Mr. SESSIONS. That may be a young man who is from Florida State University or perhaps Oregon—University of Oregon. I cannot tell. We have got about 20 interns that are in our office this month. And so, I think I was pretty close to being right.

Mr. MFUME. Well, thank you and welcome. I have got my own intern here also.

Mr. SESSION. Good.

Mr. MFUME. So, part of the clan.

Mr. SESSION. Good. Thank you very much.

So, if I could please remind the witnesses that we have read your written statements, and they will appear in the full hearing record. Please limit your statement to 5 minutes.

However, with that said, as I told Mr. Dodaro, I would like for him to complete not just his sentence, but his thought and thinking. So, we have a slow gavel that Mr. Mfume and I really enjoy. And so, we are going to recognize that.

I now recognize Gene Dodaro for his opening statement. The gentleman is recognized.

**STATEMENT OF GENE L. DODARO
COMPTROLLER GENERAL
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA**

Mr. DODARO. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Mfume, members of the Subcommittee. I am very pleased to be here today to discuss our latest report.

I want to also recognize—most of you have recognized interns here. We have 16 people from 16 different countries, the national audit offices that are at GAO for a 3-year program of development. So, they are in attendance here today as well.

Mr. SESSIONS. So, they want to see exhibit A today. And that is what you will do. And I hope that the performance today on all of our positions are well covered because, you see, the American people need to have confidence that not only can we work and listen with each other, but we go to fix instead of to fight.

Mr. DODARO. I appreciate that.

And thank you for your kind comments about GAO and the importance of our agency—we have one of the most dedicated and talented workforces in the world—and for the recognition of the achievement of over \$667 billion so far.

And, Mr. Mfume, you mentioned the 73 percent. That is of over 2,000 recommendations that we have made. So, it has had broad impact.

And so, I am very proud to talk about this year's new areas. They are very important areas to public safety and national security.

These deal with national disease surveillance programs, particularly for zoonotic diseases that can be transmitted to humans, which has caused about 75 percent of all new and emerging infectious diseases; to provide more comprehensive warnings for tsunamis; to provide additional bio surveillance so that we are aware of any particular new and emerging threats; to deal with the threats of wildfire smoke, which have grown in importance as the wildfires have become more prevalent over time.

It deals with improvements to service member fatigue at DOD, which has led to deaths of many servicemembers and the destruction of much equipment as well. So, it has important security implications.

It deals with background investigations, which we see as being duplicated when a person moves from one agency to another.

It deals with better coordination to protect Federal research from threats of foreign actors.

And so, all these recommendations are really designed to help improve the coordination and collaboration of many agencies that we see now have to work on some of these more difficult issues that need to be addressed. And it is important for economy and efficiency and effectiveness for greater collaboration among actors not only with the Federal Government level, but also in partnership with state and local, in some cases private sector entities that need to be involved in these areas.

Now, the open recommendations that we have also are for cost savings and revenue enhancement. So, we have got a number of recommendations of things that could be done to save money.

For example, in the Medicare program for management evaluation services, now if you go to a hospital, a doctor that is affiliated with a hospital, the government pays you more than if you go to a doctor in a private practice not affiliated with the hospital. If you equalized those payments and made them site neutral, CBO estimates that you would save \$141 billion over 10 years.

Also, importantly, the FirstNet program, which is to support our first responders, will be out of authorization within the next couple years, so it needs to be reauthorized by Congress in order to make sure that they can collect the revenue necessary to fund the system.

That is \$15 billion that needs to be—could be accrued to the government to prevent the government from having to subsidize that process over time and have it user paid for.

We have other recommendations in the Medicaid demonstration area to make that more budget neutral. If Congress could put those requirements in place, it could save money.

The bottom line here is that there is tens of billions of dollars in additional funding that can come from implementing our new and open recommendations from our past work, in addition to making the government more effective and efficient to better serve the American people.

So, I am proud to be here today to represent our work, and look forward to responding to your questions.

Mr. SESSIONS. I thank the gentleman very much.

You and I spoke on the phone in the last few days, and I told you that I think we in Congress should work closer with you, not just to hear back from you and read the reports and go to the agencies, but actually to engage people, to engage people of what we think are important issues.

And while you talked about wildfire smoke and background checks and savings and Medicare savings, I think that we need to do a better job to look at these and specifically challenge these agencies and the heads of the agencies to achieve these things.

And I know that from time to time there are hardships which are encountered, but I think it will take the Federal Government workers to be at work. I think they have got to come to work. And I think that this is a major issue that we in our Subcommittee have been dealing with of trying to work with someone who felt like they could make this stay-at-home model and working through telework. But I think that we are going to have to take on some of these issues.

What are the two or three things that you can think of that if we decided you wanted us to do something that you would like to ask us to work on with you, specifically highlight them, stay after them, work with the agencies, make sure that on a bipartisan basis and bicameral basis, up to and including whoever is going to be the chosen Secretaries that will lead these agencies this next year?

Mr. DODARO. There are a number of issues that come to mind.

No. 1, over the last 14 years that we have done this work on overlap, duplication, fragmentation, the statute requires us to just look at duplication. But we look at fragmentation and overlap as harbingers of potential duplication.

But it also undermines the effectiveness of Federal action to serve the public effectively. And because more and more agencies need to be involved in solving some of these problems, there needs to be good collaboration.

So, we published eight criteria that if you follow you can have effective collaboration. They are things like defining common outcomes, making clear leadership for the effort, clarifying roles and responsibilities, articulating the resources that you need, involving all the right parties, having written agreements, ensuring accountability.

These are basic management tenets that if implemented successfully would make the government much more effective in dealing with these public safety issues and national security issues.

And I would urge the Congress and would greatly appreciate working with you to enshrine these eight criteria in law and have every interagency committee that is established—many of them are established by Congress, but regardless of how they are established—to follow these eight criteria. If they do, they will have much more outcome over time.

This is a common problem that we find year in and year out, and some agencies do better than others. And so that is No. 1.

No. 2 is that every year I send a letter to every head of a department, major department and agency in the Federal Government, including independent regulators, and outlining open GAO recommendations.

And I prioritize a subset of those recommendations that could have the biggest impact in improving their agency's operations.

And those reports go to the Congress. They are also made public. But if we had followup on those reports by the Congress, that would be very effective.

Also, I would recommend that Congress act on matters that we have put forth that are still open. There are 21 matters before the Congress that have the ability to save money. Twelve of them would save over a billion dollars, and the other 18 would save hundreds of millions, if not millions of dollars.

And so those I would be happy to provide a list to the Committee and would encourage action on those recommendations.

Also, as I have worked with you in the past, Mr. Chairman, we have worked on the GAO High Risk List, which is a different series than the overlap and duplication, but that has 37 areas on there, and there are many common issues of both areas.

So, that is another area that I would like to work with the Congress on, because those should be top of mind on congressional oversight agendas. And they have been used to help shape the President's management agendas going back many Presidents, over many administrations, since we have been having that program since 1990. That program has also saved about \$675 billion in financial benefits to the taxpayer.

So, these things focus on key areas important to our country, important to our citizens, and represent great opportunities for greater improvement.

Mr. SESSIONS. The way I have looked at it in years past was we have a Federal Government that sees lots of missions and good ideas out there, and agency after agency participates in these things. But there is the duplication that you speak of, and that is really why you are where you are. That is why your agency is expected to be there.

OK. I am going to take these up, and Mr. Mfume and I talked about what we are going to be doing when we get back in a week. We are going to be on break back home for work. But we are going to get back together and establish what we are going to do these final few months.

But I think that that is a clear mandate for us to be involved in that. And I want to thank you for the clarity involved. And I consider what you said also a challenge. So, we are going to have to find out if we are up to that.

Thank you very much.

Mr. Mfume, you are recognized.

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

Mr. Dodaro, a couple of quick things in the amount of time that I have. I wanted to cover just a couple of issues that are of great importance to me and to the district that I represent.

When GAO published last year's duplication report, I noticed that it recommended that the IRS in particular do more to improve efforts to audit high-income taxpayers and ensure that they were paying their fair share.

And then, as you know, I saw the GAO report released last April, this past April, entitled "Tax Enforcement: IRS Selection Processes

for Returns Claiming Refundable Credits Could Better Address Equity.”

So, it is this issue of equity that concerns me.

Mr. Chairman, I would like to offer for entrance into the record that full report.

Mr. SESSIONS. Without objection, that will be entered into the record.

Mr. MFUME. And, according to the report Mr. Dodaro, Earned Income Tax Credit return audits conducted by the Wage and Investment Division of IRS included higher numbers of audits of Black EITC recipients, which strikes me as puzzling.

