**Interviewee**: Chris Mihm

**Background**: Managing Director for Strategic Issues at US General Accountability Office

**Interviewer**: Don Kettl Professor of The LBJ School of Public Affairs

**Video** **Length**: 15:09

**Date**: April 10, 2020

**Brief Overview**:

In this fifteen minute interview, Managing Director for Strategic Issues at the [US General Accountability Office](https://www.gao.gov/) (GAO), [Chris Mihm](https://www.gao.gov/about/contact-us/find-an-expert/chris-mihm) discusses the general roles of the GAO, important lessons learned from past stimulus acts, and projects how that knowledge will help government confront problems in administering oversight for the [Coronvirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act](https://www.congress.gov/116/bills/hr748/BILLS-116hr748enr.pdf). Mihm concludes this dialogue with an interesting perspective on what the skills current policy students will need utilize governments of the future to address the needs of society.

**Discussion Points**:

* The roles and responsibilities of the Government Accountability Office (GAO).
  + Reports to Congress and produces over 800 reports annually on its behalf, with many of these eventually being written into law.
  + Three broad oversight roles
    - Accounts for how government monies get transferred, utilized, and spent.
    - Provides insight by looking at best practices and identifying successful strategies in other agencies. Discovering and sharing information on best practices at the federal, state, and local levels of government.
    - Develops foresight that address and identifies the big issues that need to be brought to the front of the agenda for governmental decision makers, before they become a crisis.
  + Prior to the Great Society Program, GAO looked mostly at where dollars were spent, but now they attempt to determine if that money is achieving the goals set by government.
  + Looks at the fiscal path of government and prepares leaders for difficult policy issues on the horizon. Two examples mentioned are the role of artificial intelligence and the retirement of the Baby Boomer generation.
* Lessons learned in the GAO after reviewing the [American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009](https://www.congress.gov/bill/111th-congress/house-bill/1) stimulus program.
  + Created bimonthly requirements for reviewing the implementation of $220 billion of federal funding that went out to state and local governments.
  + Mihms recognizes the importance of dedicating top leadership’s attention to oversight for issues of this magnitude. He cited the role of “Sheriff Joe” in leading this initiative and talked about how the implementation was led out of the office of Vice President Joe Biden.
  + Effective government should consistently work across all levels of government and use a whole of government approach.
  + The importance of accountability and transparency while simultaneously balancing competing interests across vast networks of stakeholders.
* Oversight for the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES)
  + The GAO will play an analogous role to what they did in the 2009 recovery act.
  + Talks about some of the transparency provisions that were incorporated under the past recovery act that help citizens to track the flow of money from Congress to communities. This provides a clear vehicle to “near real time” reporting with for funding visibility and transparency.
* Mihms answers the question: “What kind of skills do students most need in the future of government?”
  + Skill in negotiation, facilitation, systems thinking, comfortability diversity, and the ability to address complex issues.
  + We need a new generation of government employees who have skills that allow them to think across organizational boundaries to address the broad goals of government.

**Find Interview Here**: <https://youtu.be/H2IYsUOaez0>