

COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, DC 20515

February 9, 2009

The Honorable Edolphus Towns
Chairman
Committee on Oversight & Government Reform
2157 Rayburn House Office Bldg.
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Robert A. Brady
Chairman
Committee on House Administration
1309 Longworth House Office Bldg.
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Towns and Chairman Brady:

In accordance with the requirements of clause 2 of rule X of the Rules of the House of Representatives, the following is a list of hearings and oversight-related activities that the Committee on Ways and Means and its Subcommittees plan to conduct during the 111th Congress.

Full Committee:

Economic Security and Federal Budget—

- **Economic and Budget Outlook.** Oversight hearings with various Administration officials to discuss current economic and budget conditions, including the long-term outlook, the state of the economy, prospects for recovery and long-term growth, our economic competitiveness, and job creation.
- **Priorities of the Office of Management and Budget.** Oversight hearings with the Office of Management and Budget Director to discuss the overall state of the federal budget and the Administration's priorities for the 111th Congress, and consider budgetary proposals affecting the various programs under the Committee's jurisdiction, including tax, health, income security, Social Security, pensions, and trade-related matters.

Tax Issues—

- **Priorities of the Department of the Treasury.** Oversight hearings with the Treasury Secretary to discuss priorities for the 111th Congress. Specifically, discuss and consider legislative and administrative proposals of the President for 2009 and 2010.

- **Tax Relief for Individuals and Families.** Oversight hearings on tax relief for individual taxpayers and families, including alternative minimum tax relief and child-related tax benefits.
- **Tax Reform.** Oversight hearings on simplifying and reforming the tax code.
- **Climate Change.** Oversight hearings on government efforts to address climate change.
- **Energy.** Oversight hearings on energy tax issues, including incentives for alternative fuel production, energy conservation, and increasing U.S. energy independence.
- **Housing.** Oversight hearings on tax incentives for moderately-priced housing, focusing on options for increasing the supply of middle-income rental housing and home ownership.
- **Education.** Oversight hearings on options to simplify the current complex structure of education incentives and tax benefits for higher education.
- **Retirement Savings and Secured Retirement.** Oversight hearings on increased decline in retirement savings, low pension coverage in employer-sponsored plans, enhanced disclosure of fees charged against pension plans, investment advice for participating workers, and efforts to increase retirement security for all American workers.

Health and Human Services Issues—

- **Priorities of the Department of Health and Human Services.** Oversight hearing with the Health and Human Services Secretary to discuss priorities for the 111th Congress and concerns related to the delivery of health services and reimbursement under Medicare. Specifically, discuss and consider health and human services-related legislative proposals of the President for 2009 and 2010. Discuss the reauthorization of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (“TANF”) program.

Trade—

- **Priorities of the Office of the United States Trade Representative.** Oversight hearing with the United States Trade Representative to discuss priorities for the 111th Congress and concerns related to international trade. Specifically, discuss and consider trade proposals of the President for 2009 and 2010, including whether the USTR has adequate resources to carry out its mandate with respect to enforcing U.S. trade agreements.

The full Committee intends to conduct additional oversight over the next two years, as becomes necessary to fulfill its oversight responsibilities to the Congress and the American people. The following is a list of further oversight hearings and activities that the six subcommittees of the Committee on Ways and Means (Oversight, Health, Income Security and Family Support, Social Security, Trade, and Select Revenue Measures) anticipate developing during the course of the 111th Congress.

Subcommittee on Oversight:

- **Programs within the Committee's Jurisdiction.** Oversight investigations and joint subcommittee hearings on issues requiring periodic or timely oversight review, including waste, fraud, and abuse identified by the U.S. Government Accountability Office ("GAO") and Inspector General reports for Federal agencies administering programs within the Committee's jurisdiction.
- **Internal Revenue Service Operations/Administration of Tax Laws.** Oversight of the major Internal Revenue Service ("IRS") programs, including enforcement, collection (including private debt collection), taxpayer services, returns processing, and information systems. Consider analyses and reports provided to the Congress by the IRS National Taxpayer Advocate, Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration, and the GAO. Oversight of IRS funding and staffing levels needed to provide taxpayer assistance and enforce the tax laws fairly, effectively, and efficiently. Evaluate tax return filing seasons, including use of paid tax preparers, electronic filing, IRS and volunteer taxpayer assistance programs, and the Free File Program. Discuss proposed funding and staffing levels for the IRS and legislative proposals of the President for 2009 and 2010. Review IRS realignment and closure of service centers and other facilities.
- **Financially Distressed Taxpayers.** Oversight of IRS programs to assist taxpayers experiencing economic difficulties.
- **Delivery of Tax Refunds.** Explore options to maximize and expedite the delivery of Federal tax refunds, including the use of debit cards, prepaid cards, and other electronic means to assist individuals who do not have access to financial accounts or institutions.
- **Tax-Exempt Organizations.** Oversight of Federal tax laws, regulations, and filing requirements that affect tax-exempt organizations, particularly charities and foundations. Examine how the economic downturn has affected these organizations and explore options to assist charities and foundations. Evaluate overall IRS efforts to monitor tax-exempt organizations, identify areas of non-compliance, prevent abuse, and ensure timely disclosure to the public about tax-exempt organization activities and finances.