And that stood out and still stands out, and for me it begs some sort of answer—and I have not seen it yet—from the IRS. But we will continue to push on that.

That EITC was designed to boost the income of eligible low-and moderate-income workers, particularly those who have children, and is the largest Federal anti-poverty program, serving approximately 26 million people.

And as you know, audits conducted by the IRS often delay tax returns, harm lower-income families, harm all of us actually.

So, I agree with the duplication report’s findings and recommendations, and I recognize that IRS’ acceptance of the six recommendations was a good first step, only the first step. But there is, in my opinion, a need to reduce, decrease significantly the algorithmic bias that exists in the dependent data base that they use.

I will give you a case in point, and maybe I will ask you a question, because it seems to me that using that biometric system with built-in biases goes against equity and is almost punitive, particularly for darker-skinned individuals who the biometrics read differently and create a listing of things or concerns that really are not sufficient and have no real support.

So, I have been concerned about that, and I remain concerned also that the very opposite of what we have charged the IRS to do in those six recommendations may be worsening the impact on African-American taxpayers, which I think is inherently wrong and incorrect.

So, I would really commend your work in this area and encourage the GAO to continue to push even harder for agencies—in this case we are talking about the IRS—to come up with options to the biometric system that will allow people to be able to not run into these impediments.

And we cannot be certain that the private sector is going to prioritize and vet these same concerns. I mean, that is not what they are driven by. They are driven by a lot of other things, not the least of which are concerns that relate back to equity and to race.

As you continue your annual assessment of identifying additional opportunities for greater efficiency and effectiveness, can you tell the Committee briefly how we can work together to ensure that the technologies—because this is where we are with the algorithmic system and biometric biases—how we can work together that those technologies are used in such a way to administer programs and services equitably?

Mr. DODARO. Yes, absolutely.

First, with regard to the tax system, tax administration has been on our High-Risk List since 1990 because of a lot of issues associated with how we approach enforcement. Our system is based on voluntary compliance, but that means that people have to have faith that it is fair, it is equitable, and it deals with issues.

And so, we have got a lot of recommendations on how IRS can better select, and the models that they use in order to determine who to audit can be done better, more effectively, and more fairly. And we will continue to press on that issue.

Now, with regard to the technologies, I have established the Science, Technology Assessment and Analytics Group, tripled the size of it over the past few years. We have done work on facial recognition technologies, talking about the biases, particularly of people of color, and some limitations in the shortcomings of those programs.

I am very concerned, as the Federal Government goes to implement artificial intelligence applications, that the quality of their information is suspect in many cases, not complete, not accurate, not reliable, and in some cases could have built-in biases in those systems.

So, we are going to be looking at this issue very carefully because artificial intelligence, if we do not improve the data and make sure it is fair going into the systems, you are going to get bad outcomes faster. And it is not going to provide all of the benefits that it could provide unless we have the proper safeguards in place.

So, we are working on that, and I am happy to talk about the different technologies and what could be done in those areas. We have hired a lot of scientists. So, I have got data scientists and others. And so, we are all over that issue, and I am happy to work with you.

Mr. MFUME. Thank you very much.

Before I yield back, Login.gov, which both the Chairman and myself and members of this Committee have been overseeing for some time now, has in my opinion those same issues and challenges. And they become punitive to the extent that when people are denied because of a system that is not fail-safe, we create more of a problem.

So, we are on the record with Login.gov because we think that there has to be more options available for them to do their job when it comes to the people they are serving.

So, I know I have gone beyond my time.

Mr. DODARO. Well, I would just say, given the slow gavel, that we are doing work currently on Login.gov. And we are happy to share the scope of that work with both of you, your staff, and to provide the results of that effort.

I share your concern. I think there has to be more options. There has to be better ways of identity verification to provide greater safeguards and assurance to the public that it is going to be done properly.

And the government is going to be protected too, because the fraud during the pandemic programs was epic. We have estimated that, between 2018 and 2022, that losses to the Federal Government of fraud were between \$233 billion to \$521 billion annually, depending on the risk level and the amount of funding in those areas.

So, it is very important we do safeguards, but you cannot do it at the expense of fair treatment to all people.

Mr. MFUME. I agree. And we have had a panel of inspector generals come before us to underscore how deeply that fraud went and to suggest on the record that it might take 8 or 9 additional years before everybody who were the bad actors are caught and prosecuted. So, it is a long-term process.

Mr. DODARO. Yes. And even if we catch everybody, you are not going to recover the money. It would be less than 10 percent by historical standards. So, we have to prevent fraud in the first place.

We worked with the Congress in the past to pass the Fraud Reduction and Data Analytics Act in 2016 to put best practices for fraud prevention in place. So, the agencies, if they had acted quickly, would have been much better prepared before the pandemic.

One of the things, for example, is to do a fraud risk assessment. The first fraud risk assessment SBA did, and based on this 2016 law, was in February 2022 after all the money had been spent.

So, they should have been better prepared. And that is an area, that fraud prevention, that I think is another area that we could work on together to make sure agencies are putting in place the practices necessary to prevent it in the first place. It is the only way to safeguard taxpayer funds effectively.

Mr. MFUME. Thank you.

Mr. SESSIONS. The gentleman yields back his time. Thank you very much.

Exactly to our point, you have got to stop this by identifying it and fixing it. It has got to be done.

We are going to yield to the distinguished gentleman from South Carolina, Mr. Timmons. The gentleman is recognized.

Mr. TIMMONS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you to our witness, Comptroller General Dodaro, for being here today.

With our national debt quickly approaching \$35 trillion, it really is past time to have serious conversations about government spending.

I firmly believe our national debt is the greatest threat to national security, and Congress must address it now. We cannot continue to ignore our failing fiscal trajectory. The debt held by the public is expected to reach \$45 trillion, or 114 percent of GDP, by 2033, and the longer we wait, the harder it is going to be to fix. And doing nothing is simply not an option.

We are here today to discuss GAO's annual duplication report and evaluate the effectiveness of our agencies' efforts to prevent waste and realize billions of dollars in cost savings for taxpayers.

Two weeks ago, I questioned the Director of the Office of Personnel Management about the concerning issue of telework which started with the COVID-19 pandemic and is still continuing today.

A great deal has been said about telework in Federal agencies, but most concerning to me is that we have yet to see any data regarding the supposed benefits of telework. And at this point it has been years since the Biden administration announced expanded telework was going to be the new norm.

I asked the Director what evidence he had regarding the value of telework. More specifically, I asked if any data exists showing

that widespread Federal telework is as effective and good for the taxpayer as in-person work.

His response was the following, “The work arrangements we have at OPM, which include telework, are consistent with the performance improvement that we are seeing from our agency.”

I also asked the Director if OPM had reduced its costs as a result of reduced physical office space since many of its employees are continuing to work from home, but the answer was quite vague. The Director said, “We have let go some leased space around the country, and we have more work to do to get to a steady state.”

So, if we are going to have telework, I feel like we should have some cost savings in leased space.

The Federal Office Space Utilization segment of the duplication report shows that the Federal Government owns over 460 million square feet of office space that costs billions of dollars annually to operate and maintain.

Is that correct, Mr. Dodaro?

Mr. DODARO. Yes.

Mr. TIMMONS. Thank you.

In a 2023 sample survey, GAO found that 17 of 24 agencies overseen by the council used an estimated average of 25 percent or less of their headquarters buildings’ capacity—25 percent or less of the 460 million square feet.

And agencies at the higher end of the range used only an estimated 40 to 49 percent of the capacity of their headquarters during that timeframe.

So, my question is this. How is it that a significant percentage of agency employees are working from home and have been doing so since the pandemic and yet agencies like OPM have only let go of some, if any, leased space?

Mr. DODARO. Yes. I will ask Dave Marroni to elaborate, Congressman Timmons.

Mr. TIMMONS. Thank you.

Mr. DODARO. It is good to see you.

Mr. TIMMONS. Great to see you.

Mr. DODARO. But I would say one thing first, is that we have had real property management of the Federal Government on our High-risk List since 2007. There was unused Federal property before the pandemic, and the Federal Government was doing a very poor job of disposing of that property, and there should have been much more cost savings.

And I agree with you, if you are going to move in this direction, you can prove telework is effective for your agency and you focus on the right outcomes, productivity, and equality of the work. You cannot have extra space. You should be able to get rid of it.

Dave.

Mr. TIMMONS. Thank you.

