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Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

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Opening Statement

Rep. Elijah E. Cummings, Ranking Member

Hearing on "Reducing Waste in Government: Addressing GAO's 2014 Report on Duplicative Federal Programs" April 8, 2014

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this hearing. And thank you, Mr. Dodaro, for being here to testify about GAO's new report.

This hearing will focus on GAO's fourth annual report on duplicative programs and opportunities for federal costs savings. This hearing goes right to the heart of this Committee's jurisdiction.

The Rules of the House identify government management and accounting measures as central pillars of the Oversight Committee's jurisdiction. The Committee's jurisdiction also includes the overall economy, efficiency, and management of government operations and activities, including federal procurement.

In its 2014 report, GAO identifies procurement of information technology as an area of potential savings for taxpayers. GAO highlights the Obama Administration's PortfolioStat initiative which was unveiled by the Office of Management and Budget in 2012.

PortfolioStat is designed to maximize IT investments by eliminating duplicative, low-value, and wasteful IT spending. GAO estimates that PortfolioStat could save the federal government at least \$5.8 billion through fiscal year 2015.

Think about that. This one program could have the potential to save the government nearly \$6 billion. We have heard so much rhetoric recently about challenges in information technology investments related to the Affordable Care Act. We should be hearing more about the money the federal government can save through initiatives such as PortfolioStat.

The House recently passed a bill sponsored by Chairman Issa and Subcommittee Ranking Member Connolly to improve information technology spending. That legislation demonstrates that there is bipartisan support for making IT spending more effective and efficient.

GAO's work shows us that there are additional opportunities to improve IT spending through bipartisan oversight.

GAO, for example, found that OMB's initial cost savings estimates for PortfolioStat failed to include information from the Department of Defense and the Department of Justice because those agencies did not report information to OMB in the proper template. As a result, OMB's estimated savings from PortfolioStat were half as much as GAO's estimate, a difference of over \$3 billion.

The Committee should ask DOD and DOJ why they failed to provide this information to OMB using OMB's template. We should also ask OMB why it released estimates without information from those two agencies and without clearly disclosing that the data from those agencies was missing. I ask the Chairman to join me in following up with those agencies to ensure that we have the best information possible about how to cut government spending.

I want to take a moment to highlight an issue that was addressed following the Committee's hearing last year on GAO's 2013 report.

In its 2013 report, GAO criticized the Department of Defense's fragmented approach to combat uniforms. Representative Tammy Duckworth introduced an amendment to address that issue and her amendment was enacted as part of the National Defense Authorization Act of 2014. Representative Duckworth's amendment required the Secretary of Defense to eliminate service-specific combat uniforms.

GAO estimates that all of the actions taken by the executive branch and Congress in response to GAO's first three reports have yielded more than \$10 billion in cost savings. GAO estimates that billions more in savings will be realized over the next ten years. I want to applaud Representative Duckworth for her work following last year's hearing. I hope we can all use the testimony we hear today as inspiration to take action.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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