Government
Transformation
Initiative

Making the Federal Government More Economical, Efficient, Effective, and Respected

By Creating a Government Transformation Commission

A White Paper Prepared by the Government Transformation Initiative
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Synopsis

Introduction

While the Congress and the President wrestle with the significant policy issues, financial challenges, and budget imperatives of the day, there needs to be focus on improving the economy, efficiency, effectiveness and credibility of government operations and programs. When private sector organizations are faced with challenging times and demanding fiscal performance, they take steps to ensure their programs and processes are as economical, efficient, and effective as they can be. To achieve this for the federal government we recommend the creation of a statutory commission for government transformation dedicated to improving the performance of government.

Purpose

The Commission for Government Transformation would be a statutory entity to oversee and help ensure the transformation and improvement of federal government processes and programs so they will be more economical, efficient, and effective.

Need

The Commission is necessary to help Congress and the President improve government performance, reduce duplication and wasteful redundancies, achieve fiscal sustainability, and enhance credibility with the American people.

Benefits

- Congress and the President would have an entity dedicated to helping them improve government operations and management
- Federal dollars would be used more economically, efficiently and effectively
- Existing legislation that supports good management and program performance would be re-enforced
- Resources, ideas, and innovations would be realized and shared
- Savings realized could be repurposed to address shortfalls, or expand improvement initiatives and innovation, and used to reduce the deficit/debt
- Unnecessarily duplicative programs would be consolidated or eliminated
- A bipartisan initiative would demonstrate that action is being taken and would help renew confidence in our government

The Commission

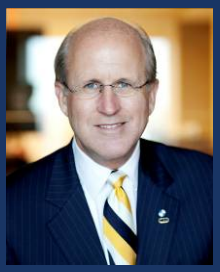
The Commission would be made up of 7 appointed members supported by expert staff with the responsibility to:

- Review and consider work done by various governmental and non-governmental entities dealing with the organization and operations of the federal government;
- Assess operational practices and make actionable recommendations to the President and the Congress in connection with longstanding management challenges; and
- Serve as a repository for best practices, innovation, and continuous improvement.

The government is challenged by increasing demand for improved performance accompanied by dwindling resources and most recently, sequestration cuts. Based on recurrent findings of unprecedented redundancy, inefficiency and duplication in the use of federal resources, the government is on an unsustainable fiscal path and in need of major transformational reforms. In order to meet our nation's challenges and capitalize on our country's opportunities in the future, government transformation is needed and can be achieved by refocusing on:

- *What it does*
- *How it does it*
- *How it performs*
- *How it is financed*
- *How it measures success*

GTI Board Members



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Introduction

The Current State and Fiscal Challenge. Recent reports concerning the federal government's financial challenges, longer range fiscal outlook and across-the-board spending cuts, all underscore the need to address the long-term sustainability of our current fiscal path, while improving the government's operational practices. The gross domestic product (GDP) has grown slowly and unemployment has remained higher than average since the end of the most recent recession. Further, the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) has identified various fragmentations, redundancies, duplication and operational inefficiencies which are at unprecedented levels and result in great cost to the federal government during a critical time in our economy. GAO's high-risk list continues to grow. Federal Inspectors General (IG) and others have noted many organizational, operational, and other management issues that need to be addressed.

Fiscal responsibility and stewardship of federal dollars is a concern to every American regardless of their party affiliation or ideological beliefs. As such, there is widespread agreement on the need for Congress to pursue operational reforms that can improve government performance and enhance fiscal flexibility and sustainability. This means not only looking at the near term oversight and corrective solutions, but taking immediate, deliberate and impactful steps that bring about meaningful transformational change, as soon as possible.

During this critical time, while the economy is still in a state of recovery and in need of thoughtful attention, the window to address the challenge narrows while the scope and depth of the required transformation grows. Simulations by the GAO and others show continually increasing levels of debt that are unsustainable over time absent changes in current fiscal policy.

Efforts and Answers on the Road to Achieve Change. To answer the question: *"How can we make the federal government operate in a more economical, efficient and effective manner?"* various commissions have been established and efforts undertaken to make recommendations on complex policy issues. In every presidential cycle, there have been efforts focusing on government operational and management reforms such as, Ronald Reagan's Grace Commission, Clinton-Gore's Reinventing Government, George W. Bush's Presidents Management Agenda and President Obama's Management Initiatives.

