

**MODERNIZING**  
*Accounting & Auditing*  
**STANDARDS FOR THE**  
*21<sup>st</sup> Century*



**The Honorable  
David M. Walker**  
Comptroller General of  
the United States

Florida Institute of CPAs  
University of Florida

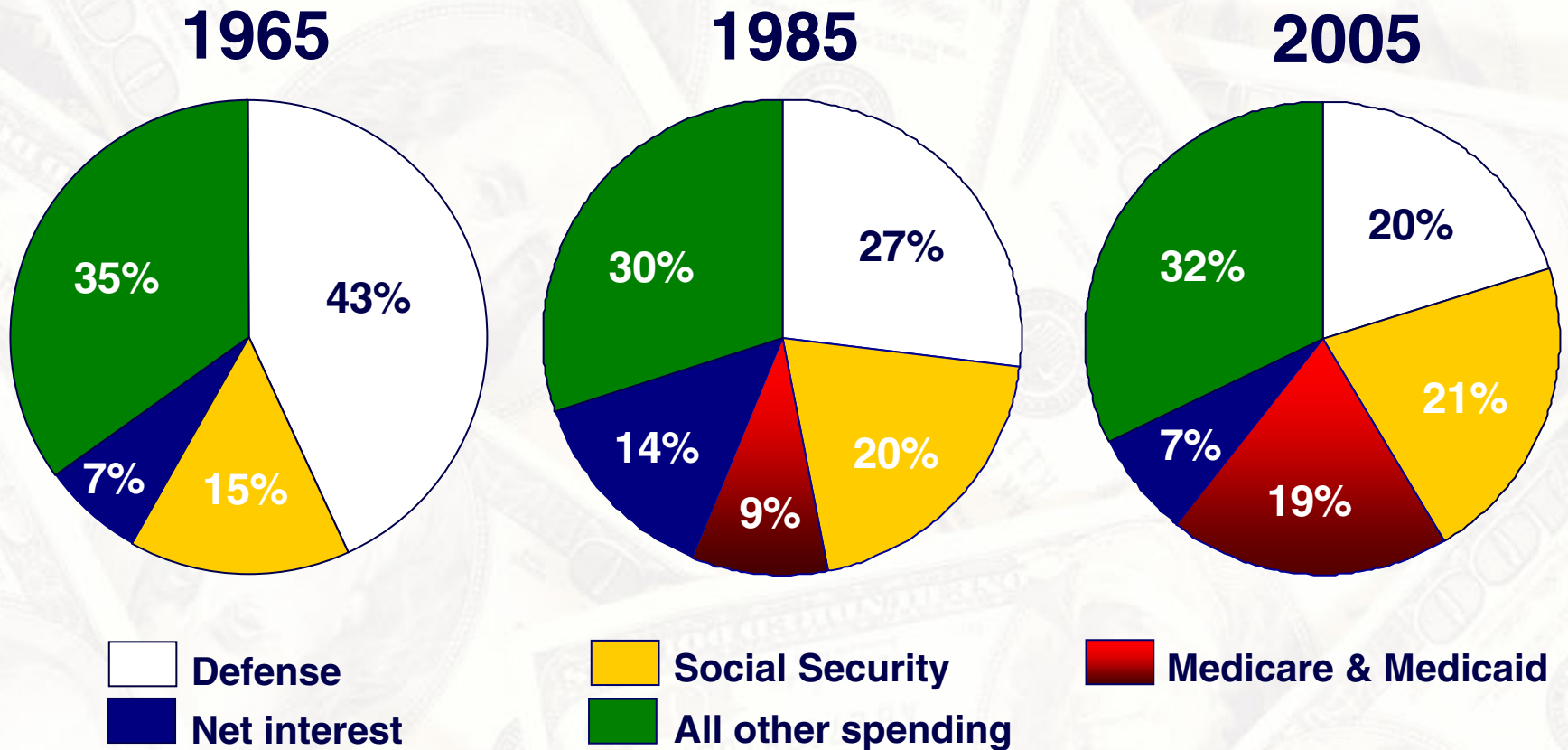
October 6, 2006

# The Case for Change

**The federal government is on a “burning platform,” and the status quo way of doing business is unacceptable for a variety of reasons, including:**