Mr. MARRONI. And to your point, Congressman, that is certainly a concern that we have looked at in terms of the low utilization of Federal office space in post-pandemic.

As the Comptroller General noted, this is a longstanding problem. But it has gotten considerably worse with increases in telework.

And so, our recommendation to agencies has been for OMB, in coordination with the Federal Real Property Council, which is the senior real property officials across the government, to develop benchmarks for determining how much space they are utilizing and then move forward to get rid of that space that they do not need.

It has significant financial costs to hold on to unneeded space, obviously, but also environmental costs. You are using energy and water for those buildings regardless if someone is at their desk or not.

It has opportunity costs. Agencies are spending money on space they do not need. That means that is not money for their mission.

It also means the local communities where those buildings are are not able to get the most out of that area either.

So, definitely a concern. The agencies do need to move forward on making decisions about their space.

Mr. TIMMONS. I appreciate that. I think we can get a lot more aggressive on this. And even here in the Capitol, the cost of office space is enormous.

So, as we consider relocating agencies and going to more telework, this is something that is a very simple cost savings that would be enormous. I mean, we are talking billions of dollars a year, and, again, \$35 trillion in debt, \$2 trillion deficit, and we are spending—or we are increasing our debt by a trillion dollars every hundred days.

These are all, like, major challenges that we have to face, and I think that this is a really good space, if indeed we are stuck with telework, which I do not particularly like. But if that is the direction that these agencies are going to go, at the very least let us save some taxpayer dollars.

Mr. DODARO. Absolutely.

Mr. TIMMONS. Great.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

Mr. SESSIONS. Thank you very much.

The gentlewoman, Ms. Lee, is recognized.

Ms. LEE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And I would also like to thank Mr. Dodaro for coming to speak on the important work of GAO's duplication report.

Part of the Republican playbook is to slash funding to government agencies and then cry foul when they cannot function properly, to continue shorting their corporate donors of any oversight or responsibility.

But we know that the only way to truly deliver for the American people is to fully and properly invest in the programs meant to serve them. This includes investment in the right people, processes, and technologies.

Mr. Dodaro, GAO is a great example of an agency where more investment in your people and resources yields better results for the American people, correct?

Mr. DODARO. That is right.

Ms. LEE. This great return on taxpayer investment is especially true when it comes to the IRS. The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office found that an \$80 billion investment in the IRS would increase Federal revenue by \$200 billion over 10 years.

Despite these findings, just last week my Republican colleagues announced that they want to slash IRS funding further and cut the Direct File program, a wildly successful pilot that makes filing taxes easier for thousands of Americans.

We know that cutting this program does not benefit taxpayers, but is a gift to tax-filing services like TurboTax that spends millions lobbying them. Just this tax season, that limited Direct File program saw 140,000 taxpayers claim more than \$90 million in refunds and save an estimated \$5.6 million in filing costs. Imagine the impacts on a nationwide scale.

Republicans specifically seek to gut the IRS' enforcement budget. So, to summarize, they want to both make it harder for everyday Americans to comply with tax law and make it easier for the wealthiest Americans to get away with refusing to pay their fair share.

GAO's work really highlights the way resources tie with outcomes, especially at the IRS. In May 2022, GAO found that the IRS has significantly reduced audits of individuals who report higher amounts of income. So, the Treasury announced a goal to increase audits of high-income and high-wealth earners.

Mr. Dodaro, is the IRS on track to meet that goal?

Mr. DODARO. Yes, yes, they are. It is 8 percent. And, yes, they are. But we think they can do a better job at who they select and how they train their people up to be more effective.

Ms. LEE. Thank you.

Earlier this year, GAO recommended that the IRS develop plans to evaluate how they select which tax returns to audit.

How could improving these selection criteria help the IRS enforce our Nation's tax laws more effectively and equitably?

Mr. DODARO. Yes. What we find for taxpayers that are very wealthy, high-income people, also for large partnerships, complex partnerships, that many of the audits they do do not result in any increase in revenue, which means that they are targeting compliant taxpayers. So, it is not benefiting the government in additional revenue and burdening those taxpayers.

So, we think the models could be done better to better target where we are likely to see noncompliance and, therefore, additional revenues appropriately to the current tax laws that come to the government. And there is a huge tax gap.

Ms. LEE. I was going to ask, well, are we likely to see more non-compliance, but—

Mr. DODARO. No, I do not think so. I think if you target it properly, you will see better compliance.

Ms. LEE. So, just to sum this up, for decades the IRS has disproportionately audited low-income people because those audits are quick and easy for them.

Filing taxes has also just been a nightmare for most folks. How many people have hit April, spent the money for filing help, and then been nailed with an unexpected tax bill? Or, conversely, how many rely on that tax refund to come through and be accurate?

Now we are finally seeing the IRS start to go after the wealthy tax cheats, the ones who are intentionally hiding their money, instead of the regular people who are making mistakes. And we are

finally seeing the start of a way to make filing taxes less stressful and cost less money.

But without the continued resources, talent, and technologies to complete these goals, they are just going to keep going after regular people, and that just is not right or fair.

I thank you. And I have no further comment, unless you do with the 38 seconds that we have.

Mr. DODARO. This is an area, as I mentioned tax administration, that we focused on as a high-risk area since 1990. It is still on the list. There is much more that could be done, that IRS could use its resources more effectively, and we could have a more fair and equitable and efficient tax system.

Ms. LEE. Thank you. We would all like to see that.

I yield back.

Mr. SESSIONS. The gentlewoman yields back her time.

Mr. Frost is recognized.

Mr. FROST. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

So, GAO investigated several national security issues at the Department of Defense and made important information-sharing and operational efficiency recommendations to the Department.

The Pentagon frequently conducts simulations of conflicts or scenarios, so-called war games, that play at the dynamics of potential conflicts across the entire world.

These exercises can yield insights that feed future strategies and policies for evaluating potential threats and adversaries. Simulations inform DOD's decision about warfare concepts, capabilities, and plans, and each branch hosts their own war games as well as participating in simulations as well.

So, Mr. Dodaro, what would GAO recommend that the Department of Defense do differently to make sure that these exercises have a greater benefit to national security?

Mr. DODARO. Yes. The Department established a central repository in 2015 to collect all this information to help make the future plans more effective and to also then learn from the results and share the results across the Department.

But it is very fragmented. Nobody is in charge. So, we recommend you put somebody in charge of the program, to lead it over time, to make it more effective, and that you have better people—I mean, better reporting of information into a central data base that would be complete and reliable and allow more effective treatment.

The Department agreed with our recommendation and has commissioned a study to figure out how best to do this.

The Department, as you mentioned, when we were charged with looking at overlap, duplication, fragmentation, DOD is kind of like the poster child for this area because they are so large and decentralized, and so there are a lot of opportunities.

And it is because they are committed to their mission, but everybody is enthusiastic and they start off in launching trying to improve these areas in good faith, but they do not have central management leadership as much as they need.

Mr. FROST. Yes. I mean, on the topic of the duplication report, this Subcommittee held a hearing on examining the root causes of DOD's financial statements on why it cannot be audited.

What does GAO suggest DOD do to help make sure that it works toward a successful audit?

Mr. DODARO. Yes. First, I might say that they got a clean opinion this year for the Marine Corps for the first time, so I was encouraged by that. They have a good plan. But they need to fix the problems that their independent auditors identify more promptly. They are not really fixing them as much as possible.

They also need to get the better control—

Mr. FROST. Why do you think they are not fixing as much?

Mr. DODARO. Well, it is a matter of resources to them. I mean, there is a lot of benefits that they have received from this thing.

Mr. FROST. Yes.

Mr. DODARO. And the auditors keep finding, like, hundreds of problems, so that the number keeps growing, but the percentage of them fixing them is stuck at around 20-some percent of the corrective action. So, they need to move faster.

But most of the recommendations, Congressman Frost, deal with their financial systems. Their systems are not designed properly. They have a process now that they put in place to make sure that they are certified, that they meet all the requirements, and they are going to be auditable.

But compliance with those requirements is lacking. And so, we have recommended that they better stick with the guidelines they have in place to certify these systems, not only new ones, ones that are in development, but existing systems.

So, we are waiting for them to react to our recommendations there. They said they agreed, but we will see what they do to implement them.

But the system fixes are at the root cause of many of these corrective actions, and that is why you do not see greater progress.

Mr. FROST. Yes, yes. And the reasoning of resources, I do not know. I do not quite buy it as we are nearing an almost \$1 trillion defense budget; one I would say is quite inflated.