- **Tax Code and Tax Form Simplification.** Oversight of tax code and tax form complexity, particularly for individuals, with the goal of simplification. Review areas where taxpayers and professional return preparers have difficulty, including the most errors, and consider solutions. Evaluate simplification of information returns to assist taxpayers in determining taxable income.
- **Tax Gap.** Oversight of the \$345 billion annual tax gap, the difference between taxes paid and taxes owed the federal government. Consider the components of the tax gap, causes of taxpayer non-compliance, and possible solutions.
- **Earned Income Tax Credit (“EITC”).** Oversight of IRS programs designed to provide tax assistance to more than 23 million low-income working taxpayers claiming the EITC. Evaluate the participation rates and outreach needed to increase the number of eligible workers who claim the credit.
- **Tax Scams.** Oversight of the latest tax scams and tax fraud activities with a goal of protecting taxpayers and preventing identity theft.
- **Federal Excise Taxes.** Oversight review of Federal excise taxes, credits, and refunds, including the trust funds financed by these taxes.
- **Pensions and Retirement Security.** Oversight review of the financial condition, operations, and governance of the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation (“PBGC”), including financial exposure to the PBGC in the pension insurance programs.

Subcommittee on Health:

- **Medicare Part A and Part B (Fee-for-Service Providers).** Oversight of the major Medicare programs to ensure efficient use of resources, quality, and access for Medicare beneficiaries. Specific topics include: adequacy of provider payments, program benefits and cost sharing; the relationship between payment policy and workforce issues (future supply); treatment of specific populations such as people with disabilities and low-income beneficiaries; quality improvement efforts; implementation of recent Medicare legislation; and waste, fraud, and abuse activities.
- **Medicare Part C (Private Plans).** Oversight of private plans, including: enrollment; value and payments; benefit packages and actuarial equivalence determinations; administrative costs; quality; consumer protection; and marketing and implementation of recent statutory changes affecting private plans.

- **Medicare Part D (Prescription Drug Plans).** Oversight of the Medicare prescription drug program, including: treatment of dual eligible beneficiaries, low-income subsidy beneficiaries, and nursing home residents; drug pricing; and beneficiary cost sharing, including specialty tiers, bidding process, and premiums.
- **Medicare Entitlement.** Oversight of the effect of program changes on the Medicare Trust Funds, including payments to private plans and Parts B and D premium levels.
- **CMS Administration.** Oversight of CMS, including the adequacy of its budget and staffing, contracting activities, and general agency accountability.
- **Health Insurance Coverage.** Oversight and review of health coverage and the uninsured, including: children, early retirees, and small business employees; adequacy of benefits; COBRA; lack of coverage for various groups; prevalence and use of health savings accounts, the value of accounts, and their influence on broader health care systems and spending; and options to expand and improve coverage and addressing rate of increase in health care costs.

Subcommittee on Income Security and Family Support:

- **Vulnerable Populations and Poverty.** Provide oversight on the impact that the current recession is having on vulnerable populations, especially those served by programs within the Subcommittee's jurisdiction. Assess proposals that would improve assistance to those most in need, and monitor interventions enacted to achieve that goal. Evaluate the impact of the recession on increasing poverty and consider possible remedies.
- **Welfare Programs.** Provide oversight of and consider proposals to reauthorize the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families ("TANF") program. Examine barriers to providing financial support and services to low-income families with children. Assess how the TANF program addresses the needs of adult beneficiaries who face barriers to employment. Review the role that related programs, such as child care and child support enforcement, play in facilitating economic opportunity for low-income families. Evaluate how the changes in the overall economy have affected the ability of TANF families to achieve self-sufficiency.
- **Unemployment Compensation.** Provide oversight of the Nation's unemployment compensation system, with a particular focus on providing federally-funded unemployment benefits to long-term unemployed workers, as needed, during the economic downturn. Review potential reforms within the unemployment compensation system that would modernize the program, including reducing the disparities in access to the program for some dislocated workers. Evaluate proposals that would increase

economic security for dislocated workers and address the new challenges facing American workers with respect to the recession, changing workforce, and globalization.

