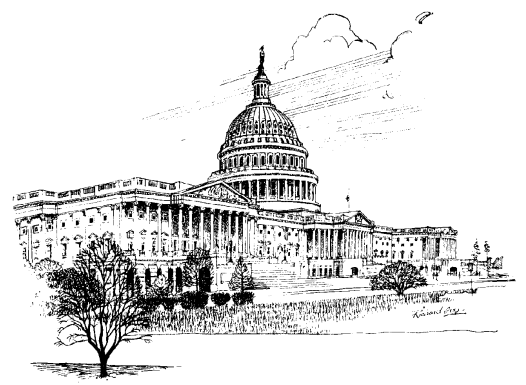


PRESS RELEASE

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE ON LEGISLATIVE BRANCH CHAIRWOMAN, DEBBIE WASSERMAN SCHULTZ



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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Opening Statement – Chair Wasserman Schultz Legislative Branch Subcommittee Markup Thursday, July 1, 2010

Good morning. The business before the Subcommittee is the mark up of the fiscal year 2011 Legislative Branch Appropriations bill.

Before we begin, I want to welcome two new Members to this subcommittee – Congressman Lincoln Davis and Congressman Patrick Murphy. The newest Member of the full committee, Mr. Murphy, might feel his “hazing” is service on this subcommittee.

The jurisdiction of this bill is vitally important, as this is where the Appropriations Committee fulfills its responsibility as the stewards of the institutions which are at the heart of our democracy.

Our Subcommittee takes this responsibility very seriously. Over the past several months, we have held 6 hearings and heard from 24 witnesses. Since the conclusion of these hearings, Ranking Member Aderholt and I, along with our staff, have reviewed the agency requests, re-read the hearing record and listened closely to our fellow Members and the public. The bill before you this morning is the product of that process.

The recommendations in this bill provide overall funding of \$3.65 billion, excluding Senate items. This is a decrease of \$6.8 million from the level provided in fiscal year 2010 and a decrease of \$337 million below the request.

This year, our challenge was compounded by our need to produce a bill that comes in under budget. I am confident that after our work together leading up to today, that we will all agree on the overall priorities in this bill and be proud of what this Subcommittee has produced.

Specifically, we have pushed the agencies to find efficiencies and improve business practices, provided agencies with the tools to recruit and retain our number one resource – staff, and provided direction to agencies such as the Capitol Police to improve on their internal controls.

This bill reflects an acknowledgment that the Legislative Branch must set itself as an example for fiscal constraint while continuing to serve the Nation.

Members have in front of them the bill and report, and the summary table prepared by the staff, but let me briefly give highlights of the bill and report:

House of Representatives – The bill includes \$1.37 billion for the operations of the House. This is an increase of only \$5 million, or .4 percent, over the 2010 enacted level and is \$44.8 million below the amount requested.

\$652 million of this amount is for the Members' Representational Allowances –MRA– account which is decreased by \$8 million from the 2010 level to reflect the fact that Members have been spending less than their authorized level.

The bill also includes several requirements to improve operations of the House, including:

Withholding \$10 million from the Office of the Chief Administrative Officer until

- (1) regular meetings have been scheduled with major staff organizations;
- (2) a user satisfaction survey is implemented for the Office of Payroll and Benefits and the Office of Financial Counseling; and
- (3) wireless service is improved in the Capitol Visitor Center.

The Committee also directs the House Sergeant At Arms, along with the Capitol Police, to find a permanent solution to the problem of wait times for access into the House buildings and into the Capitol through the Rayburn and Cannon tunnels. Anyone that has seen the lines of visitors waiting to enter the buildings can agree that we can and should do better.

Capitol Police – The bill includes \$337.2 million for the Capitol Police. This is an increase of \$8.9 million, or 2.7 percent, over the 2010 enacted level and is sufficient to maintain the end of year officer strength expected to be in place on September 30th.

The recommendation does not, however, provide for the increase in officers requested in the budget.

The Subcommittee believes that these positions are not adequately justified and has GAO currently engaged in a long-term review of the Capitol Police's staffing needs in relation to security requirements.

During the budget hearing this year, the Committee heard about significant budgeting mistakes and financial mismanagement that led to an acknowledgement by the Capitol Police that they would require additional funding this year to cover officer's salaries and benefits.

The Subcommittee is still awaiting the transfer request from the police to cover this shortfall and had to provide an almost 7 percent increase in salaries in the 2011 bill just to provide enough funding for current officers.

The Inspector General recently concluded an audit regarding the budget shortfall which found that the Capitol Police do not have adequate controls over the budget formulation process.

To that end, the bill requires a corrective action plan and other measures so that the Capitol Police have the ability to get their fiscal house in order.

Library of Congress – The bill includes \$645.2 million for the Library of Congress, an increase of \$1.8 million, or .3 percent, over the fiscal year 2010 enacted level.

The bill provides the full amount requested, \$71.5 million, for the Books for the Blind program, including the Digital Talking Books program.

Government Printing Office – The bill includes \$147.5 million for the Government Printing Office, an increase of \$50,000 over the fiscal year 2010 enacted level.

The amount provided includes \$5 million to complete the development of the Federal Digital System, the Government Printing Office's digital content system which is vitally important to keeping the public informed about the actions of their Federal government in the 21st century.

During this year's hearings, this Subcommittee wrestled with issues surrounding the security of GPO's facilities and operations, and in the report we continue the process of examining whether changes to the organization of the GPO police would be beneficial.

Government Accountability Office – The bill includes \$560.7 million for the GAO, an increase of \$3.8 million, or .7 percent, over the enacted level for 2010 to continue its role as the “congressional watchdog” as they work to uncover waste, fraud, and abuse among Federal programs.

Since the reestablishment of the Legislative Branch subcommittee, we have been encouraged to take a close look at reestablishing the Office of Technology Assessment, which was last funded as a separate bicameral organization in fiscal year 1996.

In an effort to move toward a resolution on how this function should be modernized, the Committee is requiring GAO to contract with the National Academy of Sciences for a study on how to structure a Congressional technology assessment group that will provide Congress with comprehensive and timely studies that can be widely disseminated. The only parameters we established for the study were that the plan be bicameral and bipartisan.

Architect of the Capitol – Beyond funding for day to day operations of the Congress and its support agencies, we must also preserve and maintain the infrastructure of our buildings and facilities, including the iconic Capitol.

To this end the bill prioritizes building maintenance and improvements projects which address life safety issues and maintain facilities which are critical to the operation of our branch of government.

The bill also provides strong support to AOC's efforts to be a leader in conserving energy and natural resources. The bill provides \$501.2 million for the Architect of the Capitol, which is 25.9 million, or 5.1 percent below the 2010 enacted amount. In addition to the funding in this bill we were also able to approve the use of \$17.6 million from prior year funds that will be used on projects requested in 2011.

Before I conclude, I want to thank Mr. Aderholt for his work in developing this bill.

He is the first ranking Member who has stayed with me for more than one year so I will take that as a positive sign (or as a sign of his instability!).

And of course, thank you to our majority staff, Shalanda Young, Shawn Choy, and Ida Brudnick, the minority staff, Liz Dawson, and Jenny Kisiah, Ian Rayder in my office and Megan Medley in Mr. Aderholt's office for all of their hard work and late nights as we crafted this legislation.

Finally, I want to thank all of the Members of the Subcommittee for their participation in the hearings and for their thoughtful input throughout the year.

I look forward to continuing to work with all of you as this process moves forward.

Mr. Aderholt, I yield to you for any remarks.

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