

**Opening Statement of Chairman Gary C. Peters**  
**Full Committee Hearing: GAO's 2021 High Risk List: Addressing Waste, Fraud, and Abuse**  
**March 2, 2021**

The Committee will come to order.

I want to thank Comptroller General Gene Dodaro for being here and for his service to the American people. This year marks the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Government Accountability Office, and we are grateful for all the work you do to help ensure government is working efficiently for taxpayers.

Since its creation, the Government Accountability Office, or GAO, has acted as Congress's watchdog, giving us the independent, nonpartisan analysis we need to ensure federal agencies and programs are working effectively.

GAO plays a critical role in reviewing operations and activities across the federal government, from cybersecurity, to health care services for our nation's veterans. And at the start of every new Congress, GAO presents some of its most important findings in the High Risk List, which we will discuss today.

The High Risk List report examines government programs and operations considered to be most at risk of waste, fraud, abuse, or mismanagement. The list also focuses on government functions most in need of reform.

This important report is not only an essential tool for saving taxpayer dollars but it also helps us ensure that government works better for every American.

Over the last 15 years, federal agencies, lawmakers, and this committee have been able to save hardworking American taxpayers nearly \$575 billion by addressing key issues highlighted in the High Risk List.

In the past two years alone, we have saved taxpayers more than \$225 billion by implementing changes based on recommendations from GAO.

However, there are still many pressing challenges raised by GAO that we still need to make more progress on addressing.

For example, I have long pressed the federal government to help prevent exposure to toxic PFAS chemicals that are harming the health of Michiganders and people across the country.

A GAO report that I helped release just yesterday, found that the previous Administration did not take significant steps to keep our communities safe from these harmful substances, and made limited progress in protecting communities and drinking water resources from PFAS, and that much of the progress identified in the report was exclusively due to Congressional efforts.

The recent SolarWinds breach at multiple federal agencies shows the urgent need for Congress to take additional action on federal cybersecurity protections.

And the ongoing crisis caused by the Coronavirus pandemic continues to raise new and unprecedented challenges for the federal government to address.

I appreciate the work GAO has done to conduct critical and timely analysis of the emergency spending Congress has authorized in the past year to ensure these new funds are getting to the people, small businesses, and communities who need them most.

Overall, this year's list highlights 36 areas GAO has determined are high risk – and that Congress must take action to improve.

I look forward to hearing today's testimony from Mr. Dodaro, who has led GAO since December 2010, and has worked at the agency for more than 45 years.

We appreciate your work and the efforts of everyone at GAO that allows us to continue working together, on a bipartisan basis, to ensure the federal government can better serve the American people.