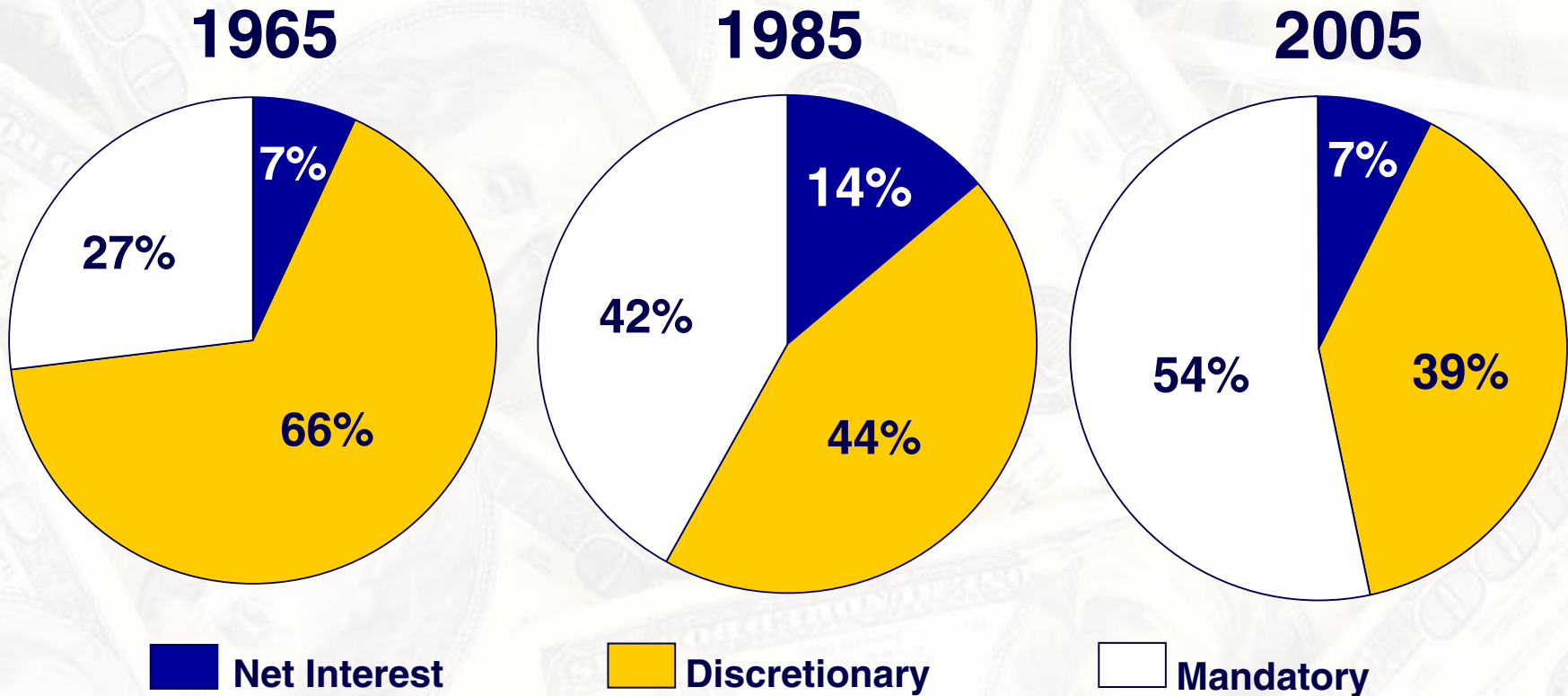
- Past fiscal trends and significant long-range challenges
- Rising public expectations for demonstrable results and enhanced responsiveness
- Selected trends and challenges having no boundaries
- Additional resource demands due to Iraq, Afghanistan, incremental homeland security needs, and recent natural disasters in the United States
- Numerous government performance/accountability and high risk challenges
- Outdated federal organizational structures, policies, and practices

# Composition of Federal Spending



Source: Office of Management and Budget.

