

Opening Statement of Chairman Rand Paul, M.D.  
Subcommittee on Federal Spending Oversight and Emergency Management

*“Review of GAO’s Annual Duplication Report”*  
*May 21, 2019*

I call this hearing of the Federal Spending Oversight Subcommittee to order.

Today we are going to hear from Comptroller General, Gene Dodaro about GAO’s annual report on duplication, fragmentation, overlap, and other areas of savings.

This is GAO’s ninth duplication report, each shedding light on some truly troubling examples of waste. This report is no exception.

For example, it is no secret that I have been critical of foreign assistance programs, I’d encourage everyone to check out this subcommittee’s report, *World Wide Waste*, which notes that the Federal Government spends money building national parks in Russia, promoting ultimate Frisbee in China, and paying for clown college in Argentina, among other things.

One of the questions I often get, is how do such things get approved? Well, this report might give us something of an answer. In it, GAO finds that we have twenty different agencies, pursuing 52 different foreign assistance strategies. That is a textbook recipe for waste, too many entities trying to do too much, in too many different ways, with too much money.

Another area I’ve been critical of is federally funded research; we have done numerous *Waste Reports*, and even held a hearing on the subject in October 2017. To my knowledge we have never been critical of quantum computing or synthetic biological research; nonetheless, GAO found six agencies funding quantum computing and ten funding synthetic biologics, with little coordination among them. If these seemingly merited areas of research are duplicative and uncoordinated, it is no wonder we find studies of daydreaming and the optimal taste of tomatoes also being funded as well.

I’ll highlight a few other examples: the Defense Department has six different human resources services, meanwhile they rely on over 800 computer based learning and training systems.

As part of the SNAP program, the USDA spends \$441 million on employment and training programs, administered by states, which are required for certain recipients. Yet, roughly half the states were not able to report participation figures in these programs.

These are just a few highlights from this year’s report. I’m also interested to see the progress we have made in correcting issues highlighted in earlier duplication reports and I hope we act quickly to address the findings of this report.

I’m also very interested in preventing the creation of new duplication. Something I think that would go a long way in that regard is including in CBO cost estimates an assessment of the

duplicative effects of the bills we consider, something I've proposed as stand-alone legislation and in my last two budgets.

As I talk to my colleagues and taxpayers, one thing we all agree on is that the kind of inefficiencies caused by duplication need to be corrected; but, too often these duplications are created because we want to look like we are doing something and frankly special interests of many different kinds benefit from much of these inefficiencies. We have to do better, and I hope this hearing will help my colleagues to realize that.

With that, I'll recognize Ranking Member Hassan for her opening statement. But, before I do, I just want to note this is Senator Hasan's first hearing as Ranking Member of this subcommittee, so I'd like to welcome her in that role, and look forward to working with you. Senator Hassan.