

## **Ranking Member Paul Opening Statement**

**April 20, 2023**

This Committee is long overdue for a hearing that focuses on the rampant waste, fraud, and abuse in the Federal Government. We are faced with a \$31 trillion mountain of debt. Rather than attempt to get spending under control, both parties continue to propose new spending with no regard for the exploding debt.

To make matters worse, everyone in Congress knows that the plague of waste has infected just about every federal agency. But rather than take steps to restore fiscal health, Congress buries its head in the sand, doles out more and more taxpayer money each year to the Executive Branch with no strings attached, crosses its fingers, and hopes the problem will fix itself.

For years, I've documented outlandish spending in my annual "Waste Report," which exposes how the federal government is misusing Americans hard-earned tax dollars. My most recent report uncovered over \$482 billion in government waste. For example, NIH spent more than \$1.1 million to get mice drunk, \$2.3 million to inject six-month-old beagle puppies with cocaine and spent \$3 million to watch hamsters fight on steroids.

Government watchdogs like the Government Accountability Office, were created to expose and combat waste, fraud, abuse, and mismanagement in the Federal Government.

Every two years, GAO publishes its own report that helps call out government misdeeds. The "high-risk" report is a compilation of government failures and vulnerabilities. It spotlights agencies and programs prone to waste, fraud, abuse, and mismanagement.

One issue prominently featured in GAO's most recent high-risk report is the government-wide problem with improper payments. For example, in 2022 GAO found Medicare made \$46.8 billion in improper payments. Medicaid was even worse, with a shocking \$81 billion in improper payments, which should NOT come as a surprise given the Medicaid program suspended enforcement of eligibility reviews during the COVID-19 pandemic.

If that wasn't bad enough, GAO can't even comprehensively measure the substantial levels of fraud that occurred in the Department of Labor's expanded Unemployment Insurance program during the pandemic.

Like my own waste report, GAO also identified the Department of Defense (DoD) as a consistent perpetrator of waste, fraud, and abuse.

Since 1995, GAO has identified DoD's financial management as "high-risk." Unfortunately, not much has changed since then. Other than DoD receiving bigger and bigger checks every year, of course. Until DoD can properly account for the money it spends, Congress can never effectively conduct oversight of the department. The DoD has become a behemoth of spending, and no one here ever questions it.

How does all this waste happen? A better question might be, how does all this waste continue to happen and get worse all the time? When I was a kid in the 1970s, William Proxmire used to give his Golden Fleece Awards for nonsensical government spending. But here we are, decades later, still facing the same problems. But today, the debt is far worse.

Mr. Chairman, GAO identified numerous instances of waste, fraud, and abuse that Congress can easily address. I appreciate GAO's work, but what is really needed is congressional will to significantly reduce government waste. The American people deserve an accountable government that manages their hard-earned tax dollars responsibly. Mr. Dodaro thank you for being here today. I look forward to hearing your testimony and working with you to reduce the waste, fraud, and abuse identified in GAO's report.