- **At-Risk Children.** Provide oversight of the Nation's child welfare system, including foster care, adoption assistance, and child and family programs under Title IVB of the Social Security Act. Review State efforts to implement new statutory and regulatory requirements under the Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act, including providing assistance to relatives who become legal guardians of children for whom they care for as foster parents, permitting federal foster care assistance to continue up to age 21 for eligible youth, improving the oversight of the health and educational needs of foster children, and providing direct federal foster care and adoption assistance to tribal governments for children in their care. Review proposals designed to improve the financing of child welfare programs to ensure better outcomes for at-risk children and families. Evaluate how States are responding to the increased need for child welfare services that has occurred in some areas during the current recession.

Subcommittee on Social Security:

- **General Oversight of Social Security.** Oversight of the importance of Social Security for American workers and their families; the essential role it plays in assuring economic security for retirees, disabled workers, and survivors; and how best to manage the challenges and opportunities presented by an aging society, given the central role Social Security plays in income security, and the importance of adopting a balanced approach to address those challenges and opportunities that have the support of the American people.
- **Social Security Administration (“SSA”).** Oversight of the administrative operations of the Social Security Administration and the agency’s stewardship of Social Security programs and taxpayer funds. Among the various areas to examine are SSA’s plans to upgrade and modernize its information technology infrastructure and systems architecture, and monitoring their implementation.
- **Service Delivery.** Oversight of the quality of SSA’s service to the public through its field offices, telephone services, emerging Internet service delivery, and administration of current benefit provisions. Examine the impact of SSA initiatives to increase the percentage of claims filed over the Internet and to increase automation of claims adjudication, including the impact on accuracy, customer service, and program integrity. Examine the growing demand on SSA by other agencies and state governments for non-program-related data matching arrangements, such as registered voter Social Security Number verification and the Department of Homeland Security’s “E-Verify” program,

and the impact of these workloads on SSA's ability to perform its core mission.

- **Disability Claims Processing Backlogs.** Oversight of SSA's processing of disability determinations, including SSA's current backlog of more than 1.3 million unprocessed initial claims and appeals requests for disability benefits, and the agency's substantial backlog of continuing disability reviews. Monitor SSA's progress in addressing the disability backlogs and assess the need for additional administrative resources to reduce the backlogs while keeping up with increases in claims. Examine SSA initiatives to modify the disability determination and appeals processes to determine their impact on claimants and on the quality and efficiency of disability decisions.
- **Ticket to Work Program and Related Work Incentives.** Oversight of the implementation and effectiveness of the Ticket to Work program and related Social Security work incentive programs, policies, and demonstration projects. Examine evaluation results from the initial implementation of the Ticket to Work program and assess the effect of recent regulatory reforms and outreach efforts on program participation and effectiveness.
- **Protection of Social Security Beneficiaries from Abusive Financial Practices.** Oversight of whether and how SSA and other federal agencies are enforcing provisions of the Social Security Act prohibiting benefits from being assigned, transferred, or otherwise diverted from the beneficiary in order to collect a private debt or payment. Examine whether non-financial institutions are marketing abusive, high-fee financial arrangements to vulnerable beneficiaries.
- **Social Security Number Protection.** Oversight of the problem of identity theft and misuse of the Social Security number. Consider the role of the Social Security number, the Social Security card, Social Security benefits, and SSA with respect to immigration policy and enforcement.

Subcommittee on Trade:

- **Signed Free Trade Agreements ("FTAs") with Panama, Colombia, and South Korea.** Oversight of the three signed FTAs, with focus on issues that need to be addressed in order for Congressional consideration, including, with respect to the Colombia FTA, issues related to violence against workers and other issues that inhibit the exercise of basic internationally-recognized labor standards, and with respect to the South Korea FTA, issues related to non-tariff market access barriers in the manufacturing and agricultural areas.

