

Opening Statement
Rep. Eleanor Holmes Norton

**Hearing on “Waste and Inefficiency in the
Federal Government: GAO’s 2018 Duplication Report”**

April 26, 2018

Mr. Chairman, thank you very much for holding this critical hearing today. And thank you, Mr. Dadaro, for being here to testify about your eighth annual report on this issue.

I sit over here every year when our Committee holds this hearing. I review the memos outlining which programs are making progress and which have challenges. And I listen carefully to the testimony of the Comptroller General, Mr. Dodaro.

Over the last eight years, there have been three different people sitting in the chair next to me—in the Chairman’s seat—Mr. Issa, Mr. Chaffetz, and now Mr. Gowdy. Next year, there will be someone new in that chair. But we are always partners in these hearings.

One constant we have noticed over all these years is that the Executive Branch can do better. I say that regardless of who is in the White House, regardless of who is President, and regardless of which political party they belong to. I am sure my Republican colleagues agree.

However, in order to truly address these recommendations, we not only need a sustained commitment by the agencies involved—we also need sustained oversight from this Committee. Congress needs to follow-up on these recommendations to ensure that reforms are made. That is why today’s hearing is so important.

For example, the Department of Defense is the largest agency in the federal government, by far. It is probably the largest agency in the history of the world. We need it to be successful because it defends our country, our people, and our freedom.

But the Department of Defense wastes a phenomenal amount of money. Every dollar that is squandered is a dollar that could have gone to help protect our troops—our service members who risk life and limb to protect us every single day.

To be clear, there has been progress.

In 2011, when GAO issued its first duplication report, it recommended several steps to improve the way the Department of Defense develops and acquires weapon systems. The Pentagon implemented several of these recommendations and, according to GAO, saved approximately \$36 billion from 2011 to 2015. That is a terrific example of how this process is supposed to work.

Unfortunately, there are dozens and dozens of areas in which the Department of Defense could do much better. This year, GAO's report says the Department of Defense still has 74 recommendations that remain open, some dating back to 2011.

For example, GAO made several recommendations for the Department of Defense to manage its commissaries more efficiently and reduce the size and staffing of various headquarters.

Now, I understand that these may not be the most exciting issues, and they may not get headlines. But GAO reports that if the Department of Defense fully implemented these recommendations, they could save the American taxpayers more than \$11 billion.

Think about that. More than \$11 billion. To me, if our Committee played even a small role in achieving these savings, that would be something we all could be proud of.

For these reasons, I would like to make a modest proposal. After today's hearing, I propose that our Committee hold a follow-up hearing with the Department of Defense. Let's work with Department officials to determine what they are doing to address these issues, and what more they can do to operate more efficiently and save more than \$11 billion. This really is the core of our Committee's jurisdiction, and I hope we can make this happen.

Mr. Dodaro, every year, you and your talented staff provide us and the American people with a crucial service to make sure our tax dollars are spent wisely. I thank you for your report, and I look forward to your testimony today.

Thank you.

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