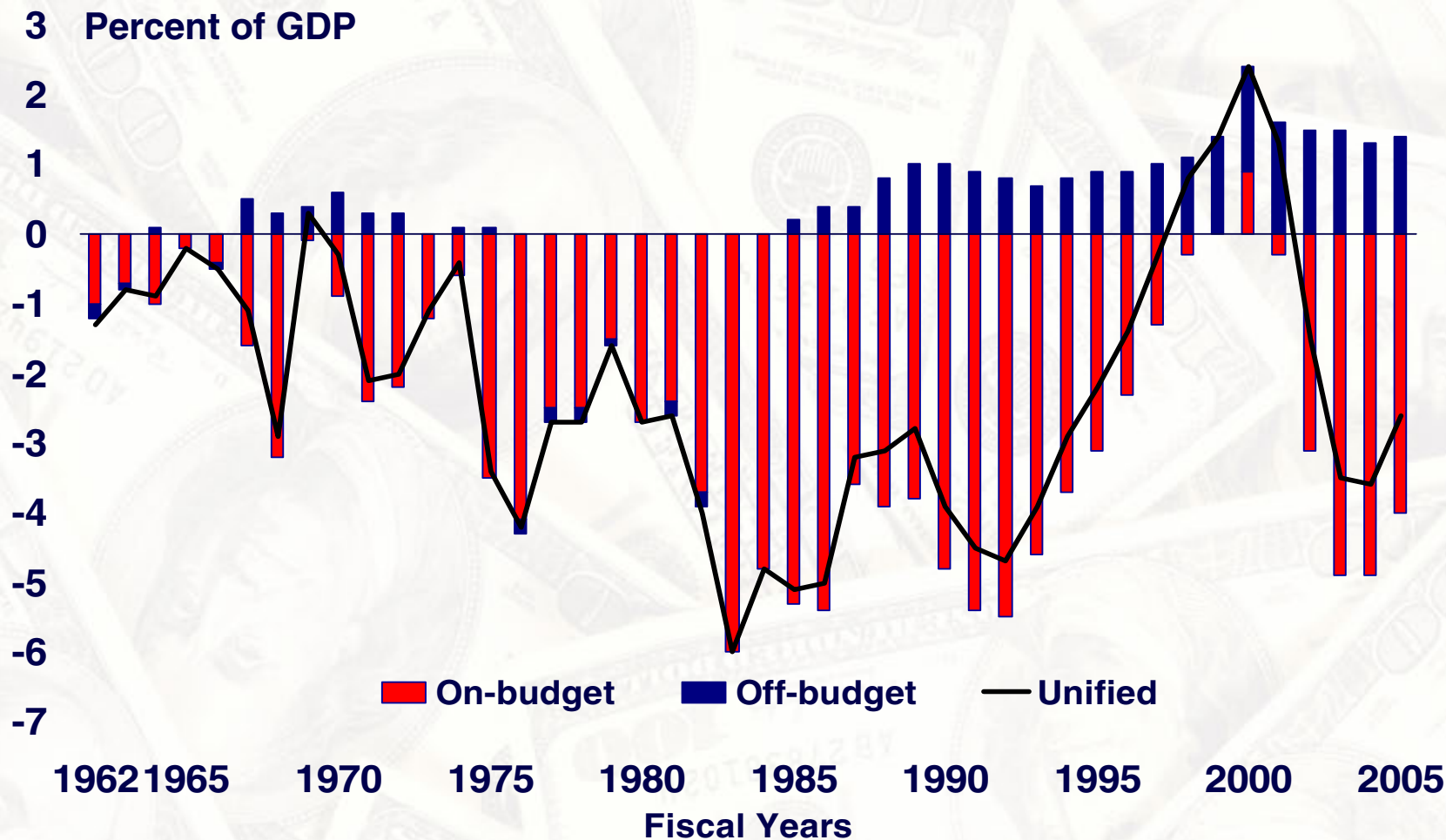
# Federal Spending for Mandatory and Discretionary Programs



Source: Office of Management and Budget.

# Surplus or Deficit as a Share of GDP

Fiscal Years 1962-2005



Source: Office of Management and Budget

# Fiscal Year 2004 and 2005 Deficits and Net Operating Costs

	<b>Fiscal Year 2004</b>	<b>Fiscal Year 2005</b>
	<b>(\$ Billion)</b>	
On-Budget Deficit	(568)	(494)
Off-Budget Surplus*	155	175
Unified Deficit	(413)	(318)
Net Operating Cost	(616)	(760)

\*Includes \$151 billion in fiscal year 2004 and \$173 billion in fiscal year 2005 in Social Security surpluses and \$4 billion in fiscal year 2004 and \$2 billion in fiscal year 2005 in Postal Service surpluses.

Sources: The Office of Management and Budget and the Department of the Treasury.

# Estimated Fiscal Exposures

(\$ trillions)

	2000	2005
<b>• Explicit liabilities</b>	<b>\$6.9</b>	<b>\$9.9</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publicly held debt</li> <li>• Military &amp; civilian pensions &amp; retiree health</li> <li>• Other</li> </ul>		
<b>• Commitments &amp; contingencies</b>	<b>0.5</b>	<b>0.9</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• E.g., PBGC, undelivered orders</li> </ul>		
<b>• Implicit exposures</b>	<b>13.0</b>	<b>35.6</b>
• Future Social Security benefits	3.8	5.7
• Future Medicare Part A benefits	2.7	8.8
• Future Medicare Part B benefits	6.5	12.4
• Future Medicare Part D benefits	--	8.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$20.4</b>	<b>\$46.4</b>

Source: U.S. government's consolidated financial statements (CFS).

Note: Estimates for Social Security and Medicare are at present value as of January 1 of each year as reported in the CFS and all other data are as of September 30.

