

**CONGRESSMAN ELIJAH E. CUMMINGS OF MARYLAND
OPENING STATEMENT**

“GAO PERSONNEL REFORM: DOES IT MEET EXPECTATIONS?”

**COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM
SUBCOMMITTEE ON FEDERAL WORKFORCE, POSTAL SERVICE
AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**

JOINTLY WITH

**SENATE SUBCOMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT,
THE FEDERAL WORKFORCE, AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**

TUESDAY, MAY 22, 2007

Mr. Chairman,

I want to thank you for holding this vitally important hearing to examine personnel reform at the Government Accountability Office (GAO).

I welcome the opportunity to fully examine the implementation of the GAO’s Human Capital Reform Act of 2004, the market based compensation study conducted by Watson World Wide for GAO, and the performance ratings of African Americans at GAO.

GAO is the largest of three agencies that provide support, research, review, and analysis for Congress—and we rely heavily on its work.

Sometimes characterized as “Congress’s watchdog,” GAO provides a variety of services to Congress that are largely connected to the oversight work that we do in this Committee.

But the question we will examine today is, "Who is watching the watchdogs?"

I have many concerns regarding GAO's treatment of its employees, and its response to attempts by Congress to provide oversight.

Specifically, I am concerned with Comptroller General David Walker's decision not to provide cost of living adjustments to more than 300 employees under the Human Capital Reform Act of 2004.

When we considered the legislation in 2004, many of us expressed concern that GAO employees would be vulnerable to losing this pay increase, and Mr. Walker told us in no uncertain terms that they would not.

We know that Mr. Walker has not made good on that promise, and I have yet to see convincing evidence as to why.

I must note that this is not for lack of trying. Last September, I joined my colleagues, Chairman Davis, and Representatives Hoyer, Ruppertsberger, Norton, Moran, Wynn, Van Hollen and then Representative Cardin, in requesting an explanation.

Mr. Walker has made reference to a Watson World Wide study, but he has not produced the study for our review. I find it ironic that an agency charged with conducting oversight of the Executive Branch is withholding information from Members of Congress.

Furthermore, I am very concerned with the long standing issue of poor appraisals for African American employees at GAO.

Over the last three years, African Americans at all pay levels consistently received the lowest performance appraisals of any

group, and were frequently denied leadership positions despite their requests for such roles.

Because of this disparity, the Comptroller General's new "pay for performance" model has disproportionately affected African American workers at GAO.

I understand that Mr. Walker is taking steps to address this disparity, but the damage is already done. The adjusted payment schedule is in effect, and African Americans are losing out now.

Finally, I would like to emphasize that I am aware that GAO employees have chosen to organize, and I expect that an election will take place expeditiously and in good faith.

Thank you and I yield back the remainder of my time.

ELIJAH E. CUMMINGS
Member of Congress