But last thing really quick. GAO also noted fragmentation in DOD research projects on service member fatigue. The report specifically mentions the repeated use of wearable devices, such as smartwatches and heart monitors, to identify and mitigate the root causes of service member fatigue. DOD has conducted nearly 50 different studies on this.

What did GAO recommend that DOD change when it comes to studying the fatigue of servicemembers?

Mr. DODARO. I will ask Cathy Berrick to do it. She is our expert in defense capabilities and management.

Ms. BERRICK. Yes, thank you.

Yes, service member fatigue is really a significant issue at DOD. By DOD's own studies of their service members, two-thirds are reporting getting 6 or fewer hours of sleep a night. So, this is a readiness issue. It is a safety issue. It is a health issue.

So, there is a lot of research—

Mr. FROST. And a workplace issue.

Ms. BERRICK. And a workplace issue, exactly.

There is a lot of research going on in the Department both monitoring service members' sleep, but also looking at things like envi-

ronmental factors, how can we increase the quality of sleep, as well as the health impacts of sleep.

We identified 130 research projects, and as you mentioned, 48 in particular were related to wearable technologies that track service members' sleep.

These projects were very fragmented. Some of them were looking at the exact same technologies, the exact same models, and there was no coordination within the Department to partner on some of this research. And as you can imagine, lots of different offices within DOD are doing this.

We looked at cost information for 29 of these 48 projects. It was \$25 million. DOD is planning on investing hundreds of millions, million more in this area. The Defense Health Agency, for example, is going to let a contract for \$350 million to look at six wearable technologies.

So, there is a lot of opportunity for potential efficiencies. If DOD does not procure one of these technologies, it is tens of thousands in savings and potentially hundreds of millions.

Mr. FROST. Thank you so much.

I yield back. And thank you to the Chair for allowing the overage.

Mr. SESSIONS. The gentleman yields back his time. Thank you very much.

The gentlewoman, Ms. Tlaib, is recognized.

Ms. TLAIB. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you so much for being here.

One of the areas—I know there is a lot of duplication in regard to, like, for instance, with even rural housing with HUD. It tends to overlap because Department of Ag is mostly present in some of our rural communities.

But the one area that I know my residents were excited about and hearing in regard to the Justice40 Initiative, and I want to kind of try to focus on that.

We had started a “We Have a Right to Breathe” campaign in my district. We have been fighting really just at the front lines about clean water and the importance of that. And so, I know Justice40 involves tens of billions of dollars fragmented across, I think, 500 Federal agencies.

And so, could you speak a little bit about some of the improvements that GAO has already seen and what you would like to see going forward? Because for many of my residents, they will hear these—you know, they will see the press releases, they will see the announcements, but implementation matters so much to them.

Can you talk a little bit about that?

Mr. DODARO. Yes, I would be happy to.

You are right, there are 500 programs, about 19 different agencies. It has been coordinated out of the Executive Office of the President. The Council for Environmental Quality, OMB, and the Climate Policy Office are all coordinating it.

So, they have developed some guidance initially and reached out and tried to get some input. So, that was a good first step. But the guidance needs to be more—

Ms. TLAIB. Is that—I am sorry. Is that from that January 2024 report that you all put out?

Mr. DODARO. Yes.

Ms. TLAIB. Yes. OK. I saw that.

Mr. DODARO. Yes. And we have made some recommendations in that report. For example, there is another group in the White House, the Environmental Justice Interagency Council, and they were not using that group as effectively as we think they could use that group, so we asked for greater coordination there.

And then they have recently issued some additional guidance which would, if effectively implemented, follow our recommendations in the GAO reports and also institute this collaboration criteria I mentioned earlier. We have eight criteria that, if effectively followed, will ensure better outcomes in the programs.

And specifically, as it relates to Justice40, what outcomes do they want to achieve? How are they going to establish performance measures and track progress and report and provide information on what benefits have accrued as a result of the initiative and have greater transparency so that the Congress and the public and your constituents can see what has happened as a result of the initiative?

It is very significant because about 40 percent of the money being spent in these areas is to go to disadvantaged communities.

Ms. TLAIB. And even in your report, even with your guidelines, which I appreciate them being proactive, I mean, they are using the right language. It is the same kind of language we have been using for quite a long time, even before the Flint crisis.

But, again, going back to implementation matters, is there anything that we should be doing as Congress Members in regard to that, because, of course, 40 percent, right, has to go.

Mr. DODARO. Yes.

Ms. TLAIB. I am just not seeing the implementation on the ground, if that makes any sense.

Mr. DODARO. I understand.

Ms. TLAIB. Yes.

Mr. DODARO. Yes. Yes. No, we are going to follow implementation.

I will ask Mr. Gaffigan, who is our managing director in this area, to talk about what work we have underway. We have a lot of work underway in the Justice40 area.

Mr. GAFFIGAN. Yes. Representative, we are following up on the implementation. We are going to follow the money.

One of the key challenges with it is identifying the disadvantaged communities and how to target these 500 programs. Also, making sure that barriers for communities' access to these programs are dealt with and addressed. So, we are going to followup on that.

And we are also sort of going to look at this scorecard, which was sort of to track where the money was going, what the results are. So, we have made a lot of recommendations to set these things up, and now we are going to follow through. And that work is being done for this Committee.

Ms. TLAIB. Pay attention to the Technical Assistance Centers.

Mr. GAFFIGAN. Yes.

Ms. TLAIB. Because that is what our frontline community-based organizations that have been doing environmental justice work has

been told. Go to the Technical Assistance Centers that are assigned to your region. For Region 5, we have two, and we have been reaching out. They just now finally, I think, got some sort of guidance, but yet my residents are like, where do we apply? Is somebody going to help us write the grant? How do we get this money to the people?

I mean, it is a great title. It is great words being used. Again, please followup with my office, and I would love to be a partner in making sure, again, that it is doing what it is supposed to be doing.

Mr. GAFFIGAN. Absolutely. We plan to be out there kicking the tires. We have also addressed these issues when it comes to Tribal Nations and their access to the things. So, that is on our radar, and we are doing work diving in.

Ms. TLAIB. Thank you. I yield.

Mr. DODARO. We will work with your office. You will give us a good litmus test to ensure we are getting the real—the ground truth.

Ms. TLAIB. I appreciate that. Thank you.

Mr. DODARO. Sure. Sure. Happy to do so.

Mr. SESSIONS. The gentlewoman yields back her time.

The distinguished gentleman from Arizona, Mr. Biggs, is recognized.

Mr. BIGGS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you for holding this hearing.

Mr. Dodaro, it is good to see you again. Thanks for being here. I appreciate your work and your testimony today and your report that you provided to us.

One of the open topic areas discussed in your written testimony is the need for the Department of Education to obtain data to verify income information for borrowers reporting zero income when applying for income-driven repayment plans for Federal student loans.

Did you make any specific recommendations? And please tell us about potential for implementation of those recommendations.

Mr. DODARO. Yes. Yes. Thank you for that. That is an important question.

When we first looked at this issue, we found over 95,000 plans—that was over 10 percent of the whole plans—reported zero income, and Education was taking the self-certification of the people and not verifying it in any way. So, we thought you need to verify that to make sure. We saw what self-certification did during the pandemic, and it did not work out so well. And so, it is not a good technique. And so, we recommended they do something.

Now, Congress has given them now the authority to use tax data, but the applicant for the income-driven repayment program has to allow their data to be accessed by IRS and reported to the Education Department. And, in the efforts to take applications for further plans, you know—because some people change their plans or apply for new ones—about 70 percent. A little over 70 percent of the people allowed Education to access their tax data. The other ones did not.

So, the question is, how is Education now going to use the other information, which could be commercial sources or it could be the new hire data base that is collected by HHS that collects current

wage data. It is used for child enforcement purposes, but that is what we used when we checked that data base against the Education data base.

So, Education has not made a decision yet about what they are going to do to verify those that do not have the IRS compliance. So, I am very concerned. They need to make sure they have something in place to do this.

Mr. BIGGS. Do they have a deadline before they need to come up with how they are going to actually implement for the other 30 percent?

Mr. DODARO. Yes. I will check on whether they have a deadline or not, but they should have one before they start the program again. But they have missed a lot of deadlines.

Like, we are looking at now at the Free Application For Student Loan Aid, the FAFSA program, all the problems they had, what happened there, and we are trying to get all the data out of them. You know, this income-driven repayment program, if they implement the recommendations successfully, CBO—or the Joint Committee on Taxation or CBO—I forget which one—have estimated it could save \$2 billion. So, it is very important. I will followup—

Mr. BIGGS. \$2 billion over time?

