

House Committee on Energy and Commerce  
Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee Hearing, “Follow the Money: Oversight of President  
Biden's Massive Spending Spree”  
March 29, 2023  
Opening Statement of Chair Griffith

Good afternoon, everyone, and welcome to today’s hearing of the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations.

We are here today to discuss a very serious problem, one that the Biden Administration and the previously Democratic-controlled Congress has avoided talking about for the last two years.

Earlier this year, the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) predicted a federal budget deficit of \$1.4 trillion for 2023.<sup>1</sup> And unfortunately, CBO now projects a cumulative deficit of \$3.1 trillion over the next ten years.<sup>2</sup> Yes, folks, that’s trillion with a “T.” Of course, numerous factors impact the federal budget outlook, but one thing is certain: over the past two years, your federal government has been spending taxpayer dollars like board game money.

Last Congress, the Democratic Majority rammed through several massive spending bills such as the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), the Creating Helpful Incentives to Produce Semiconductors

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<sup>1</sup> CONG. BUDGET OFFICE, THE BUDGET AND ECONOMIC OUTLOOK: 2023 TO 2033 1 (2023), *available at* <https://www.cbo.gov/system/files/2023-02/58848-Outlook.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

or “CHIPS” and Science Act, and the so-called Inflation Reduction Act (IRA). While couched as measures to upgrade American infrastructure or boost international competitiveness, in reality these packages threw money at Democratic priorities and handed federal agencies unprecedented amounts of funding to disperse to political allies.

While this is all extremely disturbing, I am proud to say that this era of unrestrained spending ends *now*. Earlier this month, my Majority colleagues and I sent letters to several federal agencies requesting a full accounting of their use of these taxpayer funds, only one of the first steps in our oversight efforts for the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress.

These laws I previously mentioned authorized dozens of new programs and entrusted federal agencies to spend unprecedented sums of money. For example, according to the Department of Energy’s Office of the Inspector General, after managing a Fiscal Year 2022 budget of \$45.3 billion, the Department of Energy will now administer over \$100

billion of appropriated funds and \$336 billion in loan authorities over the coming years, from the IIJA and IRA alone.<sup>3</sup>

Exponential funding increases, expansion of previously troubled programs, and an explosion of new ones certainly sound like a recipe for disaster to me. However, my Republican colleagues and I understand our constituents back home have sent us to Washington to protect their hard-earned taxpayer dollars, and we intend to do just that.

Today, we will hear from the heads of the agencies responsible for fighting waste, fraud, and abuse in federal programs. Our witnesses will help guide committee oversight efforts by highlighting important risk factors for mismanagement of federal funds and sharing lessons learned from their previous work. They will also share with us their upcoming plans for monitoring this massive spending wave.

First, we welcome Inspector General Sean O’Donnell from the Environmental Protection Agency’s Office of the Inspector General. Your office has noted that the EPA received “the largest infrastructure

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<sup>3</sup> OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GEN., DEP’T OF ENERGY, DOE-OIG-23-08, MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES AT THE DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY – FISCAL YEAR 2023 i (2022), *available at* <https://www.energy.gov/sites/default/files/2022-11/DOE-OIG-23-08.pdf>.

appropriation in [its] history,”<sup>4</sup> so we are eager to hear more about challenges that accompany this rapid funding infusion.

We are also joined by Inspector General Peggy Gustafson from the Department of Commerce’s Office of the Inspector General. Last year, the CHIPS and Science Act appropriated \$50 billion for the Department of Commerce to spend on semiconductor programs. Additionally, the IIJA charged the National Telecommunications and Information Administration with distributing \$48 billion in broadband funding. We look forward to your insights on these programs and your plans for conducting oversight during the 118<sup>th</sup> Congress.

We also appreciate the opportunity to hear from the Department of Energy’s Inspector General, Teri Donaldson. Over the past two years, the Department of Energy received billions of dollars across numerous offices to advance the Biden Administration’s clean energy agenda. The Department of Energy has boasted that it will stand up 60 new programs

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<sup>4</sup> OFFICE OF THE INSPECTOR GEN., ENVTL. PROT. AGENCY, FISCAL YEAR 2023 TOP MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES i (2022), *available at* [https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2022-11/epaig\\_20221128\\_EPA\\_FY\\_2023\\_Top\\_Management\\_Challenges\\_Final.pdf](https://www.epa.gov/system/files/documents/2022-11/epaig_20221128_EPA_FY_2023_Top_Management_Challenges_Final.pdf).

under the IIIA alone.<sup>5</sup> We understand this presents an enormous challenge for your office and we are eager to hear your plans for protecting the American taxpayer against waste, fraud, and abuse in federal programs.

Finally, we welcome Mr. Mark Gaffigan from the Government Accountability Office or “GAO.” GAO has provided countless recommendations to Congress and federal agencies to improve the efficiency of federal programs. That experience will be extremely helpful in guiding our discussion today.

Again, this hearing is only one step of many to hold this Administration accountable for its spending practices. I also hope this hearing will inform our efforts to collaborate with other Inspectors General and that these productive conversations with our witnesses and their offices will continue. We all have a daunting task ahead, so I appreciate our witnesses for taking the time to share their expertise today.

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<sup>5</sup> DEP’T OF ENERGY, *Clean Energy Infrastructure*, <https://www.energy.gov/clean-energy-infrastructure/clean-energy-infrastructure-homepage> (last visited Mar. 27, 2023).