



United States General Accounting Office  
Washington, D.C. 20548

## GAO's Congressional Protocols Addendum 1

November 1, 2002

Since January 2000, the General Accounting Office has operated under a set of protocols governing GAO's work for the Congress. The protocols are intended to provide clearly defined and transparent policies and practices relating to GAO's work. We developed these protocols in consultation with Members of Congress and their staffs, tested them during a pilot implementation phase from January 2000 to September 2000, refined them on the basis of feedback from the pilot, and fully implemented them in November 2000.

We have encouraged Members of Congress to contact us with comments or questions and we thank them for their feedback. Based on such feedback and our desire to maintain a fair and balanced approach to our work, we have decided to modify our protocols in two areas immediately: (1) work involving state and local activities and (2) comments on proposed legislation. While the changes are important, they affect only small sections of the existing document; therefore, we are issuing the following addendum to the November 2000 version of GAO's Congressional Protocols ([GAO-01-145G](#)).

State and Local Activities: GAO does not conduct studies, reviews, evaluations or audits of state or local programs or activities that are solely within the purview of states or localities where there is no connection to federal matters. GAO does review certain state and local activities and programs that are (1) carried out in furtherance of federal law, such as environmental programs or insurance regulation, or (2) funded by federal programs, such as Medicaid, transportation, or education programs. In addition, to assist the Congress in developing federal legislation, reexamining the federal role or gauging federal performance, GAO sometimes reviews the practices of the states to ascertain "best practices" or lessons learned in dealing with particular issues. Further, GAO partners with state and local auditors to examine national issues that cross geographical boundaries (e.g., transportation, homeland security, Medicaid).

When GAO receives a request from a Member of Congress that focuses on a major activity or program that is solely or largely centered in a specific geographical area that is represented by members beyond those requesting the work, GAO may advise the Members of Congress representing that geographic area of the timing, scope, and methodology of the work. After advising the requester, GAO also reserves the right to brief such members before the final report is publicly released on the findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

Proposed Legislation: GAO provides comments on legislative bills when (1) requested to do so by a committee or Member of Congress, (2) GAO's authorities or responsibilities would be affected by the bill's passage, or (3) GAO has information that would be useful to committees or members in considering or modifying the bill. In commenting on proposed legislation, GAO's objective is to identify likely program changes if the bill is enacted and the impact of such changes on a specific program.

When GAO receives a request that covers a legislative proposal introduced by other Members of Congress, GAO may notify the key sponsors that we have been asked to comment on the bill. GAO may meet with the key sponsors during the fact-finding phase to obtain a better understanding of the purpose and intent of the bill. After advising the requester, GAO reserves the right to brief key sponsors before the final report is publicly released on the results of our analysis, and our findings, conclusions, and recommendations as they relate to the legislative proposal.

For other ongoing work—except for classified work and investigations—GAO will continue to disclose, if asked by the press, agencies, or Members of Congress, the source of a GAO request and the related project's objectives, scope, and methodology. GAO will continue to maintain its intranet connections with the House and Senate where all congressional offices have access to the objectives, scope, and methodology of active GAO assignments, except for those cases where the reporting of such work would result in disclosing classified or other sensitive information.

These changes have been reviewed with representatives of the leadership of both houses of Congress. They are effective immediately and will be incorporated into our electronic version which can be accessed through our Internet Web site at [www.gao.gov](http://www.gao.gov) from the Other Publications section of the site. We will continue to monitor the application of our protocols and will consider what, if any, changes should be made in the future or the need to republish the complete document. I encourage you to contact our Office of Congressional Relations on (202) 512-4400 if you have any questions or comments on these changes or the existing protocols.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "D.M. Walker", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

David M. Walker  
Comptroller General  
of the United States