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# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

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### Opening Statement Rep. Elijah E. Cummings, Ranking Member

#### Hearing on "Government 2.0: GAO Unveils New Duplicative Program Report"

February 28, 2012

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and welcome back, Mr. Dodaro. I thank GAO for testifying here today.

Because of our Committee's uniquely broad jurisdiction, we have a tremendous opportunity to examine programs across the entire federal government. Today, GAO is issuing a report to help us determine the most promising ways to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of these programs.

In my opinion, our Committee does its best work when we are guided by a sincere effort to get more value out of federal programs on behalf of the American taxpayers. I hope we can do that today. For this reason, I hope we steer clear of politically charged rhetoric that condemns the entire government as "obese" or "bloated," and I hope we honor the millions of federal workers who do so much for this country on a daily basis.

One of the most compelling facts in the GAO report is that Congress has a much worse record than the Administration at implementing GAO's recommendations. Last year, GAO identified 176 specific actions that Congress and the executive branch could take to address duplication in government programs and enhance taxpayer revenues.

This year, GAO reports that the Administration has fully or partially implemented 76% of recommendations relating to executive branch actions, but Congress has fully or partially implemented only 38% of the recommendations for legislative reform.

For example, GAO has reported that oil and gas companies, which are now making the highest profits of any industry in history, currently pay no royalties on some of their leases with the U.S. government in the Gulf of Mexico. Even Chairman Issa has recognized this problem, estimating in a previous report that this unintended loophole is costing the American people up to \$80 billion in foregone revenue.

Although Democrats have offered legislation to address this fundamental injustice, House Republicans have repeatedly rejected it. Although it is appropriate to examine the Administration's record on these issues, I hope we will also look at our own record here in Congress.

With respect to the recommendations for the executive branch, GAO reports today that federal agencies have taken substantial action to address them. For example, the Administration has taken steps to reduce improper payments by the federal government. Agencies have also achieved \$1.5 billion in savings through the disposal of excess or under-utilized federal buildings, as well as identifying additional savings opportunities.

In addition, the President has proposed reorganizing and consolidating a number of our nation's trade agencies into a single department to improve coordination and effectiveness while saving billions of dollars in the process.

Of course, GAO's report finds that many challenges remain. For example, the Departments of Defense and Veterans Affairs need to improve integration of health care and case management to reduce duplication and provide more effective assistance to our servicemembers—particularly as they leave active duty and transition into the VA system. This is something that our national security subcommittee has focused on closely, and I know their efforts will continue.

I look forward to today's testimony from GAO, as well as the testimony from Senator Coburn, who has also been very active on these issues.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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