The economic environment calls for Congress to act to eliminate redundancy, duplication, fragmentation and inefficiency. GTI is the means and method to achieve transformation in operational and program performance that saves money and enhances fiscal flexibility.

Additionally, every year there are a large number of efficiency recommendations made by GAO, agency IG's, Office of Management and Budget (OMB), Members and Committees of Congress, and many other organizations. Unfortunately, many of these recommendations never get acted upon because they lack the specificity to be actionable, there are structural, jurisdictional, and cultural limitations that have prevented action, and there is no capacity available to address them once identified.

Establishment of a statutorily created **Government Transformation Commission** modeled after the Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) process is designed to recognize this reality and create a mechanism to effectively address operational and management issues while ultimately reserving

the decision making for Congress and the President. The Government Transformation Commission will create a non-partisan group of experts to help Congress and the Administration deal with many longstanding management and operational challenges.

As the federal government seeks a solution to cope with across-the-board spending cuts and furloughs for government workers, the application of standard, government-wide business improvement processes will likely stem considerable waste and return much needed fiscal flexibility to the government. By forming a Government Transformation Commission with statutory authority, we can give Congress and the Administration a tool to make more informed decisions to improve the economy, efficiency and effectiveness of government by recognizing and rewarding what is working while addressing problem areas. We cannot afford to continue on the path of redundancy, duplication, across-the-board federal cuts and furlough as short term solutions. We need to take a more systematic approach to addressing the structural operational and major management challenges facing the federal government.

Preventing an Unsustainable Fiscal Future. The federal government's current fiscal path is financially unsustainable. Current estimates place nearly $51,000 in unsupported debt as additional burden per American taxpayer. While the government provides critical goods and services to the American people, years of failing to address inefficiencies, spiraling operational costs and program expansion is contributing to this debt. As the largest purchaser of goods and services in the world, the U.S. government has an opportunity and obligation to pay attention to what it does and how it executes programs to achieve its mission; taking corrective measures where possible to improve utilization of each dollar and achieve performance efficiencies government-wide.

While Congress wrestles with the significant policy issues of the day, domestically and abroad, there needs to be focus on improving the economy, efficiency, and effectiveness of government. When private sector organizations are faced with challenging times and demanding fiscal performance, they take steps to ensure their programs and processes are as economical, efficient, and effective as they can be. This should be a common practice for any organization, private or public.

The creation of this Commission provides Congress with the ability to come together in a non-partisan, fully transparent way to improve the operations of government in ways that benefit all Americans.

The Government Transformation Solution. To achieve this for the federal government we recommend the creation of a statutory commission for government transformation dedicated to identifying and implementing actionable ways to transform government with meaningful and measurable results. This Commission would be dedicated to supporting the President and Congress to improve operational performance across the government.

The creation of this Commission provides Congress with the ability to come together in a non-partisan, fully transparent way to improve the operations of government in ways that benefit all Americans by taking a "systematic and professional approach" to improving government operations. Making government more economical, efficient, and effective is an area with broad bipartisan support that can achieve meaningful outcomes for all seeking better federal performance.

The Commission should not engage in the political process of, for example, setting national priorities or making policy related recommendations (e.g., social insurance programs, tax policies). Instead, the Commission will focus on driving operational and management efficiencies.

The Government Transformation Initiative (GTI) is a non-profit coalition of non-profits and for-profit entities dedicated to the achievement of a highly effective government. GTI was formed to support our government with highly qualified and respected experts in the fields of transformation, management consulting, and accounting/finance to strengthen our government through the establishment of the Government Transformation Commission. We urge Congress to consider this critical undertaking to demonstrate its commitment to effective government. We at GTI are happy to work with the Committees of Jurisdiction, the leadership of both Houses, interested members of Congress, and the Administration on a bipartisan basis to effect such legislation.

This paper describes the purpose of the Commission, why it is necessary, as well as potential roles and responsibilities of the Commission and key stakeholders. In addition, it addresses basic governance, funding, and the establishment of an improvement and innovation fund.

