

HENRY A. WAXMAN, CALIFORNIA,
CHAIRMAN

TOM LANTOS, CALIFORNIA
EDOLPHUS TOWNS, NEW YORK
PAUL E. KANJORSKI, PENNSYLVANIA
CAROLYN B. MALONEY, NEW YORK
ELIJAH E. CUMMINGS, MARYLAND
DENNIS J. KUCINICH, OHIO
DANNY K. DAVIS, ILLINOIS
JOHN F. TIERNEY, MASSACHUSETTS
WM. LACY CLAY, MISSOURI
DIANE E. WATSON, CALIFORNIA
STEPHEN F. LYNCH, MASSACHUSETTS
BRIAN HIGGINS, NEW YORK
JOHN A. YARMUTH, KENTUCKY
BRUCE L. BRALEY, IOWA
ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON,
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
BETTY McCOLLUM, MINNESOTA
JIM COOPER, TENNESSEE
CHRIS VAN HOLLEN, MARYLAND
PAUL W. HODES, NEW HAMPSHIRE
CHRISTOPHER S. MURPHY, CONNECTICUT
JOHN P. SARBANES, MARYLAND
PETER WELCH, VERMONT

ONE HUNDRED TENTH CONGRESS

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

MAJORITY (202) 225-5051
FACSIMILE (202) 225-4784
MINORITY (202) 225-5074

www.oversight.house.gov

TOM DAVIS, VIRGINIA,
RANKING MINORITY MEMBER

DAN BURTON, INDIANA
CHRISTOPHER SHAYS, CONNECTICUT
JOHN M. McHUGH, NEW YORK
JOHN L. MICA, FLORIDA
MARK E. SOUDER, INDIANA
TODD RUSSELL PLATTS, PENNSYLVANIA
CHRIS CANNON, UTAH
JOHN J. DUNCAN, JR., TENNESSEE
MICHAEL R. TURNER, OHIO
DARRELL E. ISSA, CALIFORNIA
KENNY MARCHANT, TEXAS
LYNN A. WESTMORELAND, GEORGIA
PATRICK T. McHENRY, NORTH CAROLINA
VIRGINIA FOXX, NORTH CAROLINA
BRIAN P. BILBRAY, CALIFORNIA
BILL SALI, IDAHO
JIM JORDAN, OHIO

STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN DANNY K. DAVIS AT THE SUBCOMMITTEE ON FEDERAL WORKFORCE, POSTAL SERVICE, AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA HEARING ON

“H.R. 3268, THE GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE ACT”

March 13, 2008

Today, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) has an opportunity. It has an opportunity to regain its footing as an agency that not only touts that its employees are the best and the brightest, but treats them as if they are the best and the brightest. GAO has an opportunity to hold itself to the same standards of accountability and forthrightness that it demands of other agencies. GAO has an opportunity to work with, not against, the Subcommittee, when it raises legitimate concerns about its personnel reforms and other issues pertaining to the administration of the agency.

It appears that GAO is going to seize this opportunity. I have met with Gene Dodaro, the Acting Comptroller General, and he has indicated that he intends to work collaboratively with the Subcommittee to address any concerns that we have and the Subcommittee is committed to doing the same. Mr. Dodaro has over 30 years of service with GAO and I hope he will restore GAO's legacy as a model agency. Mr. Dodaro, welcome to your first hearing as Acting Comptroller General of the United States.

That said, after two years of investigating GAO's personnel reforms, the Subcommittee has unfinished business to address. I am pleased to announce that I will be introducing legislation that restores the 2006 and 2007 across the board increase to all GAO employees who “met expectations” but did not receive it. The bill also includes a provision that establishes an across the board “floor guarantee” that will govern how pay adjustments are to be administered at GAO in the future. The legislation has the support of GAO and its union, the International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers.

While the Subcommittee is pleased that the proposal has the support of GAO, it is unfortunate that it took two years of employees being demoralized and worrying about their pay, before we received it. Last winter, the best and the brightest at GAO finally

had to vote to unionize, to get management's attention. The compromise legislation, which will be discussed today, will be introduced and marked up when Congress returns from the March recess.

In November 2007, at my request, members of GAO's Employee Advisory Council surveyed all GAO employees on GAO's personnel reforms. Seventy one percent of GAO employees responded to the survey and we will hear testimony about the results of that survey today.

Another troublesome issue, that the Subcommittee will continue to address at future hearings, is the historic disparity between the ratings of African Americans and their Caucasian counterparts at GAO. At a hearing the Subcommittee held in November 2007, on diversity in legislative branch agencies, Ron Stroman, Managing Director of GAO's Office of Opportunity and Inclusiveness, testified that he alerted David Walker, that if GAO went through with its personnel reforms or Band II restructuring, that it would have a negative impact on African Americans. When pressed as to why GAO would go through with a restructuring that it knew would adversely impact African Americans, Mr. Stroman stated, "It was a decision that the Comptroller General made."

Last August, almost a year and a half after the restructuring took place, GAO hired the Ivy Group to research the rating disparities between African American and Caucasian employees at GAO. The Ivy Group will not complete its final report until next month, however, what they have learned to-date is troubling and raises serious questions about GAO's performance management system.

Mr. Walker officially resigned from GAO yesterday, therefore the question of why he moved forward with the restructuring given the disparity in ratings, cannot be posed to him directly. Nevertheless, the Subcommittee will continue its oversight of this issue and is pleased that Mr. Dodaro has indicated that he is committed to addressing the problem.

Thank you and I look forward to hearing from today's witnesses.