

# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

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### **Ranking Member Jamie Raskin**

### **Committee on Oversight and Accountability**

### **Hearing on “The Government Accountability Office’s 2023 High Risk List”**

### **April 26, 2023**

I want to thank Chairman Comer for holding this important hearing with the Government Accountability Office on its recently released 2023 High Risk List. For more than 30 years, GAO has released its High Risk List at the beginning of each Congress. The report identifies key areas where we need to act to ensure that the federal government works effectively for the American people and not effectively against us.

This report has been a North Star for government efficiency, illuminating a path forward for Congress and the executive branch to better serve the needs and priorities of the American people.

I would also like to thank Comptroller General Gene Dodaro for testifying before the Committee today and for his 50 years of exemplary service at GAO.

GAO’s independent, non-partisan work is critical to the mission of efficient government serving the public and rooting out waste of taxpayer money, financial fraud, and self-dealing abuses of power. GAO plays a pivotal role in this process.

The GAO High Risk List identifies the areas of federal operations most in need of improvement and transformation. Every two years, GAO rates progress or backsliding from the prior report and makes specific recommendations for executive branch agencies and Congress to make progress.

These recommendations save American taxpayers billions of dollars, improve service to the public, and strengthen government performance and accountability. Since 2006, the financial benefit of addressing these high-risk areas has totaled a jaw-dropping \$675 billion.

Let me repeat that: addressing high-risk areas has provided taxpayers \$675 billion in financial benefits.

Investing in our federal operations—in oversight, in sustained leadership and practical solutions, and in resources—yields extraordinary concrete benefits to the American people, including better customer service, a more effective government, as well as billions of dollars in savings.

GAO’s 2023 High Risk List highlights 37 areas across the federal government that are at greatest risk now of waste, fraud, and mismanagement or that need broad structural reform.

**When we look at overlap with the 2021 High Risk List, 16 high-risk areas saw improvements and two were removed from the High Risk List entirely. According to GAO, this is the most progress made by Congress and the government since GAO started issuing ratings eight years ago.**

**Progress can be seen in directly improved services to the public and in agencies' enhanced ability to achieve their missions. This progress is tangible evidence of the Biden-Harris Administration's—and Congressional Democratic Majority's—commitment to work for the American people and deliver meaningful results over the last Congress.**

While we are encouraged by the progress outlined in this year's report, there is always more work to be done. Since 2021, one high-risk area regressed, and three new problematic areas were added. This is a reminder that we can do more to hold federal agencies accountable and build an effective and efficient government.

**We hope the Majority and our colleagues on both sides of the aisle will work together to implement lasting solutions and maintain the momentum of positive change from the last two years.**

**This means we must ensure continuing key investments in our federal operations and continuing implementation of positive policy changes. This public philosophy must take precedence over the suddenly fashionable drive to dismember our country's critical programs, including the social safety net, health care, science, education, climate, energy, labor, research programs—and even oversight itself—as outlined in the Majority's short-sighted, pennywise-and-pound-foolish debt-ceiling proposal.**

**The so-called Limit, Save, Grow Act, better known as the Default on Our Debt Act, would make destabilizing and indiscriminate across-the-board cuts of an estimated 22 percent to most agency budgets, plunging the federal government into uncertainty and triage mode without the resources to continue addressing high-risk areas.**

The slash-and-burn cuts proposed by House Republicans threaten to reverse dramatic progress made in high-risk areas and make many of the country's problems that much worse. They would undermine the crucial progress we have made toward addressing the skills gap in the federal workforce, defund our work to protect the nation from devastating cyberattacks by implementing the National Cyber Strategy, pit safety and efficiency against each other in our transportation systems, slow down Social Security checks, and cause significant reductions in the number of people served by affordable housing programs.

This is just the tip of the iceberg. These cuts would even eliminate millions of dollars in funding for oversight of pandemic aid and for the very oversight work the Comptroller General is here to tell us about today—oversight work that the Republicans claim to value so much.

**Members in this hearing room cannot claim that they want the federal government to best serve the American people, and then walk over to the Capitol to vote for a bill that would totally frustrate this goal.**

**One agency official stated that the cuts would, quote “cause significant damage” to national security, economic competitiveness, American jobs, disaster preparedness, and the natural environment.**

Instead of implementing widespread cuts that would halt most, if not all, the gains made on high-risk areas between 2021 and 2023, executive branch agencies and Congress need to believe in the value that comes from a well-functioning federal government—a government that serves every single American. Executive branch agencies and Congress must also commit to addressing hundreds of open GAO recommendations to bring about lasting corrective solutions to the 37 remaining high-risk areas.

**Persistent and prudent congressional oversight and thoughtful legislative solutions are essential to achieve greater progress. However, blindly axing our federal programs and slashing funding for agencies will only harm the American people and deprive us of the government we are working to improve.**

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