Mr. DODARO. Yes, over time.

Mr. BIGGS. OK.

Mr. DODARO. So, we will followup with them, and I will let you know on the timeframe. If they do not have one, I will recommend they establish one, obviously.

Mr. BIGGS. Very good. And you anticipated—one of my questions was what kind of savings do you anticipate?

So, since GAO has been conducting an annual duplication report in 2011, your agency has made over 2,000 recommendations to Federal agencies and to Congress on how to reduce or eliminate duplication and overlap in Federal programs, and the execution of those recommendations has resulted in \$667.5 billion in savings.

I commend you for that, but I would just say, it is not near enough. Why do I say that? Because, from 2011 to where we sit today, our deficit has grown—or excuse me—our national debt has grown by \$25 trillion, and we maintain a consistent structural deficit in excess of \$2 trillion.

And so, we need you to find these programs and weed them out and help us turn our woeful budget system around. The rest of it belongs to us. We have got to take care of it. And that is across both parties. It is not one party or another. Both parties are to blame there.

And so, I want to turn to the report more broadly. You identified 112 recommendations and matters in 42 topic areas in the 2024 duplication report. What are the common themes and threads among programs with opportunities for cost savings and revenue enhancement?

Mr. DODARO. Yes. Some of the most common areas is in the overlap and duplication, fragmentation, and not following best practices for collaboration. And I mentioned earlier in the Chairman's questioning, I think Congress should legislate those eight criteria so that agencies that have interagency counsels can work on it.

In the other areas, in cost savings and revenue enhancements, there are a number of recommendations at IRS to better focus their enforcement efforts, and in that area, also, we have recommendations to the Congress. Like, for example, in the past, we recommended that the Congress accelerate the date for W-2s to be provided to IRS. Before, employees had to get them in January—by the end of January—but IRS did not get them and Social Security until April. So, a lot of people were filing fake tax returns, and there was a lot of identity theft going on. So, Congress expedited the reporting of the wage data. Now, it saved \$7 billion from fraudulent tax payments.

We have other recommendations to the Congress. To your point, one of the big cost drivers in the Federal debt is healthcare. We have got recommendations if you equalize the payments for Medicare, for people going to doctors' offices affiliated with hospitals to what you do in the private practice. Right now, we pay the hospitals more—affiliated with the hospital. You can save 141 billion over 10 years in Medicare.

We have got other recommendations to save hundreds of millions in Medicaid. I think the Medicaid program needs a lot more oversight and attention. Both of these programs—Medicare and Medicaid—last year reported collectively over \$100 billion in improper payments, and so we have got recommendations to address those issues.

So, we are trying to target our recommendations to some of the major spending areas in the government, particularly the healthcare area, and to deal with the tax gap issue by better—you know, we have a lot of revenue that should be coming into the government. The latest estimate extrapolated for 2014 to 2016 was \$428 billion a year, but IRS estimates that the current tax gap between taxes owed and taxes collected is over \$600 billion.

We also have a lot of money going out the door that should not go out the door in improper payments and fraud. We estimated that—or the government agencies reported—over \$236 billion in improper payments for 2023, and that is not everything. There is a lot of programs that are not reporting payments.

Mr. BIGGS. I find this fascinating, but my time is way expired. So, Mr. Dodaro, good to see you again. Thanks for your testimony.

Mr. DODARO. Thank you.

Mr. BIGGS. I will yield back, Mr. Chairman. Thanks for your indulgence.

Mr. SESSIONS. The gentleman yields back his time. Thank you very much.

If the gentleman would know that I have told this Committee—Subcommittee that we are going to have a slow gavel. The purpose of this hearing is to get information out, not to time it at 5 minutes or 5 minutes and 1 second.

Mr. BIGGS. Then I would like some time back.

Mr. SESSIONS. Thank you very much. The gentleman yields back.

At this time, the gentlewoman from Dallas, Texas, Ms. Crockett, is recognized.

Ms. CROCKETT. Thank you so much, Mr. Chair, and good morning, almost afternoon to you.

In this Committee, we are charged with this vast task of trying to make sure that we are making the Federal Government more accountable and more efficient and more cost-effective for the American people. And reading through this new report, I am struck by just how many ways GAO has said that Congress can lead this charge.

So, my first question to you is, when GAO issues a report, it is common for the agency to include a section that talks about matters for congressional consideration. What exactly does that mean?

Mr. DODARO. The matters for congressional consideration mean recommendations we are making to the Congress to act as distinct from recommendations we are making to the departments and agencies to act. We do that in deference to Congress' constitutional responsibilities.

Ms. CROCKETT. Thank you so much.

And how many matters for congressional consideration are in the latest duplication report?

Mr. DODARO. In the latest one—I will get you the number here—but we have—we have made, over time, I think, 240 of those matters for congressional recommendations. So, there are fewer than to the agencies, but the implementation rate has been a little better with the agencies than the matters for the Congress.

Most of the money you have heard mentioned, \$667 billion that we have saved the government by implementing our recommendations, have come from actions the Congress has taken.

Ms. CROCKETT. OK. If I said that the number was around 112, would you have any reason to disagree?

Mr. DODARO. Well, there are 112 recommendations in the latest report. Not all are matters.

Ms. CROCKETT. Gotcha. OK. That makes sense.

Can you briefly walk us through a few of these matters for congressional consideration?

Mr. DODARO. Yes. Sure. One I was just talking about, which is to equalize the Medicare payments. If an individual needs to have an evaluation done by a doctor and you go to one that is affiliated with a hospital, Medicare pays you more than if you go to somebody who is in private practice. CBO estimates that that could save the government \$141 billion over 10 years.

We also have an open recommendation that Congress reauthorize FirstNet, which is the emergency response network for first responders. Very important. And also, Congress needs to give them additional authority to collect revenues from users of that system. That could save \$15 billion over time.

We have 12 matters that—another one is in Medicaid. A lot of demonstrations are giving states more flexibility, but it is supposed to be budget neutral. They can try new things, but it should not cost more money. We found that that is not the case. It always costs more money. And you could save, you know, billions more in there.

And we have got other ones on equalizing the payments between, for example, Medicare fee-for-service and Medicare Advantage. They are true up there because you do not have—one is on a capitated basis, the Medicare Advantage, and the other one is on fee-for-services.

And so, at the end of the year, they look at beneficiary characteristics, and they end up making an adjustment to the payments, but by not using the most recent information and better characteristics of the beneficiaries under Medicare Advantage, we are overpaying, probably, to that area.

Ms. CROCKETT. Thank you for that.

Mr. DODARO. Sure.

Ms. CROCKETT. Another thing that I would like to ask you about is, can you tell us how many of the matters that the GAO has given to Congress that are still open? I know you kind of laid out some, but—

Mr. DODARO. OK. Since 2011, we have made 140 matters as this work to the Congress. Seventy-six are open.

Ms. CROCKETT. OK. So, approximately a little more than half are still open?

Mr. DODARO. That is correct.

Ms. CROCKETT. OK. And of those matters—

Mr. DODARO. Now, I would say—just let me add.

Ms. CROCKETT. OK.

Mr. DODARO. Of those that are open, about 40 percent have been introduced in legislation—

Ms. CROCKETT. OK.

Mr. DODARO [continuing]. In the last Congress or this Congress. So, there are some efforts being made by different parts of the Congress to implement those matters, but they have not been pushed across the goal line yet.

Ms. CROCKETT. OK. It looks like I am running out of time. I am actually out of time. But thank you so much. I appreciate you.

And I will yield.

Mr. DODARO. Sure.

Mr. SESSIONS. The gentlewoman yields back her time.

And now I will defer to the distinguished gentleman, the Chairman of the Republican Policy Committee, Chairman Palmer.

Mr. PALMER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I want to stay on that theme of Ms. Crockett. What percent of— I want to clarify again what percent of GAO recommendations are not implemented.

Mr. DODARO. Well, there are two sets of numbers. If you talk about all our work and all our reports, not just this one we are testifying on—

Mr. PALMER. Well, you do not work for no good reason, so I would assume that 100 percent should be implemented. So, what percent—

Mr. DODARO. Seventy-five. On average, 75 percent of our recommendations. That is pretty steady over time.

Mr. PALMER. They are or are not?

Mr. DODARO. They are. They are implemented.

Mr. PALMER. OK. So, a quarter are not?

Mr. DODARO. Right.

Mr. PALMER. But I would assume that the other 25 percent would result in savings, more efficiency in the operation of the Federal Government agencies, and they should be implemented?

Mr. DODARO. Right.

