

Opening Statement of Senator Tom Coburn

“Reducing Duplication and Improving Outcomes in Federal Information Technology”

June 11, 2013

As prepared for delivery:

Thank you, Senator Carper, and welcome, all of you.

I think there are four or five problems in front of us, and having done this a number of years, we keep trying to solve the same problems. And here is the crux of it.

We are well intentioned. You are well intentioned. But we do not give people the authority to do what we ask them to do. And even in OMB's recent guidelines, they essentially in four or five areas undercut the Chief Information Officer and agencies by allowing them to place other than our key Information Technology personnel in charge of the programs. That is the first problem I see, and I will go into detail as we go through the questioning.

The second problem is we do not have real transparency and metrics on what we are doing. We do in one Department. It is very rarely we get to really praise DHS. But if you look at what they have done on their data centers, they actually track it transparently, know what they are doing, know how many they have, know how many they have eliminated, and know how much money they have saved. You cannot do that anywhere else in the Federal Government.

So we lack transparency, and we lack good metrics. As a matter of fact, the metrics are changing in the middle of all this, according to OMB.

The other thing is the IT Dashboard is a farce. We have looked at computer programs at the Pentagon, and according to the IT Dashboard, they are doing fine, which is absolutely opposite of what is actually happening in the Pentagon. Half of the money we spend on IT goes through the Pentagon. Half of it is wasted every year. Half of it is wasted every year. And yet the Dashboard shows no problems with the Pentagon's programs, just like the Pentagon shows no problems in improper payments. These problems go back to the Audit the Pentagon Act – you are never going to control the Pentagon until we can have numbers and accountability and metrics to get it done.

The fourth area is just the communication of what is actually happening. Some of our agencies, some represented here today, actually know. But once you actually get to working on this, some of our Secretaries and some of the people inside some of the agencies do not like it because there is accountability coming and our CIOs get thrown out, two of which recently and who were actually doing a good job. But other priorities other than transparency, other than metrics, other than good management take precedence – and this goes back to the first problem, because if you are not going to give CIOs the authority to do what they need to do, then why do you need a CIO?

We have looked at all the issues, and I hope to have a great discussion. But some change ought to come out of this oversight hearing - both in terms of transparency, in terms of giving CIOs the authority they need to actually make the decisions, and in terms of metrics. And actually my compliments to DHS to create a timeline so you can actually see it and manage it, and we can as you see it and manage it.

My final point I would just make is we had expected savings coming out of the data center. Those savings really have not materialized because if we did have savings, we are spending it somewhere else, essentially. And now we are going to consolidate the savings to less than what we had hoped to achieve through the latest iteration of this initiative. We are actually going backwards. The stream is more powerful than our oars. And, you know, with excess of \$80 billion a year spent on IT, of which a conservative estimate, at least a third of it is not effectively spent. We can do better, and, you know, that is \$24 billion. That is 30 percent of the sequester. Everybody talks about the sequester, how hard it is, but there is plenty of money in this government. There is \$250 billion of waste, fraud, duplication, and stupidity, and what we need is to give you all the authority to go after it and to make smart decisions.

I will just end with this: I trust the vast majority of executives in our government. What I do not trust is Congress to treat them like grownups and give them authority and then hold them accountable for it. And hopefully through this hearing today we can make some steps and get some learning through the communication that will allow us to do that.

David has been great through what he has done through the years. And so, almost every question I am going to ask the panel, I am going to ask him what he thinks about it and your answer because what we want is the best. And this is not meant to knock on anybody, but we have big problems, and they are getting worse. They are not getting better. They are getting worse. The effort is being made at OMB. I am not saying it is not. But we can do a far better job than we are doing.

So I look forward to your testimony. Again, I thank you for being here to discuss these things.

Thank you.