

PART 1: COMMITTEE FUNDING FOR THE 119TH CONGRESS

HEARING BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON HOUSE ADMINISTRATION HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ONE HUNDRED NINETEENTH CONGRESS FIRST SESSION

FEBRUARY 11, 2025

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PART 1: COMMITTEE FUNDING FOR THE 119TH CONGRESS

February 11, 2025

COMMITTEE ON HOUSE ADMINISTRATION,
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
Washington, D.C.

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:09 a.m., in room 1310, Longworth House Office Building, Hon. Bryan Steil [Chairman of the Committee] presiding.

Present: Representatives Steil, Lee, Loudermilk, Griffith, Murphy, Bice, Carey, Miller, Morelle, Sewell, Torres, and Johnson.

Staff present: Michael Platt, Staff Director; Janet Schwalb, Deputy Staff Director; March Bell, General Counsel; Rachel Collins, Deputy General Counsel and Parliamentarian; Jordan Wilson, Director of Member Services; Kristen Monterosso, Director of Operations and Legislative Clerk; Annemarie Cake, Professional Staff and Deputy Clerk; Jamie Fleet, Minority Staff Director; Khalil Abboud, Minority Deputy Staff Director; Owen Reilly, Minority Professional Staff; and Andrew Garcia, Minority Special Assistant.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. BRYAN STEIL, CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE ON HOUSE ADMINISTRATION, A U.S. REP- RESENTATIVE FROM WISCONSIN

Chairman STEIL. The Committee on House Administration will come to order.

I note that a quorum is present.

Without objection, the chair may declare a recess at any time.

Also, without objection, the hearing record will remain open for 5 legislative days so Members may submit any materials they wish to be included therein.

Thank you, Ranking Member Morelle, Members of the Committee, and our witnesses, for participating today.

Today the Committee on House Administration begins the oversight of the legislative branch for the 119th Congress. We have a duty to the American people to ensure their tax dollars are being used efficiently and effectively by all House Committees. Committee work is a critical part of our job here in Congress. It is where we discuss legislation, debate issues, and most importantly, hear from Americans who are experts on issues that impact them directly.

Over the next 2 days, we will hear from the Chairs and Ranking Members of each Committee on what funding they need to accomplish their goals for the 119th Congress. It is our goal to increase

transparency with this process and show the American people how their tax dollars are working for them.

I look forward to speaking with each of the Committees' leadership to determine how we can ensure that no taxpayer dollars are being wasted. We will continue our mission of being an open and transparent Committee, and we welcome every other Committee to use this platform to do the same. I look forward to hearing from each of the Committees coming before us today.

I would like to thank our witnesses for joining us today to discuss the important topics.

With that, I will yield to the Ranking Member, Mr. Morelle, to offer an opening statement.

[The prepared statement of Chairman Steil follows:]

**PREPARED STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE
ON HOUSE ADMINISTRATION BRYAN STEIL**

Today the Committee on House Administration begins the oversight of the legislative branch for the 119th Congress. We have a duty to the American people to ensure their tax dollars are being used efficiently and effectively by all House Committees. Committee work is a critical part of our job here in Congress. It is where we discuss legislation, debate issues, and most importantly, hear from Americans who are experts on issues that impact them directly.

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**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. JOSEPH MORELLE, RANKING
MEMBER OF THE COMMITTEE ON HOUSE ADMINISTRATION,
A U.S. REPRESENTATIVE FROM NEW YORK**

Mr. MORELLE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for yielding to me, and also for convening this series of hearings.

The Committee funding process is truly one of the more unique aspects of House Administration's duties, and I look forward to hearing from our fellow Committee leaders today and tomorrow as we undertake this important process.

The Committee system is the hallmark of the U.S. Congress. The Committees are where we exercise critical oversight, where we craft and debate policy proposals, and where we decide what to recommend to the broader House for consideration.