# How Big is Our Growing Fiscal Burden?

Our total fiscal burden can be translated and compared as follows:

<b>Total fiscal exposures</b>	<b>\$46.4 trillion</b>
<b>Total household net worth<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>\$51.1 trillion</b>
<b>Burden/Net worth ratio</b>	<b>91 percent</b>
<b>Burden<sup>2</sup></b>	
<b>Per person</b>	<b>\$156,000</b>
<b>Per full-time worker</b>	<b>\$375,000</b>
<b>Per household</b>	<b>\$411,000</b>
<b>Income</b>	
<b>Median household income<sup>3</sup></b>	<b>\$44,389</b>
<b>Disposable personal income per capita<sup>4</sup></b>	<b>\$30,431</b>

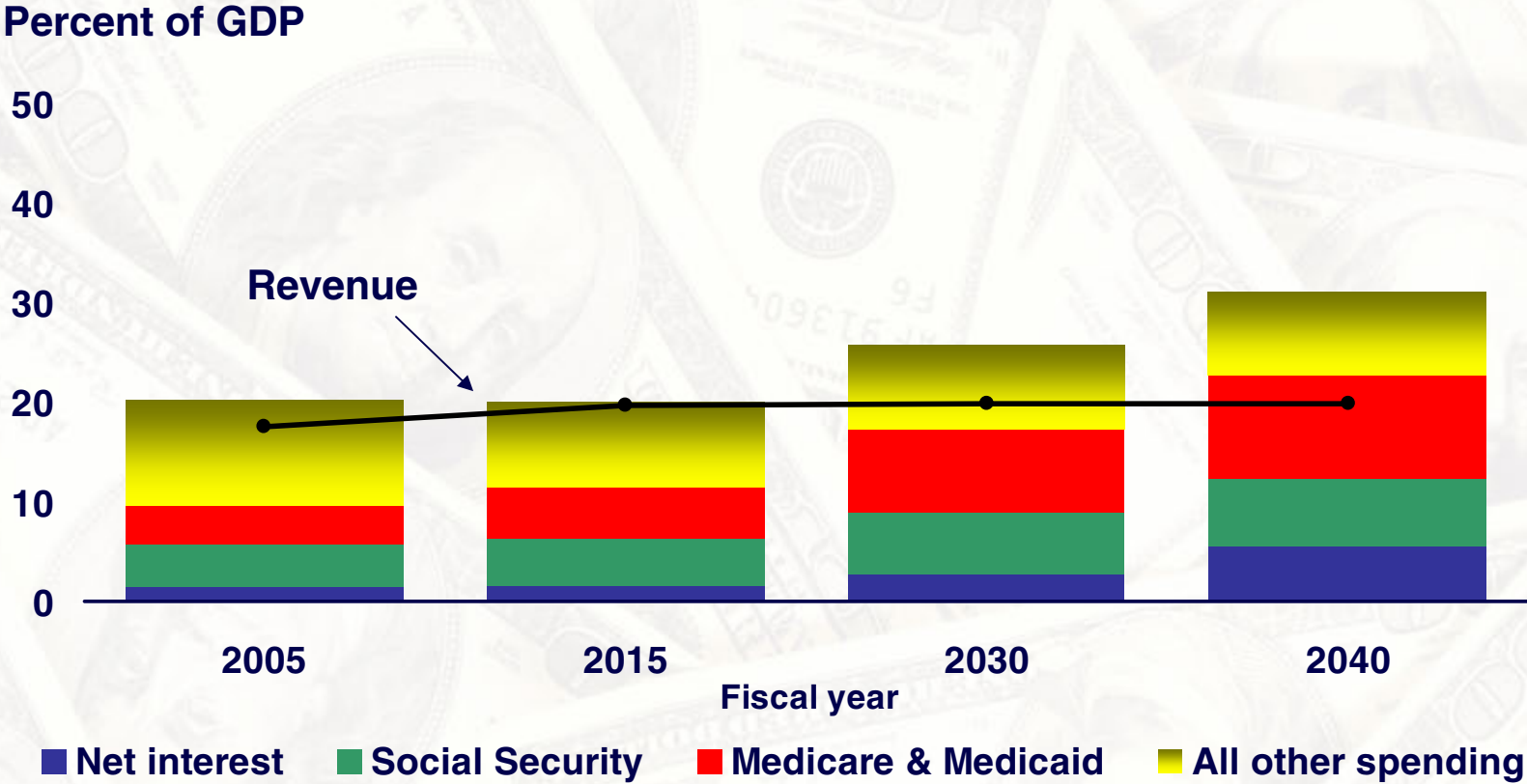
Notes: (1) Federal Reserve Board, Flow of Funds Accounts, Table B.100, 2005:Q3 (Dec. 8, 2005); (2) Burdens are calculated using total U.S. population as of 9/30/05, from the *U.S. Census Bureau*, full-time workers for 2004, reported by the Bureau of Economic Analysis, in NIPA table 6.5D (Aug. 4, 2005); and households for 2004, reported by the U.S. Census Bureau, in *Income Poverty & Health Insurance Coverage in the US: 2004* (Aug. 2005); (3) U.S. Census Bureau, *Income Poverty & Health Insurance Coverage in the US: 2004* (Aug. 2005); and (4) Bureau of Economic Analysis, *Personal Income and Outlays: October 2005*, table 2, 2005:Q3, (Dec. 1, 2005).