Purpose of the Commission

The Commission for Government Transformation would be a statutory entity to oversee and effect the transformation of federal government programs and operational functions so they will perform and be executed in a more economical, efficient, and effective manner.

Legislation would establish this independent Commission to study the programs, organization, functions, and operational practices of the federal government and make specific and actionable recommendations that will enhance the economy, effectiveness and efficiency of federal departments and agencies. These efforts will result in significant cost savings and better utilization of funding and service to the American people. The Commission will address both vertical (individual programs that directly serve the American people) and horizontal areas (functional areas that cross government organizations).

Why the Commission is Necessary

The Commission is necessary to help Congress and the President improve government performance, fiscal sustainability, and credibility with the American people.

While a "grand bargain" that includes budget controls, social insurance, tax, and other policy reforms is necessary, there is also a need to address the management and operational effectiveness of federal agencies and programs.

It is widely known that the federal government faces significant fiscal challenges requiring broad and bold action on the part of our government leaders. With proper business analysis, operational effectiveness and performance improvement can be achieved. Best practices can then be deployed to correct inefficiencies in horizontal areas such as information technology, financial systems, real property management, human capital practices, and acquisition/procurement where significant gains may be realized.

There is opportunity, expertise and scope for management changes that realize significant economies and efficiency gains. The concept of shared services has never been fully realized;

there are duplicative spending programs, management and process inefficiencies, as well as ineffective overlapping IT systems that do not talk to one another.

Vertically, while some programs are vital to the needs of the nation, others may no longer be necessary, are duplicative, or could be much more efficient and effective. A focused statutorily established body is necessary to assess such programs in order to improve efficiency and effectiveness since the normal legislative and executive process has failed to achieve adequate reforms in a reasonably timely manner. With so many issues, neither OMB nor Congress has the capacity to support such an effort, but with a Government Transformation Commission they would have a directed and dedicated entity to help them do so.

Since 2011, GAO has identified over 300 areas where agencies, offices, or initiatives of the federal government have similar or overlapping objectives or provide similar services to the same populations. In 2013, GAO has identified an additional 31 areas where agencies can achieve greater efficiency and effectiveness. The latest report highlights 81 actions Congress and the executive branch can take to either reduce the cost of government operations or enhance revenue collections for the Treasury. "Reducing or eliminating duplication, overlap, or fragmentation," GAO estimates, "could potentially save billions of tax dollars annually and help agencies provide more efficient and effective services."

Over the past three years, the Government Accountability Office found 162 areas in all where agencies are duplicating efforts, at a cost of tens of billions of dollars.

This includes:

- Government agencies spending billions on new mapping data — without checking whether other government agencies already have maps to be used;
- 29 Department of Homeland Security contracts that partly or completely overlapped with research being done by another part of the same department;
- At least 23 different federal agencies running hundreds of programs to support renewable energy;
- Each branch of the armed services is developing its own camouflage uniforms without sharing them with other services, now incorporating up to 7 different camouflage strategies, costing about $500 million, while some sit on the shelf, never to be used;
- There are 55,000-75,000 unused federal buildings costing taxpayers $8 billion a year to maintain;
- $18 billion a year is being spent on 47 job training programs across 9 agencies;
- Three federal offices have oversight of catfish inspections; and
- Individual agencies have hundreds of incompatible information-technology networks and systems that were built over time and actually hinder government wide information sharing.

The GAO suggested certain actions including canceling a demonstration program, strengthening oversight of certain payments and investments, and limiting or reducing subsidies for a particular program. However, like other efforts by the Inspectors General, OMB and other commissions and bodies, the GAO did not make specific and actionable recommendations in

The Government Transformation Commission can be the necessary and dedicated mechanism to help the Congress and the President ensure the government operates in an efficient and effective manner.

connection with most of its findings. In addition, Congress is not compelled to take action in a comprehensive way and in a timely manner.