The work is oftentimes not glamorous. It is certainly not easy. It is, however, fundamental to our system of representative government.

Article I of the United States Constitution is clear about powers granted exclusively to Congress, including the power of the purse. Article I, section 1: "All legislative powers herein granted shall be vested in a Congress of the United States." Article I, section 7, clause 1: "All bills for raising revenue shall originate in the House of Representatives." Article I, section 9, clause 7: "No money shall be drawn from the Treasury but in consequence of appropriations made by law."

It is important to remind the American public, the executive branch, and even some of our colleagues here in Congress, that unless the Constitution is amended, Congress is still the only authorizer and appropriator of Federal public money. As an appropriator, and I share that with a number of Members here, we take this to heart.

We have witnessed over the past 3 weeks Federal agencies that implement our laws are under an unchecked assault of questionable legality. While the assault is ongoing, it is important we give House Committees the resources they need to execute their responsibilities while what little separation of powers remain.

For years, the bipartisan Select Committee on Modernization, and our own Subcommittee on Modernization, led ably by my friend Mrs. Bice, has documented Congress' desperately needed infusion of resources, capacity, and expertise.

Whatever you believe about the Supreme Court's decision to end Chevron deference in a series of decisions last year, if you, like me, think it is badly misguided or others who feel it is appropriate, you cannot avoid the impact on how it impacts our work here in the Congress.

These decisions, together with what seems like an endless assault on the Federal Government's regulatory authority in the last several weeks, makes adequate Committee funding even more imperative.

You will recall experts from across the ideological spectrum stressed at a hearing before this Committee just a few months ago, relative to Chevron, that Congress must now craft laws with more technical expertise than ever before. Effective lawmaking is dependent upon this expertise, and it does not come without significant investment.

Committees also need to be adequately supported in their exercise of legitimate oversight. Oversight jurisdiction is one of the most effective tools we have in affirming the coequal branch and status of the legislative article I responsibilities.

I, personally, still believe in the powers and responsibilities of the Congress, which is why I am glad we are having these hearings today and tomorrow.

Though the Federal Government is being systematically dismantled by an unelected billionaire and the foundational principle of checks and balances erodes more by the day, I am hopeful we will stop it, not as Republicans and Democrats, but as public servants and Members of Congress who swore an oath to support and defend the Constitution.

With that, I yield back.

[The prepared statement of Ranking Member Morelle follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF RANKING MEMBER OF THE COMMITTEE ON HOUSE ADMINISTRATION JOSEPH MORELLE

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Chairman STEIL. The gentleman yields back.

Without objection, all other Members' opening statements will be made part of the hearing record if they are submitted to the Committee clerk by 5 p.m. today.

Today we will hear from the chair and Ranking Member of 11 Committees, beginning with the Foreign Affairs Committee.

For each panel, we will begin by recognizing the chair for 5 minutes, the Ranking Member for 5 minutes, and then we are going to do questions 5 minutes total for the majority, 5 minutes total for the minority.

As we ask questions, we will do it a little more casually on our side. I will defer to the Ranking Member as he navigates the 5 minutes for the minority. It will keep everything reasonably tight. It will be a little bit of a different structure. I think it will move us right along through the hearing.

I now welcome our first panel of witnesses, Chairman Mast and Ranking Member Meeks on the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

I will recognize Chairman Mast for 5 minutes for an opening statement.

**STATEMENT OF THE HON. BRIAN J. MAST, A REPRESENTATIVE
IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF FLORIDA**

Mr. MAST. Thank you, Chairman Steil, thank you, Ranking Member Morelle, Members of the House Administration Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the funding needs of the Foreign Affairs Committee for the 119th Congress, along with my friend, Ranking Member Gregory Meeks.

The Foreign Affairs Committee is a great authorizing Committee. Our role in helping craft foreign policy, it is essential, as we all see around the globe.