Mr. PALMER. Some of these recommendations that you have made, from the past conversations you and I have had, have been open for a long time. Is that correct?

Mr. DODARO. Some of them, yes.

Mr. PALMER. Yes. What can be done to ensure that GAO's recommendations are implemented?

Mr. DODARO. Yes. We just issued this week a report listing every open matter that we have suggested to the Congress along with what cost savings could occur if the Congress implemented our recommendations.

So, we have been asked by the Congress to address this issue. Give us in one report all your open matters that you have recommended to Congress. And it just came out a few days ago. Of there, we have 21 matters open that could save over a billion dollars—or 20 of them—12 of them could be over a billion dollars. The other ones are millions or hundreds of millions. I would be happy to submit that report for the record here.

Mr. PALMER. Well, Mr. Chairman, I think we could help on the implementation side, obviously, with legislation but also with oversight because I do think it is incumbent upon agencies to act on these recommendations, and the history of GAO's recommendations have pretty well documented some substantial savings to the Federal Government.

A couple things I want to ask about. You have made some recommendations on disposable radioactive sources or you have looked into that. Have you made recommendations on disposable radioactive sources?

Mr. DODARO. Yes. Yes.

Mr. PALMER. Have they been acted on?

Mr. DODARO. Not yet.

Mr. PALMER. How about safeguarding—now, this is something I think is extremely important—safeguarding federally funded research from foreign threats?

Mr. DODARO. I do not believe they are fully implemented yet.

Mr. PALMER. Mr. Chairman, I think that the failure to safeguard research, federally funded research, and from my perspective, any domestic research that impacts our national security needs to be—those recommendations need to be fully acted on.

Mr. DODARO. I do not think, Congressman Palmer, those sets of particular recommendations will be implemented without congressional attention and action.

Mr. PALMER. You think they will be?

Mr. DODARO. They will not be.

Mr. PALMER. They will not be.

Mr. DODARO. They will not be fully implemented. That is my opinion.

Mr. PALMER. Mr. Chairman, I think we need to make this a priority.

And I know it is going to shock you that I am going to ask about improper payments because we spent years working on this, but you were talking about duplications. In the case of duplication, is that not also a problem in terms of improper payments?

Mr. DODARO. Well, it could be depending upon—it does not really fit the definition that we have, but we have—it fits—in addition to

overlap and duplication, we include cost savings and revenue enhancement. So, the cost savings and improper payments fit within that category.

Mr. PALMER. And you say if we can eliminate some additional duplications, it would save another \$70-plus billion?

Mr. DODARO. Well, no. We said that that was what was saved from last year's report to this year. So, that is in the bank already. There are tens of billions of dollars that could be implemented.

We have a report coming out soon that has a simulation if all of GAO's open recommendations are implemented that have financial benefits, and a lot of our recommendations that are to improve the economy and efficiency cannot be measured. Improving public safety, for example. You would save up to \$180 billion.

Mr. PALMER. We have had this discussion in the past as well—in regard to improper payments, and I think it would apply to duplications—and that is the failure of coordination and, in some cases, communication between Federal agencies and between Federal and state agencies.

Mr. DODARO. Right.

Mr. PALMER. And I think, when we first started this discussion, one of the big issues that we identified was antiquated data systems.

Mr. DODARO. Right.

Mr. PALMER. How much of a problem is that now? Does that persist?

Mr. DODARO. It is still a problem and an impediment. It is not the only one, but it is definitely one. And I think, for example, there is much more attention that the Congress ought to be paid to the Medicaid program.

Mr. PALMER. Right.

Mr. DODARO. The Medicaid program is one of the fastest growing programs. Each state is a little bit different.

The other area of antiquated programs that the Congress really ought to focus on as well is unemployment insurance. That was a huge problem that led to a lot of fraud. And if we have another—at some point, there is going to be another economic downturn or some issue. We are going to rely more on the unemployment insurance to help people who are really in need of help. If you do not have those systems modernized, you are going to have a real problem.

I know when the pandemic came—and the Congress did not want to send the \$600 to everybody in supplemental payment. They wanted to gear it to whatever that person was earning at that time so that you did not overcompensate people more on unemployment than what they were gaining from their job, but the systems could not do that. I got calls ahead of time, “can we do that,” and it just was not possible at that time.

Mr. PALMER. We have got all kinds of problems with this. I was very involved in Alabama looking into fraud in respect to that. We have taken down a lot of the guardrails. Just failure to verify eligibility and responding to requests for unemployment benefits from foreign IP addresses.

Mr. DODARO. Right.

Mr. PALMER. I mean, it is across the board.

Mr. Chairman, I do think that some of the things we have discussed today would merit congressional action and, I think, additional oversight from this Committee.

I could go on for quite a while. Mr. Dodaro and I have had many discussions about some of these issues, and I greatly appreciate the work of the GAO and your staff. You do a great job. We have got to do a better job, though, of making sure that these recommendations are implemented.

I yield back.

Mr. SESSIONS. The gentleman yields back his time. Thank you very much.

The gentlewoman from Washington, D.C., Ms. Norton, is recognized.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Over the past 14 years, GAO's duplication, overlap, and fragmentation report has made critical findings and recommendations to make our government more efficient. These findings and recommendations have had an impact. Congress and agencies have addressed nearly two-thirds of GAO's 2,008 matters and recommendations.

Mr. Dodaro, that progress has yielded significant financial benefits. Is that correct?

Mr. DODARO. Yes.

Ms. NORTON. I believe it is \$667 billion?

Mr. DODARO. Billion.

Ms. NORTON. And that is an increase of about 71 billion since last year's report?

Mr. DODARO. That is correct.

Ms. NORTON. In response to GAO's urging, the Office of Management and Budget leveraged the buying power of the Federal Government to save almost \$49 billion over a 4-year period. GAO also goaded the Small Business Administration's implementation of a new automatic screening system among other oversight controls. That saved the taxpayers more than \$13 billion in just 3 years.

GAO's duplication work is about finding ways to make each Federal agency go as far as it possibly can. GAO's report recognizes the critical value of these programs while improving their efficiencies.

Mr. Dodaro, it seems to me that this report shows us what GAO does best: finding process fixes that can yield huge results for the American people. Is that fair?

Mr. DODARO. It is not only fair; it is absolutely true.

Ms. NORTON. In this regard, this report is an excellent roadmap for Congress to further strengthen invaluable Federal programs, giving us a to-do list of items for legislative reform, although it may not be so obvious today. Over my decades in Congress, I have seen us come together in a bipartisan way to create legislative fixes to government operations, improving daily life for the American people. These may not be flashy topics, but they are the nuts and bolts of improving government and delivering vital services to the American people.

Let us take a simple example that I mentioned earlier. In 2017 and 2021, GAO highlighted that agencies could potentially save taxpayers billions of dollars if they simply collect—simply use collective buying power for things like office supplies.

Mr. Dodaro, how does leveraging buying power help save money?

Mr. DODARO. Well, you have individual agencies going out and basically, you know, buying these things themselves. So, there are a lot of common items, particularly in information technology area, where the government can use their buying power to get a better price out of the market by having a greater quantity of those items that are bought collectively rather than everybody buying something simply.

And so, it is just a matter of market dynamics. If you have a bigger order and a demand, you can negotiate to get a better price.

Ms. NORTON. It is clear that GAO's recommendations are intended to improve the Federal programs that serve the American people, not gut them. I look forward to opportunities to work with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle for implementation of GAO's recommendations.

Thank you very much, and I yield back.

Mr. SESSIONS. The gentlewoman yields back her time. Thank you very much.

The distinguished gentleman from the state of Missouri, Mr. Burlison, is recognized.

Mr. BURLISON. Thank you, Chairman Sessions and Mr. Dodaro, for being here today.

I have a lot of questions. I do not know that I am going to be able to get to all of them in the 5 minutes, but I would first like to talk about the student loan income-driven repayment plans.

So, for Federal students, the borrowers can apply for income-driven repayment plans which use the borrowers—supposedly, their income—their taxable income and their family size to determine what the pay rate is. GAO recommended that the Department of Education obtain data to verify income information for borrowers that were reporting zero income on income-driven repayment applications.

What has been the result of that recommendation?

Mr. DODARO. Due to implementation of our recommendations, the Congress had given Education the authority to use IRS data to verify income if the applicants for the income-driven repayment program would agree to allow them their tax data to be accessed by IRS. That was part of the law.

Mr. BURLISON. Would that not be a tacit consent if they are making the application that they understand that their data would be accessed?

