

**Opening Statement of Oversight and Government Reform Committee
Ranking Member Darrell Issa
Before House Administration on the Second Session 111th Budget Request
February 3, 2009**

Chairman Brady, Ranking Member Lungren, I would like to thank you for allowing us to testify today as a follow up to our testimony of last year on the Oversight and Government Reform Committee's budget for the 111th Congress.

The Oversight and Government Reform Committee is the primary Oversight Committee of the House. Our Committee is able to conduct fair and aggressive oversight and investigate wrongdoing because of our staff and expertise. Unlike some Committees, who may be too close to those they legislate, we are not wedded to any particular program or agency. Our oversight has meaning and when needed, we can use our unique tools to get to the bottom of government waste, fraud, abuse and mismanagement. In 2009 we did just that. Our Committee wisely spent its funds to build an organization that conducts meaningful oversight over a broad range of organizations and programs. The enemy is not Republicans or Democrats. The enemy is the mischief caused when you have massive government bureaucracy. Whether it is investigating the potential fraud and abuses that led up to our current economic crisis or looking into widespread abuse of taxpayer dollars by government and non-government organizations, our Committee accomplished the goals we laid out last year.

I sit here today fully confident that our oversight efforts to date have saved the taxpayers millions if not billions of dollars. The predominance of our 2009/2010 budget is being used on staff salaries. My staff is made up of attorney and non-attorney professionals with experience in the fields they are investigating. We hire very competent professionals and that means paying competitive salaries. The budget is also being used to upgrade our technology and to enhance our investigative tools. For example, just this week we received documents from the New York Federal Reserve concerning our investigation of the financial crisis. The documents we received number over 250,000 pages. As you can imagine, it would take the combined majority and minority staffs weeks if not months to properly examine these documents by hand. Because this is not an isolated case we have employed the latest software technology to assist us with our efforts. Instead of taking months, some searches now take only days.

Our Committee will continue to conduct meaningful oversight and, when appropriate, recommend the appropriate reform methods to resolve long-standing problems that make our government inefficient and ineffective. This budget reflects our needs as a Committee when we conduct business under ordinary circumstances. But I think we all agree these are extraordinary times and extraordinary circumstances. As federal spending increases there will be a corresponding rise in waste fraud and mismanagement. Our Committee, working with agencies Inspectors' General, the GAO,

and whistleblowers, is on the front lines protecting taxpayer dollars to ensure Americans have an honest and well run government.

Without a doubt I can say that the upcoming year will be busier and more productive than it was in 2009. I fully anticipate that we will spend our entire budget – indeed – I could use a bigger staff, more investigators, more space and a bigger budget. I would like to see our Committee receive a significant increase in staff slots. As I said earlier, for every dollar we spend we give back a hundred fold by exposing waste, fraud, and mismanagement. But I am not oblivious of the times we live in. The taxpayers want us to tighten our belt and I will live with the small budget increase assigned to us last year. After all, the American public demand we properly oversee federal programs and government functions so the taxpayer dollars spent go to the greater good and not squandered. I pledge to continue to do this work and look forward to working with my Chairman to accomplish this.

With that I welcome your questions.