Sources: GAO analysis.



# Composition of Spending as a Share of GDP

## Under Baseline Extended

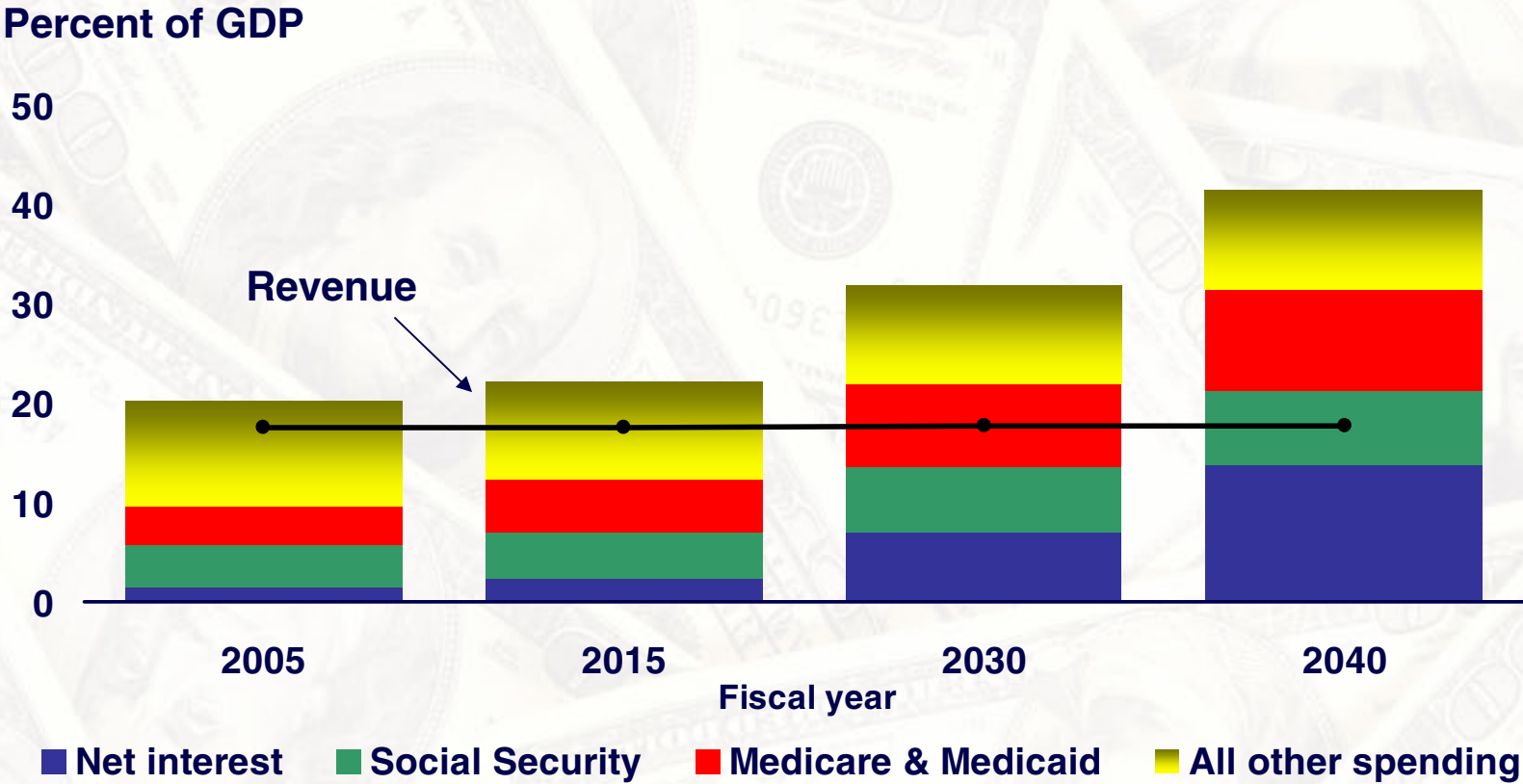


Notes: In addition to the expiration of tax cuts, revenue as a share of GDP increases through 2016 due to (1) real bracket creep, (2) more taxpayers becoming subject to the AMT, and (3) increased revenue from tax-deferred retirement accounts. After 2016, revenue as a share of GDP is held constant.

Source: GAO's August 2006 analysis.

