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COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

MAJORITY (202) 225-5074

FACSIMILE (202) 225-3974

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<http://oversight.house.gov>

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Opening Statement

Rep. Elijah E. Cummings, Ranking Member

Hearing on "Time to Reform IT Acquisition: The Federal IT Acquisition Reform Act"

February 27, 2013

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding today's hearing on the need to reform the government's information technology acquisition policy. I commend you on your bipartisan approach to developing the legislation we are considering today, the Federal IT Acquisition Reform Act, and I appreciate that you made a draft of the bill publicly available for comment.

I also want to recognize Representative Gerry Connolly, the Ranking Member of the Government Operations Subcommittee, for his critical work on these technology issues. A significant portion of the Federal IT Acquisition Reform Act is based on Ranking Member Connolly's legislation on consolidating federal data centers.

I agree with both Chairman Issa and Ranking Member Connolly that reforms are needed to ensure that the federal government is making wise and efficient investments in information technology. Every full Committee hearing so far this Congress has focused on wasteful spending, including in some IT investments.

Two weeks ago, the Government Accountability Office issued its newest High Risk report which includes several IT investments. For example, the Department of Defense has contracts for a number of Enterprise Resource Planning Systems to modernize the management of logistics, finances, and business operations. GAO and the Pentagon's Inspector General have found that many of these contracts are behind schedule and significantly over budget. For instance, a contract to streamline the Army's inventory of weapons systems is 12 and a half years behind schedule and almost \$4 billion over budget.

Effective oversight is one of the best weapons against this kind of wasteful spending. Congress has a duty to conduct oversight, as well as an obligation to give agencies the tools they need to conduct their own oversight. Agencies need more well-trained acquisition personnel to effectively oversee complex systems and to ensure that the government is a smart and diligent consumer. The Federal IT Acquisition Reform Act recognizes this need.

Congress must also ensure that agencies have the resources to hire and retain acquisition professionals. Almost every witness we hear from today will testify that the acquisition workforce is critical to ensuring that the government is spending its money wisely. However, just two weeks ago, the House voted to extend the freeze on federal employee pay for a third consecutive year. And even worse, at the end of this week, hundreds of thousands of employees—including critical acquisition workforce personnel across every agency—will face furloughs as a result of the indiscriminate across-the-board cuts to agency budgets imposed by the sequester.

We need these employees. Instead of repeatedly attacking these key federal workers, Congress should be pursuing ways to retain their expertise, train them in the most cutting-edge techniques, and support their critical work.

I want to thank each of the witnesses for testifying today. I look forward to hearing your thoughts on how Congress can most effectively modernize the way the government does business and save taxpayers money.

Contact: Jennifer Hoffman, Press Secretary, (202) 226-5181.