Mr. DODARO. No. No. They have to give permission in order to do it. There are criminal penalties for IRS sharing tax data without appropriate authorities. So, that was a safeguard put into place. So, that is in place now, but what is not in place is for the people who do not agree to have their tax data accessed.

Mr. BURLISON. Right.

Mr. DODARO. What is Education going to do to verify their income? Now, they can get commercial sources. There are plenty available for that.

Mr. BURLISON. Yes.

Mr. DODARO. They can use the—if they get authority from the Congress—the new hire data base that the HHS, Health and Human Services, has. It has the most up-to-date wage information

for people in the country. It is used for child enforcement purposes, but it can be used.

That is what we use when we compare that data to what people put in their applications at Education. That is where we found 95,000 plans were reporting zero income, but that data showed that that was not necessarily the case.

Mr. BURLISON. Does the Department of Education have the authority if they were to be able to get this private sector data and compare that with the claims?

Mr. DODARO. Sure.

Mr. BURLISON. And then, if you have incongruency, what would the next steps be? Could they require at that point or deny them unless they provide their tax forms?

Mr. DODARO. They could provide additional support.

Mr. BURLISON. And is that happening?

Mr. DODARO. We do not know yet. We are going to look at this. This is just newly implemented.

You know, there was a pause during COVID for people in the repayment of their income-driven repayment plans. So, that has just started up most recently. And people have to recertify every year. So, we are going to look at this and see what they are doing at the Education Department to handle this particular gap.

Mr. BURLISON. And then I have two more questions.

One, I was intrigued by the discussion about our universities and your recommendations to secure the—make sure that our intellectual property—security of the United States is protected at our research facilities.

It sounds like you said that there are some recommendations that will require steps from Congress. Can you elaborate on that?

Mr. DODARO. I am not sure—yes. Our recommendations really were to the executive branch—is what I thought—that there be more efforts to determine foreign ownership and control or influence over these particular areas.

Now, what we found is that some agencies were doing a good job and using intelligence information and others, but there was no sharing going on across the government. So, one agency might be making a grant to the same place. Another agency would not do so because they had concerns and had additional information.

So, we asked the Office of Science Technology and Policy in the White House—which is supposed to put out governmentwide guidance on this to put out better guidance—so there is more thorough vetting ahead of time because agencies have a lot of questions.

Mr. BURLISON. And then, within my short time, this is a big question.

Mr. DODARO. All right.

Mr. BURLISON. You mentioned that there is potential saving opportunities with the Medicaid systems for states to modernize. Can you elaborate on those and if there is any action we need to take in Congress?

Mr. DODARO. Yes. I think the main action is oversight. I think the Medicaid program needs a lot more oversight about what is going on. For example, they estimate there was \$50 billion in improper payments last year, but it is mostly in the fee-for-service portion. In the Medicaid Advantage portion—which, as you know,

is almost half of the amount of spending now in Medicaid—there is really not very good auditing of what is going on in the Medicare Advantage program.

We have encouraged and CMS has started to do more audits over there, and they are finding some of the same overpayment programs and preliminary estimates in that area, but Congress can do a lot more.

Also, Congress can require that any Medicaid demonstration—about half of Medicaid spending right now is because states came to the Federal Government and they said, you know, we want to try this new process, and if we do so, we think we could better serve the public.

Mr. BURLISON. The waiver program?

Mr. DODARO. Waiver. Yes. Exactly. The waiver program. But the waiver program was supposed to be budget neutral. So, it was not supposed to cost more money, and it has, big time. So, we are allowing waivers that are costing more, and they are not really, in many cases, demonstrating the benefits.

Mr. BURLISON. A better outcome for the—

Mr. DODARO. Better outcomes. Exactly.

So, that program—and it is fast growing. It is fast growing. And I think it is always used to help during economic downturns and other things.

We have a recommendation that Congress act to provide during economic downturns a formula that would be put in place to more timely provide assistance during high periods of unemployment for people that would then require Medicaid. It would be more efficient and effective than some of the approaches Congress uses in times of economic crisis.

Mr. BURLISON. Thank you.

Mr. SESSIONS. The gentleman yields back his time.

We are going to have an opportunity—and thank you. I put the wrong talk on.

Mr. Dodaro, I want to go back to—there has been some bit of discussion about healthcare here today in probably four or five specific areas you have spoken of. I wondered if you would walk through for Mr. Mfume and I generally the right way—what you do, how you deal with the law, how you deal with an agency, how you deal with inspector general—on what might be what we knew several months ago was a report about people being on FEHB. Maybe many people being on that that should not be, either not paying, added improperly, still being on maybe when they—across the board.

Are you prepared, maybe, to give us a walkthrough on that or a high-level idea about that? Because that would be something seemingly that someone should have within their immediate vestiges of their authority, and to have to come back and show them where they have not been faithful to that would be distressing, I am sure, to both of us on a bipartisan basis.

Mr. DODARO. Yes. Sure. Sure. Yes. That was our report. The IG has done some work in that area.

The estimates of improper payments where there are ineligible people on the Federal Employee Health Programs range from \$1 billion to \$3 billion. The 1 billion is by OPM. The 3 billion is by

the OPM IG. You know, we have looked at it. We have made recommendations that they have people provide documentation to support the number of people on each healthcare plan.

Now, OPM has started—if somebody wants to change a plan during open season or they have a life event where they are allowed to, you know the birth of a child or whatever, to add somebody to ask for documentation, but they have not yet gone back and looked at all the people that are already in the system as to whether they have legitimate numbers of people. You know, not beneficiaries, but people who are eligible for services that are legitimate. We think that kind of audit needs to take place.

You know, part of the issue that OPM has is they do not have central data, even though it is all at the agencies—the individual Federal agencies—and so they are trying to get more of a central repository so that they can have more controls in place to check on these things right now.

But there are ways that they could do this audit. They could sample across the Federal agencies. They could get some participation. But there has to be a thorough audit done of existing people that are on the Federal employees health benefit system. It is one of the biggest benefit systems in the country, and for decades, nobody checked these things. Whatever the Federal employee put down and, you know, that is what was there.

Mr. SESSIONS. Self-reporting?

Mr. DODARO. It was self—yes, basically, and an area of trust. And, when people started checking, they started finding out, well, no, there were some people on there that were not really eligible to be part of that person's health benefit program.

I have talked to the OPM Director about this—the now Acting Director—and encouraged them to implement our recommendations, and hopefully they will.

Mr. SESSIONS. What generally is the take on this specific issue? I am not asking you to say which person.

Mr. DODARO. Yes.

Mr. SESSIONS. But, generally, agency responsibility, IG providing, doing their own internal investigation, trying to figure out where that link might be that is a disconnect, an office or an audit or a process—

Mr. DODARO. Right.

Mr. SESSIONS [continuing]. That did not yield something. Have they gotten far enough along there to say, “Oh, I see what we need to be doing or what further information we need to correct that circumstance?”

Mr. DODARO. Yes. Yes. No, I think, in this case, the current Acting Director of OPM knows exactly what needs to be done. He has a background in insurance areas, and he knows what the shortcomings are. The question he is wrestling with is how can he implement all these things that need to be implemented as soon as possible, like getting a central repository in place.

So, some of it is going to take time, but in the meantime, they need to have an audit, and that is, you know, his responsibility to orchestrate that audit, working with other departments and agencies as he needs to. He could use the IG to help him do that work. But that is where the locus of responsibility is right now.

Mr. SESSIONS. Several hours ago, we had a brief discussion with you—both of us with you—about the things that you felt like we could partner on better, and you mentioned those eight items, I believe.

Mr. DODARO. Right.

Mr. SESSIONS. And, while I was aware of them and you and I spoke about them on the phone earlier in the week and I did see those, those are broad concepts. Those are necessary management toolsets that you would want our agencies and you would want OPM to be certainly involved in that, IGs, you would want anybody that is going to be a Secretary of a department, perhaps, to agree with that.

This is a specific issue. This is one that deals with an agency and their responsibility. How did they handle the feedback that came from OPM and you about this issue?

Mr. DODARO. I think they recognized the significance of the issue but, you know, like in a lot of cases, people are slow to act on a recommendation. That is why we keep following up. Every year, I have mentioned I send a letter to every department head at the agency.

You know, here, you have an example. You know, an average political appointee spends about 2 years in the Federal Government. So, there is a lot of turnover, and that is part of the problem. This occurs throughout government.

Now, here, you have got somebody who has just stepped into the acting job. Now, he was a deputy before, so he had some responsibility for this, but it is up to him to take action as soon as possible in this regard and marshal whatever sources they have. He can partner with OMB and get some additional support from OMB, which I think he could use in order to start this process of auditing the current, you know, people who are enrolled in that program and how many people they report as eligible to receive services under their plan.

