

March 24, 2022

The Honorable Gene Dodaro
Comptroller General
U.S. Government Accountability Office
441 G Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Dodaro:

The *American Rescue Plan Act of 2021* (ARPA) provided \$350 billion to the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds (SLFRF) to “mitigate the fiscal effects stemming from the public health emergency.”¹ It was an unprecedented allocation of emergency federal funding to state and local entities, which many of my colleagues and I warned would become a slush fund plagued by mismanagement and abuse. Unfortunately, recent reports have uncovered the exact kind of irresponsible actions we feared. As such, I write to request a full GAO review of state, local, and tribal governments’ use of SLFRF funds to ensure that taxpayers benefit from full transparency and Congress can protect against further waste and abuse.

ARPA included broad guardrails with respect to how state, local, and tribal governments could use SLFRF funding, including responding to the COVID-19 public health emergency and its negative economic effects on communities, providing additional support to essential workers, replacing lost or delayed revenues, and making certain infrastructure investments. Additional guidance from the U.S. Department of Treasury further clarified the allowable usage of such funds, providing a remarkable level of flexibility and streamlining the funding distribution process.

The stories of waste and abuse are piling up. States and localities have reportedly used the money to renovate baseball stadiums, replace golf course irrigation systems, push new local marketing campaigns to attract tourists, revamp websites, and fund construction of a luxury hotel. Regardless of how much flexibility some in our legislative body may have wanted to attach to these hundreds of billions of dollars, few can argue that this is what Congress had in mind.

Reports of outrageous and wasteful spending come at the same time the Biden Administration demands additional funding for COVID-related programs. During a time of soaring prices, continued supply chain challenges, and other disruptions to our economy, taxpayers and lawmakers must have transparency into how this funding is being used.

¹ Pub L. No. 117-2, Tit. IX, Sec. 9901(a)

In response, I ask for a GAO review of usage of state, local, and tribal relief funding provided through the ARPA SLFRF. I look forward to your forthcoming report.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "M. Rubio", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Marco Rubio
U.S. Senator