November 16, 2026

The Honorable Rand Paul
Chairman, Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
United States Senate

The Honorable Gary Peters
Ranking Member, Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
United States Senate

Dear Chairman Paul and Ranking Member Peters:

We write to express strong opposition to rushing through a nomination for the Comptroller General of the United States.[1] The statutory selection process and decades of bipartisan precedent should not be bypassed to install one of the President's nominees as the head of Congress's principal watchdog agency. Doing so would be a serious affront to Congress's institutional independence under the Constitution and would undermine its preeminent watchdog agency, especially as the Comptroller General leads a *legislative* branch agency for a 15-year term.

The Government Accountability Office is indispensable to Congress's ability to govern and conduct robust oversight of the federal government. Its auditors, analysts, and attorneys investigate federal spending, evaluate government programs, identify waste and mismanagement, and determine whether agencies are complying with appropriations law. Its work reaches across the federal government, from national defense and health care to federal contracting, technology, and financial management. GAO provides Members of both parties with the independent facts and analysis they need to legislate, oversee the executive branch, and protect Congress's constitutional power of the purse. The Comptroller General must be of the highest caliber and have the confidence of members of both parties because this position leads the agency that serves Congress as an institution.

No President should nominate a candidate until Congress has undertaken the customary public search and bipartisan evaluation of candidates. Any candidate must reflect Congress' prerogatives. Statute requires the convening of a ten member selection commission, and precedent places the convening obligation on the current chair of the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee. No such commission has been formed.

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1 https://www.hsgac.senate.gov/media/dems/peters-schumer-jeffries-and-garcia-statement-on-sham-nomination-process-for-next-gao-leader/

Every Comptroller General appointed under the 1980 law has been selected through the congressional commission process. In the previous two instances, the commission publicly solicited applications, including through notices in the Congressional Record and online. Congressional staff and Members carefully reviewed and interviewed candidates before the commission developed its recommendations. In each instance, the nominee had the support of all ten members of the commission.

Earlier this year, many of the undersigned organizations recommended criteria for evaluating candidates.[2] The HSGAC Chair's last-minute request to the ten members designated by statute for their "recommendations" over the Veterans Day holiday is no substitute for convening the commission and conducting a meaningful, bipartisan evaluation of candidates.

Acting Comptroller General Orice Williams Brown, who has worked at GAO for more than 35 years, is widely regarded as doing a capable job leading the agency, which continues to carry out its responsibilities. There is no institutional emergency requiring an immediate appointment. The GAO has previously operated under acting leadership for extended periods, including more than two years before the appointments of both David Walker and Gene Dodaro.

In a bipartisan September 21, 2026 letter that many of us signed, we called upon Congress to take sole responsibility for appointing the Comptroller General.[3] We continue to believe Congress should change the law before any appointment moves forward. The GAO is a legislative branch agency, and its leader should be chosen by Congress.

Even under existing law, the bipartisan congressional commission has not started — let alone completed — a thorough, open, and deliberative selection process.

We therefore urge you to set aside any effort to advance a Comptroller General nomination through the Senate and to instead establish a selection process that safeguards GAO's independence.

Sincerely,

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2 https://americalabs.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/Principles-for-Evaluating-Nominees-for-Comptroller-General-of-the-United-States.pdf

3 https://americalabs.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/09/Coalition-Letter-Change-GAO-Appointment-Process-2026-09-21.pdf

American Governance Institute

American Oversight

Carl Levin Center for Oversight and Democracy

Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW)

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Kevin T. Kosar, Senior Fellow, American Enterprise Institute*

Lorelei Kelly, Principal, Public Good Group

National Women's Law Center Action Fund

Norman Ornstein

Partnership for Public Service

Protect Democracy United

Public Citizen

Taxpayers for Common Sense

* Signing in an individual capacity