

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

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House Committee on Oversight and Accountability
Subcommittee on Government Operations and the Federal Workforce
“Where Do We Go from Here? Examining a Path Forward to Assess Agencies’ Efforts to
Prevent Improper Payments and Fraud”
September 10, 2024

Thank you, Chairman Sessions, and thank you to the witnesses for being with us here today.

Since the beginning of the 118th Congress, my colleagues and I on the House Oversight Committee, on both sides of the aisle, have been laser-focused on combatting waste, fraud, and abuse within our federal government. This is not a partisan issue – no matter what side of the aisle you are on, you should be able to agree that every single cent of the people’s money that we spend ought to be going to its intended purpose.

From our conversations with distinguished panelists, as well as the helpful work of the Government Accountability Office, the Pandemic Response Accountability Committee, and others, we have learned that the potential extent of improper payments and fraud within our government is simply astounding.

For example, in April of 2024, the GAO released a report estimating that between \$233 and \$521 billion per year worth of fraud occurred from 2018 to 2022.

While the Office of Management and Budget has taken significant issue with the methodology for obtaining these figures, there is no doubt that some level of fraud has occurred.

On the improper payments front, this past March, the GAO reported a total of \$235.9 billion in improper payments government-wide last fiscal year. That’s up by almost \$100 billion since 2015.

In recognition of this shared challenge, Chairman Sessions and I have been working for roughly a year, on a bipartisan basis, to create a Congressional scorecard to assess the progress of key government spending programs in reducing fraud and improper payments.

The federal programs on this scorecard were selected because they represent those with the highest fraud risk per dollar. The Earned Income Tax Credit, which helped 359,000 hardworking families in the state of Maryland make ends meet last year, is on the scorecard. Supplemental

Security Income, which keeps the lights on for more than 35,000 of my eligible constituents, is on the scorecard as well.

It is so crucially important to me that we assess the degree of and progress in combatting fraud and improper payments in these programs because they have been so successful in keeping our country afloat during the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Thanks to the policies passed by large bipartisan majorities during the beginning of the pandemic, and the American Rescue Plan passed by Congressional Democrats and signed into law by the Biden-Harris Administration, the United States has had the strongest economic recovery out of the entire developed world. Congress should defend these programs from those that seek to abuse them by strengthening the executive branch's ability to track the success of ongoing fraud prevention efforts.

Finally, before I conclude, I am compelled to mention the importance of investing in solutions that we already know are effective in combatting waste, fraud, and abuse.

In the Council of the Inspector General for Integrity and Efficiency's 2023 report to Congress and the President, it was found that for every dollar spent on Offices of Inspectors General, \$26 was saved by the federal government. I urge my colleagues to consider the benefits of further investments into OIGs to achieve greater cost savings.

Furthermore, Larry D. Turner, the Department of Labor Inspector General, has done exemplary work in investigating the potential benefits of data analytics in preventing fraud, and found that the use of such analytics could have prevented much of the unemployment insurance fraud that occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic. I am very interested in learning more about how Congress can invest in these kinds of tools for other kinds of fraud prevention.

Our Subcommittee has been an island of bipartisan productivity in the storm of what has been a chaotic 118th Congress. I am proud of the work we have done and the strength of our cooperation across party lines and look forward to forging ahead on this topic today.

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