In its annual report of activities, the Councils of Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency (CIGIE) cited the identification of a total of "$93.9 billion in dollar savings as well as program efficiencies and enhancements from a range of audits, investigations, evaluations, and inspections." "Cumulatively," according to the CIGIE, "these efforts resulted in: $84.8 billion in potential savings from audit recommendations and $9.1 billion in potential savings from investigative recoveries and receivables…. "

Along with the current fiscal crisis, the government has faced years of neglect with poorly managed, duplicative, cost overrun programs that have left the government inefficient and, in many areas, ineffective. Enacted reforms, such as the Government Performance and Results (GPRA) Act of 1993/2010, the E-Government (E-Gov) Act of 2002, the Chief Financial Officers (CFO) Act of 1990, Federal Acquisition Streamlining Act (FASA) of 1994, and the Clinger-Cohen Act of 1996, as well as the Federal Government Performance Plan requirements of Section 1115 of Title 31, United States Code, attempted to address longstanding management challenges. However, there simply are too many programs for Congress or the White House to manage and oversee, and the implementation of the above statutes has not been totally effective.

Year after year, auditors and investigators raise the same or similar management challenges, yet inadequate progress is made to address them. Often the recommendations of these groups are not specific enough for them to be actionable. That's one reason there is a need to finally establish an independent commission with the capacity, credibility, and authority to make specific recommendations that will accelerate actions to address these challenges.

The Government Transformation Commission would be the necessary and dedicated mechanism to ensure the government operates in an efficient and effective manner. It would also be designed to ensure a tangible return on investment to the American people.

Benefits of the Commission

A Commission on Government Transformation will provide much needed focus on the transformation of our government's programs and its culture, and would be a valuable new entity supporting both Congress and the President in their efforts to ensure:

- A specific entity is dedicated to helping them improve government operations and management;
- Federal dollars would be used more economically, efficiently and effectively;
- Existing legislation that supports good management and program performance would be re-enforced;
- Resources, ideas, and innovations would be realized and shared;
- Savings realized could be repurposed to address shortfalls or expand improvement initiatives and innovation;
- Unnecessarily duplicative and inefficient programs are consolidated or eliminated; and
- A bipartisan initiative would demonstrate that action is being taken and would help renew confidence in our government.

The Commission would leverage existing legislation, as well as the good work of GAO, OMB, Agency IG's, Congressional staff, think tanks, and others.

The Commission should be responsible for ensuring a return on investment of at least 10–20 times its cost. Congress would appropriate funds to operationalize the Commission for two years. Thereafter the Commission should be self-sustaining based on an allocation of a percentage of its savings with the objective of also repaying the initial appropriation. In addition, a modest reinvestment of some of those returns into the capacity of agencies and programs could have a long lasting, positive impact on the performance of government.

Definitions

Program – The term "program" shall mean any activity or function of an agency, any activity or function that is implemented between 2 or more agencies, and any infrastructure activity or function that supports multiple agencies.

Commission – The term "Commission" shall mean the Commission established by legislation authorized for a period of no fewer than 6 years to undertake and help effectuate a transformation of the federal government.

Duplicative Program – The term "Duplicative Program" shall mean the performing of the same function with separate management and implementation structures by 2 or more agencies.

The Commission on Government Transformation

Duties of the Commission. The Commission will take a comprehensive approach to improving federal programs through:

- Review and consider work done by various governmental and non-governmental entities dealing with the organization and operations of the federal government;
- Assess operational practices and make actionable longstanding recommendations to the President and the Congress, including longstanding management challenges; and
- Serve as a repository for best practices, innovation, and continuous improvement.

The Commission's duties are to:

- Develop and maintain a set of criteria and a schedule for assessing government agencies and programs;
- Inventory and assess program evaluations performed by agency or program activities;
- Assess government programs for economy, efficiency, and effectiveness, using a consistent methodology, and determine if the program has achieved its legislative intent;
- Select staff and other resources competent to assist the Commission in its work who are credible and without a conflict of interest;
- Based on its independent assessment, make recommendations for individual program elimination, reduction, consolidation, or improvement;
- Conduct research into best organizational practices and government reform efforts and provide a repository for best practice and program information that supports agencies in further and continual improvements;
- Provide a mechanism by which government employees, citizens and other interested parties can offer ideas and make recommendations for reviewing and improving government programs;
- Provide advice and recommendations to OMB for the improvement or reporting on performance measures as required under Section 1115 of Title 31;
- Make specific and actionable recommendations to the President that include opportunities to eliminate or consolidate programs if, based on the judgment of the Commission, such actions would enhance the achievement of program and agency efficiency. Include recommendations for reinvestment and opportunities for innovation, as appropriate;
- Make specific and actionable recommendations to Congress through the Committees of Jurisdiction, or a special Select Committee composed of applicable Committee Chairs and Ranking Members, for legislative changes to improve the economy, efficiency, and effectiveness of the federal government. Include recommendations for reinvestment and opportunities for innovation, as appropriate;
- Provide advice and recommendations to agencies regarding the transformation of programs to make them more economical, efficient, and effective;
- Reassess programs after efficiency and effectiveness actions and changes have been made by the agencies to determine the resulting effectiveness of those changes, make further recommendations as necessary;