# Composition of Spending as a Share of GDP

## Under Baseline Extended



Source: GAO's August 2006 analysis.

# Current Fiscal Policy Is Unsustainable

- **The “Status Quo” is Not an Option**

- We face large and growing structural deficits largely due to known demographic trends and rising health care costs.
- GAO’s simulations show that balancing the budget in 2040 could require actions as large as
  - Cutting total federal spending by 60 percent or
  - Raising federal taxes to 2 times today's level

- **Faster Economic Growth Can Help, but It Cannot Solve the Problem**

- Closing the current long-term fiscal gap based on reasonable assumptions would require real average annual economic growth in the double digit range every year for the next 75 years.
- During the 1990s, the economy grew at an average 3.2 percent per year.
- As a result, we cannot simply grow our way out of this problem. Tough choices will be required.

# Moving the Debate Forward

- **The Sooner We Get Started, the Better**

- The miracle of compounding is currently working against us
- Less change would be needed, and there would be more time to make adjustments
- Our demographic changes will serve to make reform more difficult over time

- **Need Public Education, Discussion, and Debate**

- The role of government in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century
- Which programs and policies should be changed and how
- How government should be financed

# The Way Forward: A Three-Pronged Approach

1. Strengthen Budget and Legislative Processes and Controls
2. Improve Financial Reporting and Performance Metrics
3. Fundamental Reexamination & Transformation for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

*Solutions Require Active Involvement from both the Executive and Legislative Branches*

# Key National Indicators

- **WHAT:** A portfolio of economic, social, and environmental outcome-based measures that could be used to help assess the nation's and other governmental jurisdictions' position and progress
- **WHO:** Many countries and several states, regions, and localities have already undertaken related initiatives (e.g., Australia, New Zealand, Canada, United Kingdom, Oregon, Silicon Valley (California) and Boston).
- **WHY:** Development of such a portfolio of indicators could have a number of possible benefits, including
  - Serving as a framework for related strategic planning efforts
  - Enhancing performance and accountability reporting
  - Informing public policy decisions, including much needed baseline reviews of existing government policies, programs, functions, and activities
  - Facilitating public education and debate as well as an informed electorate
- **WAY FORWARD:** Consortium of key players housed by the National Academies domestically and related efforts by the OECD and others internationally.

# Key National Indicators: Where the United States Ranks

The United States may be the only superpower, but compared to most other OECD countries on selected key economic, social, and environmental indicators, on average, the U.S. ranks

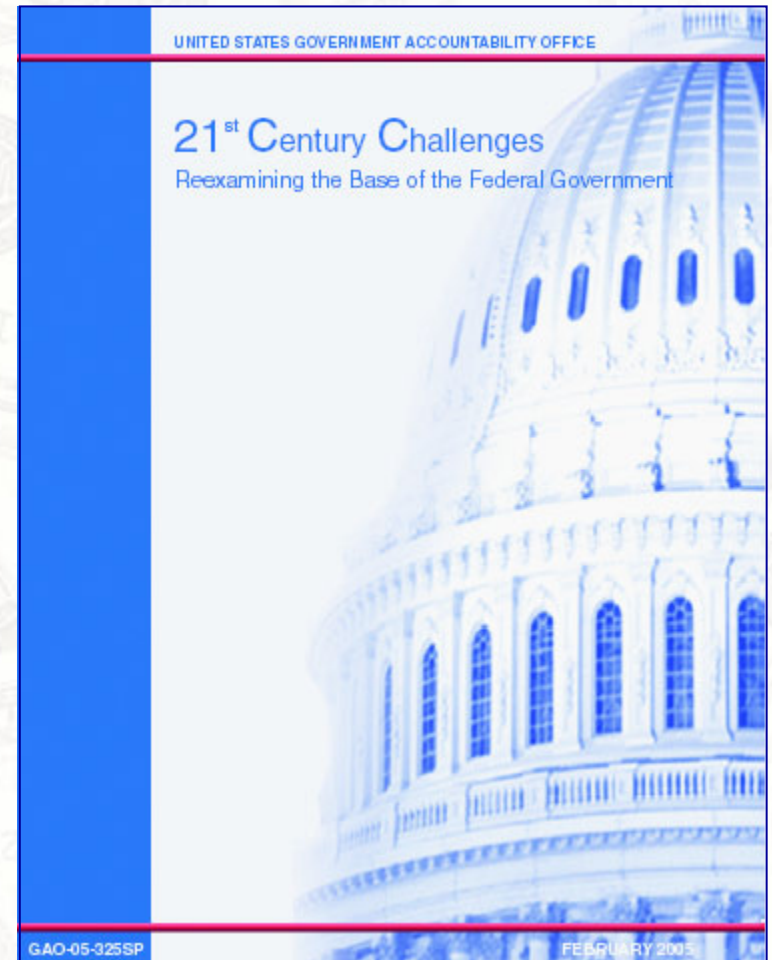
# 16 OUT OF 28

## OECD Categories for Key Indicators (2006 OECD Factbook)

• Population/Migration	• Energy	• Environment	• Quality of Life
• Macroeconomic Trends	• Labor Market	• Education	• Economic Globalization
• Prices	• Science & Tech.	• Public Finance	

