

**Statement of Ranking Member
Senator Susan M. Collins**

**Nomination Hearing for Gene Dodaro to be
Comptroller General of the Government Accountability Office**

November 18, 2010

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Today we consider the nomination of Gene Dodaro to head the Government Accountability Office as Comptroller General.

As Congress's primary watchdog, the GAO has a critical role to play in the efficiency and effectiveness of government. Its independent audits and non-partisan investigations help to identify wasteful and ineffective spending and to promote transparency and accountability.

The GAO dates to 1921 when the federal government's financial management was in disarray. The country was awash in debt, saddled with the enormous costs of World War I. As the debt mounted, lawmakers faced a dearth of reliable information and lax controls over government expenditures. Many observers would say that we face similar tests today, and GAO has never been more critical as we work to overcome these challenges.

GAO has a broad oversight mandate to investigate federal programs on behalf of the Congress. To bolster its independence, the Comptroller General serves a single, 15-year term, giving the GAO's leader an autonomy that transcends election cycles.

Given the length of the term and the importance of the GAO mission, the Comptroller General must provide strong leadership and chart a visionary future for the agency.

Our nation needs aggressive and independent oversight of the federal government. We live in an era of historic deficits, crippling unemployment, and smaller budgets. As the government tightens its belt, the GAO, which has been labeled "the U.S. taxpayers' best friend," must remain an unabashed advocate for the public and a protective steward of federal resources.

At a time when virtually every household in America is grappling with tight finances, the objective, factual, and credible reports from GAO provide an important accounting of the federal government's operations.

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These audits and investigations, aimed at uncovering waste, fraud, abuse, and mismanagement, can propel needed reforms. GAO's findings and recommendations often provide the foundation for legislation or other congressional action.

As the recent elections made clear, the public is no longer willing to accept the status quo. Americans want realistic solutions to problems and dependable leadership. As a new Congress begins in January 2011 and we look for ways to make our government more effective and accountable, the GAO and its next Comptroller General will play a critical role.

Mr. Dodaro's career at the GAO spans more than 30 years, and he has been acting Comptroller General since 2008. I look forward to discussing his vision for the GAO and specific areas where I believe additional oversight must be focused. The next Comptroller General must ensure that the "congressional watchdog" zealously safeguards the interests of the American taxpayer.

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