

STATEMENT OF THE HONORABLE IKE SKELTON
CHAIRMAN, COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON HOUSE ADMINISTRATION

January 27, 2010

Mr. Chairman, Mr. Lungren, and distinguished members of the committee, thank you for allowing me to testify today on the where things stand with the Committee on Armed Services' budget along with my friend and new partner, Buck McKeon. You have the committee's budget data and supporting materials before you, so let me make some brief opening remarks and get to your questions.

Before I discuss our financial summary, I would like to take this opportunity to thank both you, Mr. Chairman, and Mr. Lungren for supporting the renovation of the main Armed Services Committee hearing room. Our hearing room was desperately in need of renovations to allow

wheelchair access and to replace the outdated audio system. The result, which was returned to us this week, is a hearing room that jumps the committee forward technologically and improves our ability to conduct hearings. We are thrilled that your committee was able to provide for this renovation.

The Armed Services Committee was very active during the first session of the 111th Congress and we intend to make good use of our renovated hearing room in 2010. In 2009 the committee conducted 122 hearing and 55 briefings as we worked to oversee a military actively fighting two wars. At the current rate, I expect the committee to easily exceed the 177 hearings conducted in the 110th Congress. The committee saw seven pieces of its legislation passed by the House including the Fiscal Year 2010 National Defense Authorization Act, which

authorized over 50 percent of the discretionary portion of the entire Federal budget, and the Weapons System Acquisition Reform Act of 2009, which made significant steps forward in reforming the process by which the Department of Defense buys weapons systems. This oversight and legislative work comports with our committee oversight plan to oversee readiness, acquisition, military manpower and the conduct of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

To support this work your committee provided the Armed Services Committee \$15.8 million for the 111th Congress. Of that, \$7.8 million was allocated for 2009 and the committee expended and obligated 98.8 percent of those funds. The remaining 1.2 percent served as a buffer to ensure we did not exceed our funding allocation. The majority of these operating funds went to fulfill the

substantial oversight responsibilities of the committee and to retain a technically-skilled and professional staff.

We will need to work with this committee going forward on some additional funding needs. Our staff, now allocated at 71, serves 62 members and reflects a ratio of staff to committee members that is below the average of other House committees and is not in keeping with the past history of the committee. For example, during the 103rd Congress Chairman Les Aspin had a staff of 82 to assist his 55 committee members. There remain unmet staffing needs on both sides of the aisle to allow us to complete our ambitious oversight agenda and to compete effectively for the right talent to oversee the military's programs. The Armed Services Committee continues to operate with our unique bipartisan approach with a unified and bipartisan staff, within which Mr. McKeon controls

fifteen slots. Our committee has always had a collaborative bipartisan approach to both our work and our staff.

One last area of concern that I would like to raise is the need to upgrade the committee's Internet presence. Buck and I are in agreement that we need to better utilize technology to ensure the public is fully aware of what this committee is doing to support the Nation's Defense. To that end, we need additional resources to improve both the Majority and Minority websites to enhance document distribution, video and audio webcasting and increase the visibility of the committee. We look forward to working with you over time to meet these additional needs.

These are challenging budgetary times. We know this. We appreciate your support for our committee's work and look forward to your continued support in the future.

Thank you for your time, Mr. Chairman. I am happy to answer questions once Mr. McKeon has completed his statement.