# 21<sup>st</sup> Century Challenges Report

- Provides background, framework, and questions to assist in reexamining the base
- Covers entitlements & other mandatory spending, discretionary spending, and tax policies and programs
- Based on GAO's work for the Congress





# Twelve Reexamination Areas

## MISSION AREAS

- Defense
- Education & Employment
- Financial Regulation & Housing
- Health Care
- Homeland Security
- International Affairs
- Natural Resources, Energy & Environment
- Retirement & Disability
- Science & Technology
- Transportation

## CROSSCUTTING AREAS

- Improving Governance
- Reexamining the Tax System

# Generic Reexamination Criteria and Sample Questions

## ■ **Relevance of purpose and the federal role**

Why did the federal government initiate this program and what was the government trying to accomplish?

Have there been significant changes in the country or the world that relate to the reason for initiating it?

## ■ **Measuring success**

Are there outcome-based measures? If not, why?

If there are outcome-based measures, how successful is it based on these measures?

## ■ **Targeting benefits**

Is it well targeted to those with the greatest needs and the least capacity to meet those needs?

## ■ **Affordability and cost effectiveness**

Is it using the most cost-effective or net beneficial approaches when compared to other tools and program designs?

## ■ **Best practices**

Is the responsible entity employing prevailing best practices to discharge its responsibilities and achieve its mission?

# GAO's Work to Modernize the Accountability Profession

- Leading by example in connection with a range of accountability actions (e.g., independence, internal controls, audit committees, other transformation efforts)
- Strengthening the independence of the FASAB
- Revitalizing the JFMIP principals' efforts, including definitions of success in financial management, accelerated reporting, etc.
- Creating the U.S Auditing Standards Coordinating Forum (i.e., GAO, PCAOB, ASB)
- Leading strategic planning and coordination efforts with major accountability organizations around the world (e.g., INTOSAI, IGAF) that include oversight, insight, and foresight dimensions
- Revising the 2003 edition of *Government Auditing Standards* (2006 revision is in process)
- Promoting the modernization of the accounting/reporting and audit models (e.g. IFAC, IAASB, FASB, GASB, FASAB, etc. )

# GAO's Work to Modernize the Accountability Profession (cont.)

- Enhancing federal financial reporting (e.g., social insurance, restricted revenues) and pursuing publication of a summary annual report
- Assuring appropriate treatment of restatements by auditors and others
- Monitoring implementation of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act, including providing suggestions for possible actions by the PCAOB and the SEC in connection with the internal control reporting requirements under Section 404
- Considering whether reform elements similar to those in Sarbanes-Oxley make sense for the federal government
- Exploring additional opportunities for employing more frequent reporting and continuous auditing approaches for both financial and performance information
- Assuring appropriate treatment of restatements by auditors and others
- Analyzing the consolidation of the major accounting and auditing firms and the implications for the future
- Exploring revised approaches to quality assurance programs, including internal inspections and peer reviews

# Auditing Standards Coordination in the United States

## The Comptroller General established the U.S. Auditing Standards Coordinating Forum

- PCAOB, GAO, ASB
- Three principals meet several times a year
- Key staff coordinate regularly to implement agenda
- Rotating chair, based on who is hosting the meeting
- Still defining role for IAASB

# Auditing Standards Coordination in the United States

## Purpose of U.S. Auditing Standards Coordinating Forum

- Maximize complementary standards-setting agendas
- Minimize duplicative or competing efforts
- Identify any significant gaps not being addressed
- Develop strategies for overcoming challenges and barriers to modernizing the auditing profession in the U.S.
- Assure consistency where appropriate for core auditing standards, while seeking to modernize those standards

# GAO's Auditing Standards-Setting Goals

- Develop high quality Government Auditing Standards that are well understood, highly regarded, widely used, and serve as a model for other environments such as the private sector and other governments around the world.
- Provide leadership in modernizing and transforming the accountability profession in the public and private sectors, both domestically and internationally.
- Encourage the development of consistent, core auditing standards for both the public and private sectors, in the U.S. and internationally, as appropriate.
- Provide a foundation for an accountability profession that is effective, ethical, and prepared for the challenges of the 21st century.