We literally have the power to declare war and to end war. We conduct oversight of the State Department, USAID, the United Nations, Millennium Challenge, the Development Finance Corporation, and other agencies and bureaus that make up America's foreign policy infrastructure.

We manage export controls, which is everything related to chips. We approve weapons sales, to include basically every weapon system, engine modifications, aircraft, Navy vessels—you name it—that may be sold to any one of our allies. In the 119th Congress we will conduct the first full State Department reauthorization since the year 2002.

This is our mission, and it is more important than ever. Reauthorization is the only way to ensure the State Department is accountable to Congress under any administration.

Right now, only 15 percent of the State Department is strictly authorized by Congress. On the State Department's organizational chart there are nearly 66 offices that Congress has not authorized, and that does not count the nearly 40 special envoys appointed during the previous administration.

A full reauthorization is the only way to ensure that there is no wasteful spending within the State Department or USAID or any of the other arms of foreign assistance.

For this reauthorization to succeed, it has to be just as serious as how the House Armed Services Committee conducts their NDAA; and as such, we have worked to model everything that we need off of what the House Armed Services Committee has done, since this has not been done in so many years with the Foreign Affairs Committee.

The needs are to hire a budget director to review every dollar that the State Department has received and will send out the door; build out a new amendment tracking system for reauthorization that will mirror the one used by the House Armed Services Committee for the NDAA; and hire and retain staff with the expertise necessary to ensure that every dollar and every diplomat that we authorize does, in fact, put America first.

The world is a dangerous place at this very moment. We all realize this more than ever. We have Iranian-backed terrorists looking for their next target in the Middle East; we have a war waging in Ukraine throughout Europe; we have China probing every facet of America and our allies for weaknesses. Yet, these dangers have increased over the past 4 years as our foreign assistance system has lost sight of its mission.

Conducting oversight of this system is not easy. That is why it hasn't been done in 20 years. However, the State Department alone

has nearly 80,000 employees. Some of them are based right here in Washington, but a large number work out of the nearly 300 embassies and consulates America has across the globe. In comparison, the House Foreign Affairs Committee has at most 59 employees who are responsible for doing this oversight.

That is why we are respectfully requesting \$11,683,048 for the year 2025, and \$12,693,693 for the year 2026. This increase reflects the need for added staff, again, modeled after how the NDAA is conducted with the Armed Services Committee, who will be tasked with performing diligent oversight of regional issues and conducting, again, that full State Department reauthorization.

It also reflects the Committee's addition of a new task force focused on foreign military sales that will add to our workload and require additional highly skilled professionals to oversee the increasingly critical foreign policy function.

We have a constitutional duty to conduct rigorous oversight over America's vital foreign policy institutions and ensure that every dollar and every diplomat is working to advance America's national security interests.

I am asking for your support to help us carry out this mission. I thank you for your time. I do look forward to answering any questions you may have.

Chairman STEIL. Thank you very much, Chairman Mast.

Ranking Member Meeks, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF THE HON. GREGORY W. MEEKS, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF NEW YORK

Mr. MEEKS. Thank you, Chairman Steil, Ranking Member Morelle, and Members of the Committee on House Administration. Thank you for this opportunity to appear before the Committee with Chairman Mast, my friend, in support of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs' budget request for the 119th Congress.

In the 118th Congress, the Foreign Affairs Committee conducted unprecedented oversight and pushed an ambitious legislative agenda, including several pieces of legislation supporting America's ability to win the competition with China, addressing crises in Haiti and Sudan, the war in Gaza, and Putin's illegal invasion of Russia.

This year, Chairman Mast has expressed through the Committee oversight plan and the budget request an intention to pursue a State Department authorization bill, as he just described, in this Congress, which I know from my own experience as chair of this Committee in the 117th Congress is a difficult and time-consuming task. It is, however, an important undertaking that will require significant staff resources.

Chairman Mast has also put forward an oversight agenda that includes seven Subcommittees, and has indicated he will establish a task force to review the arms sales process and potentially others.

