

OPEN LETTER

We commend the Administration for seeking congressional approval to make apportionment changes via the rescissions mechanism.

DATE: July 9, 2025

SUBJECT: Robust GAO Key to Strengthening the First Branch, Reducing Waste

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, we urge members of Congress to reconsider extreme reductions to the Government Accountability Office (GAO) recommended by the House Appropriations Committee Fiscal Year 2026 (FY 2026) [Legislative Branch Appropriations](#). Reducing the GAO's budget authority by half would severely weaken a critical oversight and accountability asset, rendering both the GAO and Congress less effective institutions. Instead, legislators should [prioritize modernization and reforms](#) that could make the GAO a more useful resource.

No federal agency is perfect, but the GAO's more than [100-year history](#) is a success story overall, with an average return on investment of [\\$123 for every \\$1 expended](#). As Congress's fiscal watchdog, the GAO has identified [hundreds of billions of dollars](#) in savings along with opportunities to reduce duplication and mismanagement. In addition to more than 150 recurring reports—including [annual audits](#) of the federal government's consolidated financial statements—the GAO receives an average of [627 new congressional requests](#) each year. This provides Congress with key insight into the workings of our sprawling federal government. A diminished GAO would hamper lawmakers in their work to root out waste, rein in executive overreach, and exercise their core constitutional power: control of the purse.

The House FY 2026 Legislative Branch appropriations bill would slash the GAO's budget authority to approximately \$451 million. The last time the GAO's budget was near that sum was [FY 2003](#), when the agency had 3,269 employees and total federal outlays were barely over [\\$2 trillion](#). Today's [3,560 employees](#) are tasked with overseeing the fiscal integrity of more than [\\$7 trillion](#) in outlays, an exponential increase in responsibility of nearly \$1.4 billion per employee—and more than double the \$612 million per employee in FY 2003.

The GAO performs an essential function for Congress, providing information in a nonpartisan and independent manner. The GAO is the first line of oversight for Congress, acting as the eyes and ears of the legislative branch within the workings of the vast federal apparatus. Without the GAO's expertise and diligence, Congress's constant struggle for meaningful oversight would be far more challenging. A sweeping cut would undermine the role of Congress and let waste, fraud, and inefficiencies proliferate, resulting in wasteful spending that could far outweigh any immediate savings the current plan might achieve. Likewise, undercutting Congress's in-house auditors is unlikely to resolve [ongoing concerns](#) regarding the GAO's legal functions, management, and review practices.

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We urge lawmakers to prioritize good stewardship of taxpayer dollars and oppose this massive cut to the GAO. A considered reform effort, in the context of restoring and improving the First Branch, would pay long-term dividends for Congress and constituents alike.

Sincerely,

R Street Institute
National Taxpayers Union
American Association of Senior Citizens
Center for a Free Economy
Concord Action
Due Process Institute
Hispanic Leadership Fund
Independent Center
Millennial Debt Foundation
Niskanen Center
Project on Government Oversight
Rio Grande Foundation
Taxpayers for Common Sense
Taxpayers Protection Alliance
60 Plus Association
Kevin R. Kosar, Senior Fellow, American Enterprise Institute*

*Organization listed for identification purposes only.