# 2006 Yellow Book Revisions

- Audit quality assurance, monitoring, inspection, peer review
- Ethics/professional judgment
- Expanding and clarifying the categories of nonaudit services
- Reporting deficiencies in internal control for financial audits
- Auditor's responsibility for evaluating and disclosing financial statement restatements
- Evidence in performance audits
- Audit documentation
- Use of GAGAS with other standards (PCAOB, AICPA, IIA, IAASB)
- Clarification and "clean up"



# Other Major Auditing Standards-Setters

## **International Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions (INTOSAI):**

Develop high quality guidelines that are globally accepted for the audit of financial statements in the public sector. Leverage the expertise and resources of the IAASB, an internationally respected auditing standards setting organization, for a strategic and cooperative partnership

## **International Auditing and Assurance Standards Board (IAASB):**

Serve the public interest by setting high-quality auditing and assurance standards and by facilitating the convergence of international and national standards, thereby enhancing the quality and uniformity of practice throughout the world and strengthening public confidence in the global auditing and assurance profession.

## **Auditing Standards Board (ASB) of the AICPA:**

Seeks cooperative standard setting discussions and projects with regulators and other standard setting bodies, recognizing the importance of auditing standards harmonization, both within the US and between countries.

# The Future Accounting/Reporting and Audit Reporting Model

- **We need to review and revise the existing accounting/reporting model to reflect several dimensions:**
  - Generic provisions
  - Industry information
  - Entity-specific information (i.e., value and risk)
- **We need to recognize the difference between certain types of financial and other information:**
  - Historical cost
  - Readily marketable assets
  - Non-readily marketable assets
  - Projection information
  - Performance information

# The Future Accounting/Reporting and Audit Reporting Model

- **We need to review and revise the existing audit reporting model to accomplish at least four objectives:**
  - Recognize that the opinion should address whether the financial statements are fairly presented in all material respects and prepared in accordance with authoritative accounting principles (e.g., promulgated by FASB, GASB, FASAB, IFAC)
  - Expand the auditor's report to include key value and risk-based performance and projection information over time and as appropriate
  - Update the audit reporting model to link it with the new financial reporting model, and provide appropriate degrees of assurance for each type of information to improve value and reduce risk
  - We need to move beyond “going concern opinions” to provide more timely and meaningful information to the users of financial statements in appropriate circumstances (e.g. US government)
- **We need to ultimately go global in connection with all major accounting and audit matters**
- **We need to coordinate domestic efforts in the interim (e.g., U.S. Auditing Standards Coordinating forum)**

# Social Insurance Financial Reporting

- FASAB has made significant progress on a range of federal accounting and reporting issues since their creation, including progress in the social insurance reporting area.
- The statement of social insurance, which has been reported as Required Supplementary Stewardship Information (RSSI) since fiscal year 2000, will become a basic financial statement and be subject to a full audit for the first time beginning with fiscal 2006. This statement discloses the present value of future revenues and scheduled benefits for the various social insurance programs.

# Social Insurance Financial Reporting (cont.)

- We need to consider whether the bonds in the so called “trust funds” should be deemed to be a liability of the US government (e.g., deferred revenue), and how we can better present the operating results of the federal government. We also need to consider how we can enhance the presentation of the federal government’s rapidly growing total liabilities and unfunded commitments, including the fiscal sustainability and intergenerational equity implications of such items.
- The AICPA, AAA, FEI, and other national and state professional organizations need to comment on this critically important topic.
- Your opinions are both valued and valuable, and the stakes are very high.
- Later this year, FASAB will publish a very important preliminary views document on social insurance and fiscal sustainability with two alternative views.

# Learning from the Past and Others while Preparing for Future

- Roman Republic
- New Zealand vs. Argentina

# Key Leadership Attributes Needed for These Challenging and Changing Times

- ***Courage***
- ***Integrity***
- ***Creativity***
- ***Stewardship***

**MODERNIZING**  
*Accounting & Auditing*  
**STANDARDS FOR THE**  
*21<sup>st</sup> Century*



**The Honorable  
David M. Walker**  
Comptroller General of  
the United States

Florida Institute of CPAs  
University of Florida

October 6, 2006



---

## On the Web

Web site: [www.gao.gov/cghome.htm](http://www.gao.gov/cghome.htm)

---

## Contact

Paul Anderson, Managing Director, Public Affairs  
[AndersonP1@gao.gov](mailto:AndersonP1@gao.gov) (202) 512-4800  
U.S. Government Accountability Office  
441 G Street NW, Room 7149  
Washington, D.C. 20548

---

## Copyright

This is a work of the U.S. government and is not subject to copyright protection in the United States. The published product may be reproduced and distributed in its entirety without further permission from GAO. However, because this work may contain copyrighted images or other material, permission from the copyright holder may be necessary if you wish to reproduce this material separately.