



United States Senate

Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs

Chairman Joseph I. Lieberman, ID-Conn.

Opening Statement of Chairman Joseph Lieberman

“Retooling Government for the 21st Century: The President’s Reorganization Plan and Reducing Duplication”

Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee

March 21, 2012

As Prepared for Delivery

Good morning and welcome to this hearing.

I don’t think there’d be any disagreement with the statement there’s too much duplication and too little unity of effort in our federal government. And of course that leads to too much waste at a time when our government and our taxpayers can least afford it.

Today’s hearing is going to look at two important efforts to identify and offer solutions to reduce waste and to increase unity of effort and efficiency in our government.

First, GAO’s latest report on duplication in federal agencies – which was required by legislation first introduced by Senator Tom Coburn. This report identifies 32 areas of overlap, duplication or fragmentation that likely are wasting a large number of taxpayer dollars.

GAO’s recommendations range from better coordination of Homeland Security grants – which is something of long-standing concern to this Committee – to more centralized coordination of the nine federal agencies charged with protecting our food supply from terrorist attacks or natural disasters.

Solving these problems will require concerted action by Congress working of course with the Executive branch. That’s why today we thought it would be appropriate to examine legislation which implements the President’s proposal, which he first discussed during his State of the Union address, to give him authority to reorganize government.

The “Reforming and Consolidating Government Act of 2012” is legislation introduced by Senator Mark Warner of Virginia and me and based upon language requested by the President. We believe it will help reduce duplication and improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the federal government.

This proposal reinstates the government reorganization authority that past Presidents relied on from 1932 to 1984.

Any plan a President proposes under this legislation must decrease the number of executive agencies and result in cost savings. Such presidential reorganization proposals would be put on a fast track through Congress, with no amendments or filibusters permitted if this legislation as introduced is adopted. The authority given to the President by this legislation would sunset after two years.

I know some of my colleagues have concerns with how a president might use this authority, but as the current President said in his State of the Union speech – “We live and do business in the Information Age, but the last major reorganization of the government happened in the age of black-and-white TV.”

That’s not going to get the job done, and the bill we are considering today takes an important first step in updating and improving our federal government and would enable whoever is elected to have two years of this extra authority to reorganize our government and make it more efficient.

So I look forward to hearing from the witnesses and questioning them as well.

Thank you. Senator Collins.