

Opening Statement
Ranking Member Mitt Romney
U.S. SENATE SUBCOMMITTEE ON
EMERGING THREATS AND SPENDING OVERSIGHT
“EXAMINING THE FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF GAO’S 2023 REPORT ON
OPPORTUNITIES TO REDUCE FRAGMENTATION, OVERLAP, DUPLICATION AND ACHIEVE
FINANCIAL BENEFITS.”
JUNE 14, 2023

Thank you, Chair Hassan, for holding this hearing. I appreciate Mr. Dodaro for being here to discuss GAO’s findings and how we can prevent waste across the federal government and save taxpayer dollars.

Before we begin, I want to thank GAO for its extensive work identifying so much waste and duplication in government. While the levels of waste can be profoundly discouraging, you have provided Congress with a roadmap of possible reforms. The annual duplication report, which was first created as part of a debt ceiling deal, has become essential reading and we must address the problems you and your investigators have uncovered.

I’m extremely discouraged by the high levels of COVID relief waste, fraud, and abuse. Some recent reporting alleges that over \$400 billion has been wasted, misspent, or stolen. In March of 2022, I led a letter with over 30 of my colleagues to President Biden, requesting more information on this colossal waste of taxpayer dollars. Today, we still don’t know the true extent of how many taxpayer dollars have been wasted.

I’m also interested in discussing how the government could be fumbling taxpayer money in other ways, like through federal work-from-home policies. How do we know if the federal workforce is actually working from home? How many federal activities would be more efficient if employees were back at the office? How do we know that time and resources aren’t being wasted?

In addition to saving Americans’ hard-earned money, I’m curious to learn more about duplicative lines of effort in disaster prevention and mitigation efforts. I’ve worked to improve stakeholder coordination through securing the passage of the Wildland Fire Mitigation and Management Commission, for example. We’ve seen great successes so far from that group, and I’d like to hear ways that we can reduce fragmentation across the government to combat wildfires that have so negatively impacted my home state of Utah along with much of the American West.

We need to ensure that our government is spending taxpayer money wisely, especially as we work to combat pressing national security threats like China.

Thank you, Madam Chair.