



Highlights of [GAO-08-1153T](#), a testimony before the Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management, the Federal Workforce, and the District of Columbia, the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, U.S. Senate

Why GAO Did This Study

The upcoming 2009 transition will be a unique and critical period for the U.S. government. It marks the first wartime presidential transition in 40 years. It will also be the first administration change for the relatively new Department of Homeland Security operating in the post 9/11 environment. The next administration will fill thousands of positions across government; there will be a number of new faces in Congress as well. Making these transitions as seamlessly as possible is pivotal to effectively and efficiently help accomplish the federal government's many essential missions.

While the Government Accountability Office (GAO), as a legislative branch agency, has extensive experience helping each new Congress, the Presidential Transition Act points to GAO as a resource to incoming administrations as well. The Act specifically identifies GAO as a source of briefings and other materials to help presidential appointees make the leap from campaigning to governing by informing them of the major management issues, risks, and challenges they will face.

GAO has traditionally played an important role as a resource for new Congresses and administrations, providing insight into the issues where GAO has done work. This testimony provides an overview of GAO's objectives for assisting the 111th Congress and the next administration in their all-important transition efforts.

To view the full product, including the scope and methodology, click on [GAO-08-1153T](#). For more information, contact J. Christopher Mihm, Managing Director, Strategic Issues, at (202) 512-6806 or mihmj@gao.gov.

THE UPCOMING TRANSITION

GAO's Efforts to Assist the 111th Congress and the Next Administration

What GAO Found

GAO will highlight issues that the new President, his appointees, and the Congress will confront from day one. These include immediate challenges ranging from national and homeland security to oversight of financial institutions and markets to a range of public health and safety issues. GAO will synthesize the hundreds of reports and testimonies it issues every year so that new policy makers can quickly zero in on critical issues during the first days of the new administration and Congress. GAO's analysis, incorporating its institutional memory across numerous administrations, will be ready by the time the election results are in and transition teams begin to move out.

Objectives for GAO's Transition Efforts

- Provide insight into pressing national issues.
- Highlight the growing need for innovative, integrated approaches to solve national and global challenges.
- Document targeted opportunities to conserve resources that can be applied to new initiatives.
- Underscore critical capacity building needs in individual agencies that will affect implementation of whatever new priorities are pursued.
- Help inform the management improvement agendas of Congress and the new administration.
- Monitor the implementation of the Presidential Transition Act provisions and identify potential improvements for future transitions.

GAO will provide congressional and executive branch policy makers with a comprehensive snapshot of how things are working across government and emphasize the need to update some federal activities to better align them with 21st century realities and bring about government transformation. In keeping with its mission, GAO will be providing Congress and the executive branch with clear facts and constructive options and suggestions that elected officials can use to make policy choices in this pivotal transition year. GAO believes the nation's new and returning leaders will be able to use such information to help meet both the nation's urgent issues and long-term challenges so that our nation stays strong and secure now and for the next generation.

GAO's transition work also will highlight the need to modernize the machinery of government through better application of information technology, financial management, human capital, and contracting practices. GAO also will underscore the need to develop strategies for addressing the government's serious long-term fiscal sustainability challenges, driven on the spending side primarily by escalating health care costs and changing demographics.