



Highlights of [GAO-07-644T](#), a testimony before the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, U.S. Senate

Why GAO Prepared This Statement

The Committee sought GAO's views on the role GAO has played in assisting congressional oversight and the authorities and resources GAO needs to further improve its assistance to the Congress.

Today's testimony discusses some of the ways that GAO has helped "set the table" for this Committee, the Congress, the executive branch, and the nation to engage in a constructive and informed dialogue about the challenges and opportunities our nation is facing in the 21st century. It also discusses the authority and resources GAO will need to address the critical oversight and other needs of the Congress.

What GAO Recommends

This statement summarizes a comprehensive body of GAO's published work in support of the Congress, much of which offered recommendations to address specific issues. As such, this statement makes no new recommendations.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?-GAO-07-644T.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Gene Dodaro at (202) 512-5600 or dodarog@gao.gov.

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE

Supporting the Congress through Oversight, Insight, and Foresight

How GAO Assists the Congress

GAO is a key tool for the Congress as it works to improve economy, efficiency, effectiveness, equity, and ethics within the federal government. To better meet the needs of the Congress, GAO has transformed itself to provide a range of key oversight, insight, and foresight services while "leading by example" in transforming how government should do business.

GAO's **oversight** work has traditionally focused on ensuring government entities are spending funds as intended by the Congress and complying with applicable laws and regulations, while guarding against fraud, waste, abuse, and mismanagement. For example, since the early 1990s, GAO has updated its list of government programs and operations across government that it identifies as "high risk." It has contributed to the Congress enacting a series of governmentwide reforms and achieving tens of billions of dollars in financial benefits. Last November, GAO issued recommendations for oversight in the 110th Congress ranging from Iraq, to food safety, to the tax gap.

GAO work also provides important **insight** into what programs, policies, and operations are working well; best practices to be shared and benchmarked; how agencies can improve the linkages across the silos of government; and how different levels of government and their nongovernmental partners can be better aligned to achieve important outcomes for the nation. For example, GAO developed a number of crosscutting and comprehensive reviews of the preparedness for, response to, and recovery from the 2005 Gulf Coast hurricanes. GAO has issued over 40 related reports and testimonies, and in work for this Committee and others GAO is examining lessons learned from past national emergencies and catastrophic disasters—both at home and abroad—that may prove useful in identifying ways to approach rebuilding.

Finally, GAO's work can provide the Congress with **foresight** by highlighting the long-term implications of today's decisions and identifying key trends and emerging challenges facing our nation before they reach crisis proportions. As the Chief Accountability Officer of the United States Government, the Comptroller General continues to call attention to the nation's long-term fiscal challenge and the risks it poses to our nation's future.

Continuously improving on the critical role GAO plays in supporting the Congress will require enhancements to GAO's resources and authorities. GAO's fiscal year 2008 budget request seeks resources to allow it to rebuild and enhance its workforce, knowledge capacity, employee programs, and infrastructure. GAO will be proposing changes to its authority, such as the ability to administer oaths in conducting its work, relief from certain mandated reviews, additional human capital flexibilities, and the creation of a Board of Contract Appeals at GAO. Finally, the Comptroller General has noted that GAO should be increased in size over the next 6 years to address the current and anticipated needs of the Congress.