

# GAO Highlights

Highlights of [GAO-25-108165](#), a testimony before the Subcommittee on Oversight, Investigations, and Accountability, Committee on Homeland Security, House of Representatives

## Why GAO Did This Study

DHS has a pivotal role in securing the border, strengthening cybersecurity, and preventing violent acts of domestic extremism, among other roles. DHS has an annual discretionary budget of about \$60 billion, plus additional funding for disaster assistance. Oversight remains critically important to ensure effectiveness and efficiency.

GAO has designated two DHS areas to its High-Risk List: [Improving the Delivery of Federal Disaster Assistance](#) (2025) and [Strengthening DHS IT and Financial Management Functions](#) (2003).

This statement discusses GAO's highest priority recommendations for DHS and areas on GAO's High-Risk List, among other things.

This statement is based on products GAO issued from May 2024 to February 2025. For this work, GAO analyzed DHS strategies and other documents related to the department's efforts to address its high-risk areas and interviewed DHS officials, among other actions.

## What GAO Recommends

As of March 2025, GAO has 459 recommendations to DHS that remain open. These recommendations are designed to address the various challenges discussed in this statement. DHS has taken steps to address some of these recommendations. GAO will continue to monitor DHS's efforts to determine if they fully address the challenges GAO has identified.

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## DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

### Key Areas for DHS Action and Congressional Oversight

## What GAO Found

GAO has issued numerous reports with thousands of recommendations to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) over the department's history. DHS has yet to fully address many recommendations that would help ensure effectiveness and efficiency, including dozens of the highest priority recommendations. For example, implementing GAO's priority recommendations could help DHS address the increasing risk of catastrophic cyber incidents for U.S. critical infrastructure, better allocate billions of dollars used to procure goods and services, and build effective policy to address violent extremism. DHS's continued attention could lead to significant improvements in government operations.

In addition, GAO is tracking two DHS high-risk areas:

- **Improving the delivery of federal disaster assistance.** Natural disasters have become costlier and more frequent (see figure). In the last 10 years, appropriations for disaster assistance, including to DHS, totaled at least \$448 billion, plus an additional \$110 billion in supplemental appropriations so far in fiscal year 2025. Recent disasters such as Hurricanes Helene and Milton and wildfires in California have demonstrated the need for government-wide action to deliver assistance efficiently and effectively and reduce its fiscal exposure. In particular, attention is needed to improve processes for assisting survivors, invest in resilience, and strengthen the disaster workforce and capacity.

Debris from Damaged Homes Following Hurricanes Helene and Milton, 2024, Florida



Source: GAO. | GAO-25-108165

- **Strengthening DHS IT and financial management functions.** DHS manages an annual discretionary budget of about \$60 billion, but it has faced difficulties with IT and financial management. More work remains for DHS to (1) strengthen its information security program, and (2) modernize its components' financial management systems and business processes. These security and modernization efforts are critical given the significant amount of money DHS manages for disasters as well as its sizable annual budget.