- Report to the President, Congress, and the American people at least quarterly on Commission activity and results, as it relates to improvements in efficiency and effectiveness, returns on investment, and barriers to advancement;
- Maintain the privacy and security of data as required by law;
- Over time, report on historical data and trends gathered by the Commission;
- Support requests for information by agencies, GAO, CBO, or the American people under the Freedom of Information Act consistent with appropriate restrictions;
- Provide advice and recommendations to Congress, OMB, and affected agencies regarding the design and implementation of significant new federal programs to ensure the efficient, effective, and economical development and execution of the program;
- Provide advice and recommendations to Congress, OMB, and affected agencies regarding agency improvement activity; and
- Hold hearings and gather testimony on the effectiveness of government programs.

Establishment and Oversight of an Improvement and Innovation Fund. Separate from appropriated operating funds from Congress, the Commission shall maintain and administer a fund for the purpose of providing financial resources and oversight to support initiatives designed to improve the economy, efficiency, and effectiveness of the federal government. For the first two years, this will be funded through appropriations and thereinafter through an agreed-to portion of the savings obtained through its efforts to improve government operations and programs.

The fund will be discretionary to the Commission and will have no fiscal year boundaries or limitations. The Commission could initiate its own improvement or innovation initiative or demonstration project with the cooperation of impacted agencies. In addition, agencies could submit a formal request (proposal) for funds for an improvement or innovation initiative, or demonstration project. Each proposal would define the program, a problem statement, its intended outcomes, how it would be measured, and the expected benefit and return on investment. The Commission would maintain oversight over all improvement or innovation programs subject to this fund. Yearly or more frequent reviews would be required. The Commission could direct multiple agencies to participate in the initiative as necessary to reduce further waste and create efficiency.

Legislative mechanisms will need to be created to allow the Commission to receive funds that are realized through improvement savings and require change to their initial authorization.

Membership. The Commission could consist of 7 members appointed as follows:

- 3 could be appointed by the President to include 1 member from each major political party and an independent (non-affiliated) member;
- 2 could be appointed by the Majority Leader and Minority Leader of the Senate to include no more than 1 member from each political party; and
- 2 could be appointed by the Speaker and the Minority Leader of the House of Representatives to include no more than 1 member from each political party.

Members shall be appointed for 3-year staggered terms. Vacancies shall be filled using the same method identified for new Commissioners.

The President shall designate Co-chairpersons from among the members of the Commission. The Co-chairpersons may not be affiliated with the same political party.

Commissioners will be compensated at the per-diem rate of appropriate Executive level officials (e.g. level II for the Co-Chairs and Level III or IV for the other members). Reasonable and customary expense reimbursements will be provided.

Role of the Commissioners. The Commissioners as a body shall:

- Be accountable to the President and Congress for the transformation of the government;
- Guide the direction of Commission work;
- Approve all policies, methods, and procedures developed by Commission staff;
- Approve the annual schedule of Commission program assessments and activity;
- Hire, oversee, and hold the Commission staff and contractors accountable;
- Review the results of the Commission staff;
- Approve all Commission findings and recommendations;
- Communicate status and results on an annual and as-requested basis with the President and Congress;
- Approve the organizational structure, resources, and activity of the Commission;
- Hold public hearings on Commission business, program reviews, opportunities for reinvestment, innovation, etc.;
- Approve the budget of the Commission; and
- Communicate with the American people and other stakeholders regarding the purpose, activity, and results of the Commission.

