

February 24, 2020

The Honorable Mike Enzi
624 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Chuck Grassley
135 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Ron Johnson
328 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mark Warner
703 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable David Perdue
455 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable James Lankford
316 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senators Enzi, Warner, Grassley, Perdue, Johnson, and Lankford:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations, representing a diverse coalition of taxpayer, transparency, and government oversight advocates, we write to applaud the introduction of the CFO Vision Act of 2020.

The 1990 CFO Act provided a meaningful step in the right direction for financial responsibility and accountability at federal agencies. Thirty years after the passage of the CFO Act, though, it is clear that Congress needs to better define the roles CFOs play at agencies and insist on higher standards for financial controls across the board. According to one recent report, the Department of Defense (DOD) “made \$35 trillion in accounting adjustments last year alone -- a total that’s larger than the entire U.S. economy.”¹ This is unacceptable for taxpayers and for the watchdogs who conduct oversight on their behalf.

Indeed, financial management issues exist and persist across government. In March 2019, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) reported that it once again could not render an opinion on the U.S. government’s annual financial statements, noting “problems with DOD’s financial management and auditability, the federal government’s inability to account for transactions between agencies, and weaknesses in the process for preparing the consolidated financial statements.”²

The CFO Vision Act of 2020 would tackle many of these problems. It would require agencies to submit performance-based financial management metrics to GAO, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), and Congress. It would also more consistently involve agency heads and auditors in the duties and responsibilities of agency financial management.

The CFO Vision Act of 2020 would standardize and clarify the roles of agency CFOs and deputy CFOs across government, ensuring both consistency and continuity in agencies’ work to exceed the performance-based metrics outlined by the Act. It would also require CFOs to coordinate with other senior agency personnel, including the Chief Data Officer, Chief Information Officer, Chief Performance Officer, Chief Acquisition Officer, Chief Risk Officer, and Chief Evaluation Officer, on both strategic planning and risk management at the agencies.

We represent a variety of advocates from across the ideological spectrum, we strongly support this bipartisan piece of legislation, and we are prepared to work with you and the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee to see it reach the President’s desk. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



National Taxpayers
Union



American Consumer
Institute



Americans for
Prosperity



Center for a Free
Economy



Center for Freedom and
Prosperity

¹ Capaccio, Anthony. “Pentagon Racks Up \$35 Trillion in Accounting Changes in One Year.” Bloomberg, January 22, 2020. Retrieved from: <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-01-22/pentagon-racks-up-35-trillion-in-accounting-changes-in-one-year> (Accessed February 11, 2020.)

² Government Accountability Office (March 28, 2019). “GAO Again Unable to Render an Opinion on the U.S. Government’s Annual Financial Statements.” Retrieved from: https://www.gao.gov/about/press-center/press-releases/gao_opinion_financial_statements.htm (Accessed February 11, 2020.)



Council for Citizens
Against Government
Waste



Government
Accountability Project



Independent
Women's Voice



Project On
Government Oversight



R Street Institute



Small Business &
Entrepreneurship
Council (SBE Council)



Taxpayers Protection
Alliance