I mean, this is not rocket science. I mean, it is basically—you know, looking at those things and doing some good auditing, and it could be tackled, you know, as soon as the resources could be marshaled to do it.

Mr. SESSIONS. Resources or a person that decides they want to do it.

Mr. DODARO. Yes. Right. Well, you have to have leadership. You have to have the will. You have to have the will and the leadership, and it has to be sustained leadership. And that is one of our criteria on the high-risk list. You do not get off the high-risk list unless you have sustained leadership commitment, and that can come from multiple people, you know, over time.

Mr. SESSIONS. That is why, in 1997, in working with a gentleman named Robert Shea, we developed what that red light—I think you helped us—red light, green light—

Mr. DODARO. I did, yes.

Mr. SESSIONS [continuing]. Yellow light process where we wanted agencies to move.

Mr. DODARO. Yes. Well, one thing you did during that period, too, that I think was very effective and you may want to consider this again, you had a results caucus.

Mr. SESSIONS. We did.

Mr. DODARO. And you had—certain Members had an assigned high-risk area to them to work it in depth. And that was very helpful because they were able to, you know, really dig in deeper and understand the nuances and the details that needed to be done, and so—I mean, that was one model that I think had some good success. There are other approaches that could be made.

Mr. SESSIONS. I completely agree with you.

Before we get too far away from this, OMB presents their budget to the Congress from the President. Is there a good way to link up the results that you see with putting those with the funding mechanism that shows some bit of delivery or open process and—

Mr. DODARO. Right.

Mr. SESSIONS [continuing]. And to have the Budget people asking the same people that the Government Accountability people are asking for? Would that be helpful?

Mr. DODARO. Yes.

Mr. SESSIONS. Mr. Womack wrote me this note and said, hey—this is his addition. He thinks it is a good idea. What do you think?

Mr. DODARO. Well, actually, it is already supposed to be implemented. I mean, the Congress passed the—it is called the GAO-IG Act.

Mr. SESSIONS. Right.

Mr. DODARO. And, with each budget submission, each agency is supposed to list open GAO and IG recommendations and what they are going to do to address those recommendations. Now, whether that is working or not, it is one of the things that we need to look into along with the IGs.

Our initial glance at it was that it was very—you know, it was not uniformly applied. Agencies were all over the place. Some did it right. Others did not do it at all. So, there is no enforcement mechanisms in place. OMB did not require, you know, that they look at it as part of the budget process and make sure that they were including that information in there.

So, as usual, Bill has got a great idea. I think the concepts are in place, but they need to be effectively implemented. And, if Congress is not saying, “Well, where is that information, why do we not have it here as part of the budget submission,” agencies are going to get the idea, “Well, it is just another mandate Congress put on us. Nobody is going to use it.”

Mr. SESSIONS. Well, if it does not become a shiny object to someone—

Mr. DODARO. It becomes a hollow requirement.

Mr. SESSIONS. Right.

Mr. DODARO. And so, I think much more can be done with that. And, also, these priority recommendation letters that I send each year, I send to all the appropriators as well as the oversight committees. So, that could be part of the process. I have one for OMB itself as well.

Mr. SESSIONS. Is that not great?

Mr. DODARO. It is wonderful—

Mr. SESSIONS [continuing]. Several forum, too.

Mr. MFUME, the gentleman, is recognized.

Mr. MFUME. OK.

Well, Mr. Dodaro, this has been interesting to say the very least, and I am hoping that, in consultation with the Chair, that we do not let a year go by before we have you back. In fact, for those of us who might be lucky enough to return to this place after November elections, it is probably something that we may want to consider late in the year.

But I am going to defer to the Chair on that and indicate on the record that I just think that we need to hear from you as much as we can over and over again. And I am hoping also that what we have gleaned from this will give us enough energy and focus to do something that is not hollow, to do something that is long-lasting. And I listened to your comments about this results caucus. It predates me, but it sounds like it is a great idea.

We are a part of the world's largest bureaucracy, and if we ever thought we were not, all we had to do was listen to these several hours of testimony today. And that largest bureaucracy in the world really creates for us the greatest challenge.

And all I could think about as I listened to the questions of my colleagues on both sides of the aisle and my comments and the Chair's comments is that we are throwing money away in so many different areas in so many different ways and really missing the opportunity of the wealth of this society to be able to efficiently operate in a way where equity, economy, efficiency, and efficacy are all working together.

So, the challenge is really, really large. You have given us a lot to think about. I listened to some of the comments that came about early in the last couple of hours. From my side of the aisle, if you walk away with anything today, please keep in mind that some of the issues that were raised earlier dealing with equity and particularly bias that has been able to be identified as well as duplication that has been identified so many ways are really very important issues.

And I must tell you, if there was ever a concept that I would consider a joke, it is this whole notion of self-certification. I do not know where that came from, how it got into the government, or why we even think that it would work.

So, I am hoping—and I do not know if there are other places that self-certification is alive and well—that you continue to point that out to us because we can do something legitimately legislatively to make sure that that goes away. We saw what it did to us during the pandemic. It is a disaster. I mean, a real disaster.

And the other thing is—I mentioned earlier, in terms of the algorithmic selections that take place, particularly here as it relates to IRS or the Login.gov situation—they need options. That cannot be the sole method of identifying, verifying, and moving forward.

And I was glad that you mentioned that the real next frontier here is AI and what is going on with that and how that can disrupt the entire effort and all the good efforts of people who are working to eradicate the inequities that may exist.

So, you have got a big job. I see why you have hung around for 51 years because you cannot finish it. Every day, there is a new issue and a new problem. We thank you very much for this time and hope to see you again.

You know, on the wall behind you is the portrait of the former Chair of this Committee, the late Elijah Cummings, who was a friend of mine for 42 years. And he would, in the simplest way, remind us over and over again—and I quote—“We can do better than this.” So, thank you, sir, for your time.

Mr. Chair, I yield back.

Mr. DODARO. Thank you. Mr. Mfume, if I might—

Mr. SESSIONS. Yes, sir.

Mr. DODARO. Mr. Cummings, I was in this room with him many, many times, and he talked about the importance of why people were in public service. He used to say it was to feed their souls. And it was a very apt saying. And he was, you know, very committed, as both of you are, to making improvements in these areas.

And everything, also the one area I do not want you to lose sight of is making these improvements builds better trust in government, and we desperately need to work together to do that right now as our institutions deliver for the American people what they expect.

So, I thank you for the opportunity to be here. I am sorry to interject, but I have very fond memories of Mr. Cummings.

Mr. MFUME. Well, he was a remarkable individual and friend, as I said.

And, maybe on your last point about building trust and the fact that it has not been done, that is why it is so typical to hear the joke sometimes that “I am from the government, and I am here to help you.” People do not believe that anymore. Thank you, sir.

Mr. SESSIONS. I want to thank the distinguished gentleman and my colleague.

Mr. Dodaro, the bottom line is, when we spoke the other day, I told you that I thought you would be well worth our time, but I also told you today that we wanted to be worth your time. You and your colleagues that have joined you today have been value-add to us.

And I hope that, even though we did not have a lot of huge shiny objects that draw a lot of people, we did run through this Subcommittee that you receive feedback and questions and opportunities from people.

And I think we spoke pretty much with a similar voice, if not the same, and that is that we do as you just suggested and see that something has to be fair, but when it is fair, there is not going to be self-reporting. There will be accountability associated with that.

I spoke several weeks ago to a new citizen indoctrination where we are bringing people through the process, and I talked to them about responsibilities. Today, when they raised their hand and they were new citizens, there is a right and a responsibility. And I do believe that these things offer some bit of balance. And I think that you, of all people in this government, bring that to bear. You should be thanked for it. Your agency should be thanked. But on behalf of us, we appreciate it again today.

We are going to close the hearing right now, but we would like to come down and get our picture with you. I alluded earlier that there may be some students that are present here today, and I would like to ask, that as Mr. Mfume and I walk down, that our students would come and stand behind us, and we would be able to shake your hand and let this be a testament to them that there

is a lot done in this town. When done properly and together, it can be achieved, and I hope that we have done a little bit of that today.

Mr. DODARO. You sure have. I appreciate it.

Mr. SESSIONS. Yes, sir.

OK. Well, we have now heard from this. This closes the hearing that was today. Thank you.

[Whereupon, at 1:28 p.m., the Subcommittee was adjourned.]

