



Highlights of [GAO-03-624T](#), testimony before the Committee on Government Reform, House of Representatives

Why GAO Did This Study

GAO has sought to assist the Congress and the executive branch in considering the actions needed to support the transition to a more high performing, results-oriented, and accountable federal government. At the Committee's request, GAO provided perspective on the proposal to reinstate the authority for the President to submit government restructuring plans to the Congress for expedited review.

What GAO Recommends

The President and the Congress may wish to consider alternative provisions geared toward whether policy or operational issues are being considered. Further, they may wish to consider establishing processes (e.g., a commission) that provide for the involvement of key players and a means to help reach consensus on any specific restructuring proposals that would be submitted for consideration by the Congress.

www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-03-624T.

To view the full report, including the scope and methodology, click on the link above. For more information, contact Patricia A. Dalton at (202) 512-6806 or daltonp@gao.gov.

EXECUTIVE REORGANIZATION AUTHORITY

Balancing Executive and Congressional Roles in Shaping the Federal Government's Structure

What GAO Found

In view of the overarching trends and the growing fiscal challenges facing our nation, there is a need to consider the proper role of the federal government, how the government should do business in the future, and in some instances, who should do the government's business in the 21st century.

The fundamental issue raised by the proposal to grant reorganization authority to the President is not whether the government's organization can and should be restructured, but rather, whether and how the Congress wishes to change the nature of its normal deliberative process when addressing proposals to restructure the federal government. This testimony makes the following key points:

- Given current trends and increasing fiscal challenges, a comprehensive review, reassessment, and reprioritization of what the government does and how it does it is clearly warranted. This is especially vital in view of changing priorities and the compelling need to examine the base of government programs, policies, and operations since, given GAO's long-term budget simulations, the status quo is unsustainable over time.
- While the intent of such a review is desirable and some expedited congressional consideration may well be appropriate for specific issues, the Congress also has an important role to play in government reform initiatives, especially from an authorization and oversight perspective. In contrast to the past "one-size-fits-all" approaches in developing new executive reorganization authority, the Congress may want to consider different tracks for proposals that propose significant policy changes versus those that focus more narrowly on government operations. Further, Congress may want to consider establishing appropriate processes to ensure the involvement of key players, particularly in the legislative and executive branches, to help facilitate reaching consensus on specific restructuring proposals that would be submitted for consideration, should the Congress enact a new executive reorganization authority.
- Modern management practices can provide a framework for developing successful restructuring proposals. Such practices include: establishing clear goals, following an integrated approach, developing an effective human capital strategy, considering alternative program delivery mechanisms, and planning for both initial and long-term implementation issues to achieve a successful transformation. Furthermore, successful implementation will depend in part on continuing congressional oversight. The Congress could significantly enhance its efficiency and effectiveness by adapting its own organization to mirror changes in the executive branch.