

Statement of the Representative John D. Dingell
House Committee on Rules
Privileged Resolution Recommending that the House find
Attorney General Holder in Contempt of Congress
Wednesday, June 27, 2012

Mr. Chairman, thank you for your courtesy in allowing me to testify this afternoon.

This situation is a true tragedy. Because of grossly irresponsible actions by the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives, or ATF, a constituent of mine, Brian Terry, was killed in a firefight in Arizona with weapons which ATF agents allowed to “walk” across the border to Mexico.

These events were characterized by the usual dishonest, evasive and deceitful activities of ATF personnel.

Operation Fast and Furious was a highly irresponsible operation that should have never occurred. I think everyone on both sides of the aisle agrees with that statement.

The American people want the answers and they deserve to have a proper, thorough, and bipartisan investigation that gets them the truth. Brian Terry’s family wants the truth and as God is my judge, they deserve it.

I would point out that I have chaired scores of investigations and hearings on wrong-doing which have collected hundreds of millions of dollars wrongfully taken from our government and have caught more than a few serious wrong-doers – who paid the proper penalties for their crimes. Those investigations were always bipartisan with both sides of the aisle actively participating. The reports were unanimous or overwhelmingly supported by members from both parties.

What we see before us does not follow that model and brings no respect to this body. As someone who holds this institution in the highest regard, I find this terribly offensive.

Instead of going after the real answers and getting the facts about what happened at ATF, the Majority of the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform has engaged in what appears to be partisan and political witch hunt with the Attorney General as its target. The proper witnesses were not called, and the goalposts for resolving the matter were continuously moved throughout the investigation.

Over the 16 month investigation, Democrats did not get to call **a single witness** to testify. So much for fairness and bipartisanship.

Why? If the Committee wanted a truly bipartisan inquiry which would yield the facts, the minority should have been invited by the Majority to participate in a fair, open and proper way. Then there would have been something for all to be proud of.

The American people deserve better than this, Mr. Chairman. They deserve a legitimate inquiry based on the facts which all members of this body can support. That can still be achieved, even at this late date.

Unfortunately, this will not happen with this investigation. This is truly regrettable because ATF's behavior here is shameful and much good could come out of a serious and proper examination of the facts, including proper disciplining of a rogue agency, guilty of misbehavior for a long time.

Therefore, Mr. Chairman, I ask that the Committee allow me to offer a Motion to Refer on the floor during consideration of the contempt resolution.

This motion would send the contempt resolution back to the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform and instructs them to hold proper, open and bipartisan hearings, call on additional witnesses pertinent to this investigation, and examine requested needed documents and papers.

With a proper investigation, Congress and the American people will have a complete sense of what really happened with Operation Fast and Furious, instead of engaging in a partisan exercise for political gain.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for your courtesy, and I yield back the balance of my time.

2012.06.27_Contempt Resolution in Rules Committee

This resolution is about truth, not gamesmanship. And that is why it has garnered bipartisan support.

The San Diego Union Tribune sums up the choice before Congress regarding Fast and Furious as such:

What matters ultimately is this simple narrative:

Many people, including a U.S. Border Patrol agent, died because of a U.S. government program. The Justice Department was caught lying about its oversight and handling of the program. Congress wants to know why. Holder says he's done nothing wrong but won't provide the very documents that would establish his innocence.

So why would the attorney general and the Obama administration act in such a fashion? A logical conclusion: They have something to hide.

And that's exactly the way it seems to the victims of this failed government policy:

"For more than 18 months we have been asking our federal government for justice and accountability," write Kent and Josephine Terry, the parents of fallen Border Patrol Agent Brian Terry. "The documents sought by the House Oversight Committee and associated with Operation Fast and Furious should be produced and turned over to the committee. Our son lost his life protecting this nation, and it is very disappointing that we are now faced with an administration that seems more concerned with protecting themselves rather than revealing the truth behind Operation Fast and Furious."