

Opening Statement of Ranking Members Peters

**High Risk List 2019: Recommendations to Reduce Risk of Waste,
Fraud, and Mismanagement in Federal Programs**

Wednesday, March 6, 2019

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to join you in welcoming Comptroller General Gene Dodaro to today's hearing. Mr. Dodaro, thank you for joining us and for all of the hard work that the men and women of the GAO do to hold the federal government accountable and ensure taxpayer dollars are being spent appropriately. I look forward to hearing your testimony today.

Since 1990, the GAO has alerted Congress to areas that are considered 'high risk' - by providing this list of federal agencies and programs they have identified as vulnerable to fraud, waste, abuse or mismanagement.

The High Risk List is a roadmap to cut waste, save taxpayer dollars and set our country on a course for a more fiscally responsible future. Yet federal agencies and Congress have struggled to effectively address many of the problems identified in this report.

I believe this failure is rooted in a dysfunctional budgeting and appropriations process that is filled with last-

minute deadlines, continuing resolutions and brinksmanship that leads to government shutdowns.

Instead of thoroughly examining whether the programs we authorize and fund are serving the American people effectively - Congress routinely relies on stopgap spending measures and continuing resolutions that disrupt normal order and do not allow for meaningful oversight of how we use taxpayer dollars.

This leads to governmental short termism. Too often, we spend more money to lease office space over years or decades than it would cost to build and own what we need. We didn't invest effectively in federal cybersecurity and are now paying for credit monitoring for over 20 million people in the wake of the OPM breach.

Efforts we make now to prepare for and mitigate climate change could save the federal government, farmers, homeowners, and small businesses billions of dollars in the coming years.

The federal government is also dragging its heels in addressing toxic chemicals. The sooner EPA and other agencies act to address PFAS - fluorinated chemicals harmful to human health - the more money we can save on billions of dollars of future cleanup and health care costs.

This pattern of waste and delay is particularly alarming at a time when our country is on course to reach a \$1 trillion deficit this fiscal year. Taxpayers in Michigan and across the country deserve better - and we simply cannot afford to continue on this same path.

As Members of Congress - it is our duty to root out waste and ensure that government is being held accountable to taxpayers. We must fulfill our obligation to conduct rigorous oversight and craft bipartisan, commonsense reforms to strengthen the programs Americans count on.

We must also look for smart ways to cut spending and save tax dollars - such as eliminating duplicative or overlapping efforts that end up costing us more in the long run.

I appreciated having the opportunity to work with my colleagues - Senators Paul and Lankford - to enact legislation to increase government efficiency last Congress. I also look forward to reviewing Senator Lankford's "Waste Report" and finding new areas to work in a bipartisan way with Chairman Johnson and members of this committee to make our government function better.

We must make real progress on these goals - starting with today's hearing.

By examining the areas of concerns raised in today's hearing - and we can focus on providing the proper funding and oversight of federal programs that will enable us to rein in spending, reduce waste and provide greater accountability for the American people.

And with that, Mr. Chairman, I look forward to the discussion.