- **Implemented FTAs.** Oversight of implemented FTAs involving Peru, Central America/the Dominican Republic (“CAFTA-DR”), Oman, Bahrain, and earlier FTAs with Singapore, Chile, Australia, Morocco, Jordan, the North American Free Trade Agreement (“NAFTA”), and Israel.
- **Other FTA Negotiations.** Oversight of uncompleted FTA negotiations, including with Thailand, Malaysia, United Arab Emirates, the South African Customs Union (“SACU”), Ecuador, and proposed negotiations with the “P-4” countries (Brunei, Chile, New Zealand, and Singapore).
- **Preference Programs.** Oversight of major U.S. trade preference programs such as the Generalized System of Preferences (“GSP”), African Growth and Opportunity Act (“AGOA”), Caribbean Basin Initiative (“CBI”), Andean Trade Preference Act (“ATPA”), and Haitian Hemispheric Opportunity Through Partnership Encouragement Act (“HOPE I” and “HOPE II”). Evaluate efficacy of programs and options for long-term renewal and reform.
- **Haiti.** Oversight of U.S. preference programs for Haiti (“HOPE I” and “HOPE II”). Evaluation of proposals to assist Haiti’s economic recovery.
- **World Trade Organization (“WTO”) Negotiations.** Oversight of U.S. goals in the areas of agriculture, manufacturing, services, and trade remedy laws. Evaluation of reasons for current impasse in WTO negotiations, and consideration of proposals to break impasse and achieve meaningful outcome in all areas.
- **WTO Dispute Settlement.** Oversight of the WTO dispute settlement system, including oversight of WTO decisions involving U.S. trade remedy laws.
- **Enforcement.** Oversight of U.S. enforcement of WTO rights and rights under FTAs and other agreements. Evaluation of proposals to strengthen U.S. trade remedy laws and improve U.S. tools as leverage to open foreign markets and other areas. Evaluation of proposals to strengthen border enforcement related to counterfeit imports and import safety. Oversight of administration by the Department of Commerce and U.S. International Trade Commission of U.S. trade remedy laws and USTR’s role in enforcement.
- **China.** Oversight of systemic problems in U.S.-China trade relations, including issues related to China’s continued violation of U.S. intellectual property rights and use of industrial subsidies, and China’s alleged manipulation of its currency, as well as other areas.

- **Europe.** Oversight of the third largest bilateral trade deficit of more than \$100 billion in 2005, as well as sectoral issues, such as Airbus subsidies, discriminatory regulations in high technology transfer and sectors, attempts at technology transfer, discriminatory barriers to U.S. farm exports, European Union (“EU”) practices in the WTO negotiations, and EU practices concerning regional trade agreements.
- **Trade and Developing Countries.** Oversight of U.S. trade relations with developing countries, role of developing countries in the WTO and world trading system, extent to which developing countries have benefitted from the trading system over the past 20 years and, in regard particularly with respect to the least developed countries, why many of these countries have lost ground over the last 20 years and what can be done in the area of trade and aid to reverse this trend.
- **Globalization Adjustment Assistance.** Examine options to improve education, on-the-job training, trade adjustment, and portable health care/pensions, including reform and expansion of the Trade Adjustment Assistance programs for Workers, Firms, and Farmers.
- **Climate Change.** Evaluation of impact of mandatory proposals to reduce U.S. greenhouse gas emissions, including with respect to addressing carbon leakage, domestic and export competitiveness concerns of carbon-intensive industries, and issues related to consistency with international trade rules.
- **Priorities of U.S. Customs and Border Protection.** Oversight hearing with the Customs Commissioner to discuss priorities of the 111th Congress and concerns related to customs revenue functions and trade facilitation, including enforcement of U.S. customs laws and regulations. Specifically, discuss and consider proposals of the President for 2009 and 2010 and other proposals related to CBP’s capacity and resources, including personnel resources, to carry out its mandate.
- **Miscellaneous Tariff Bill (“MTB”).** Continue work to complete in the 111th Congress the review of introduced bills and preparation of an omnibus bill, begun in the 110th Congress, in accordance with Committee guidelines and House Rules.
- **Priorities of the United States International Trade Commission.** Oversight hearing to receive information from the Commission concerning overall priorities and operations. Specifically, discuss and consider trade proposals of the President for 2009 and 2010 and inquire as to whether the Commission has adequate resources and technical expertise to carry out its mandate.

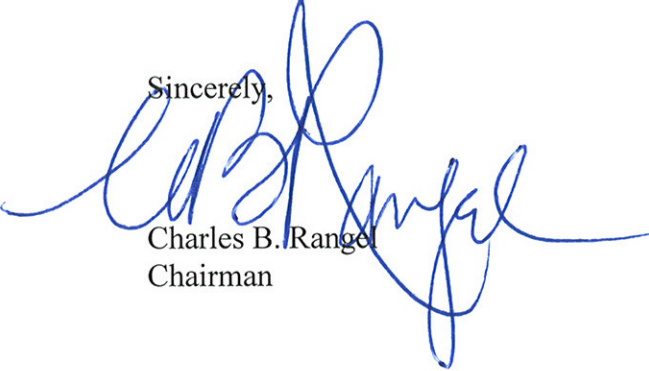
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Subcommittee on Select Revenue Measures:

- **Various tax matters.** Oversight of a variety of tax issues and tax legislation, as directed by the Committee Chairman.

This list is not intended to be exclusive. The Committee anticipates that additional oversight hearings and activities will be scheduled as issues arise and as time permits. Also, the Committee's oversight priorities and particular concerns may change as the 111th Congress progresses over the coming two years.

Sincerely,



Charles B. Rangel
Chairman

cc: The Honorable Dave Camp
Ranking Member