Authorities of the Commission. The Commission shall have the authority to:

- Request and obtain any and all non-deliberative program and budget documentation from agencies, the White House, GAO, CBO, IGs, OPM, and other entities within the federal government;
- Review federal programs, including interviewing agency leaders, managers, and staff, conducting process reviews, interviewing recipients of agency services (internal or external), etc.;
- Employ all investigative methods deemed appropriate by the Commission to carry out its mission;
- Procure the necessary resources required to conduct the work of the Commission;
- Organize or reorganize the Commission when necessary so as to most effectively carry out the mission of the Commission;
- Spend appropriated funds as provided by Congress;
- Maintain archive files of federal programs and the work of the Commission indefinitely;
- Request the detail of federal employees from other agencies to the Commission for a designated period of time;
- Hold hearings on the economy, efficiency, and effectiveness of government agencies and programs as well as to identify thought leadership and ideas regarding efficient government; and
- Oversee and manage the improvement and innovation fund.

Responsibility to Congress. In support of Congress the Commission shall:

- Meet regularly with the relevant Committees of the Congress to review Commission activity and provide the necessary support;
- From time to time, give formal testimony and recommendations to Congress;
- Make specific and actionable recommendations requiring legislative action to improve the economy, efficiency, and effectiveness of government, which shall be voted on by both Houses of Congress without amendment within a limited period of time;
- Request the authorization of funds for the operation of the Commission; and
- Request that Congress direct GAO, CBO, and others to cooperate with the Commission to carry out its duties.

Responsibility to the President. In support of the President the Commission shall:

- Meet regularly with the President to review Commission activity and provide reasonable and necessary support;
- Seek full access to all agencies to carry out its duties;
- Make specific and actionable recommendations and, with the President's assent, direct agencies to implement those recommendations;
- Offer advice and support when designing and implementing new programs; and
- Recommend those areas with broad implications that could be effected through a Presidential Directive or Executive Order.

Responsibility to Agencies. In support of each agency the Commission shall:

- Make reasonable requests for documents and information regarding agency and program operations;
- Offer advice and support when designing and implementing new programs;
- Offer advice and support when conducting internal assessment of agency programs;
- Seek reports on any change in program addition, approach, method, improvement or deletion, including the anticipated and actual results of said changes;
- Offer the use of the methodology employed by the Commission to assess the economy, efficiency, and effectiveness of its own programs;
- Oversee the planning, execution and results of any program improvement actions; and
- Seek reports on the planning, execution, and results of any agency improvement activity.

Funding of the Commission. The Commission shall be funded initially with a one-time appropriation, which shall expire after funds are expended. The Commission will submit an initial budget request to Congress within 180 days of the Act establishing the Commission.

Commission Staff. The Commission shall have an Executive Director, who will report directly to the Commissioners and shall carry out the duties of the Commission as required by the legislation and directed by the Commissioners. The Executive Director shall possess the requisite knowledge, skills, and experience as required of the position. The Executive Director will be appointed by the Co-Chairs of the Commission who shall seek input from the Congress and the Administration. The Executive Director shall be credible and free of any personal conflict of interest. The Executive Director would be paid at Level III of the Executive Schedule.

The Commission will be supported with the appropriate number of qualified leaders, managers, and staff or other resources required to execute the mission of the Commission. They shall be credible and free of any personal conflict of interest. Commission employees will not be subject to Title 5 requirements.

Summary

Achieving meaningful and measurable federal performance is important and possible. However, it is possible only with bold action, expert solutions, and a fearless resolve to work together as leaders to benefit the American people. GTI builds upon the foundation of prior efforts and best practices, utilizing sound business solutions to realize efficiency, effectiveness and cost savings. The Government Transformation Commission would be the primary centralized focus of this undertaking, and it would provide support to both the President and Congress. It is an effective means to outcomes that cuts through bureaucracy to focus on the business of "good government".

Contacts

GTI stands ready to support Congress and the Administration with the creation of this statutory Commission. To discuss GTI further or set up an appointment with an appropriate GTI staff member, please contact our Executive Director at jennifer.kerber@gticoalition.org or (703) 596-2664.