This work will require new technology and new resources and additional mid-career and senior staff. I look forward to this work and believe an increased budget would enable the staffing and supporting resources required to maximize the quality and output of our efforts.

America's national security interests are squarely at the center of this Committee's jurisdiction at a time when global challenges will continue to require our most skilled staff and innovative thinking.

We know wars are easier to start and much more difficult to stop. It is the work of this Committee that helps us do the latter.

Whether it is the war in Ukraine or Gaza, strategic competition with China, addressing newfound global challenges in the race for AI dominance, and deepening our diplomatic engagement in our hemisphere and on the continent of Africa, this Committee will be on the forefront of addressing these challenges.

The minority in the 118th Congress, and by past practice, controls one-third of the Committee budget, and I appreciate the fact that Chairman Mast intends to honor that practice and allow me the autonomy to use the minority budget to best meet the unique needs that come with being in the minority.

Unfortunately, because of a smaller budget and staff allotments in the minority, my staff have taken on more responsibilities without the increased compensation that they deserve.

They are highly skilled policy staff and lawyers with the technical skills required to meet the demands that come with the work of the Committee, people with both regional expertise but also with experience in the agencies this Committee oversees.

This budget increase would allow me to compensate the staff for their work, hire additional staff to cover the additional issues outlined in the Committee oversight plan, and, importantly, retain talented employees.

The work of this Committee is consequential to our national security. If we are to leverage diplomacy to avoid conflict, counter global threats, expand our soft power, and increase America's competitiveness and global standing, there is no Committee of greater importance than the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

Having the resources to do the important work the American people expect us to do requires a budget that can support the high expectations we have set.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak and testify before this Committee, and I look forward to answering any questions you may have.

[The prepared statement of Representative Meeks follows:]

**PREPARED STATEMENT OF REPRESENTATIVE GREGORY W.
MEEKS**

**Ranking Member Gregory W. Meeks
Testimony Before the Committee on House Administration
Committee Funding for the 119th Congress
Tuesday February 11, 2025**

Chairman Steil, Ranking Member Morelle, and members of the Committee on House Administration, thank you for the opportunity to appear before the Committee with Chairman Mast in support of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs budget request for the 119th Congress.

In the 118th Congress, the Foreign Affairs Committee conducted unprecedented oversight and pushed an ambitious legislative agenda, including several pieces of legislation supporting America's ability to win the competition with China, addressing crises in Haiti and Sudan, the war in Gaza, and Putin's illegal invasion of Russia.

Chairman Mast has expressed through the Committee oversight plan and the budget request an intention to pursue a State Department Authorization Bill this Congress, which I know from my own experience as Chair in the 117th Congress, is a difficult and time-consuming task. It is, however, an important undertaking that will require significant staff resources.

Chairman Mast has also put forward an oversight agenda that includes seven subcommittees and has indicated he will establish a task force to review the arms sales process, and potentially others. This work will require new technology resources as well as additional mid-career and senior staff. I look forward to this work and believe an increased budget would enable the staffing and supporting resources required to maximize the quality and output of our efforts.

America's national security interests are squarely at the center of the Committee's jurisdiction at a time when global challenges will continue to require our most skilled staff and innovative thinking. We know wars are far easier to start and much more difficult to stop. It is the work of this Committee that helps do the latter, and whether it's the war in Ukraine or in Gaza, strategic competition with China, addressing newfound global challenges in the race for AI dominance and deepening our diplomatic engagement in our hemisphere and on the continent of Africa, this Committee will be on the forefront of addressing these challenges.

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The work of this Committee is consequential to our national security. If we are to leverage diplomacy to avoid conflict, counter global threats, expand our soft power, and increase America's competitiveness and global standing, there is no committee of greater importance than HFAC. Having the resources to do the important work the American people expect us to do requires a budget that can support the high expectations we have set.

Chairman STEIL. Thank you, Ranking Member Meeks.

I will begin our questions on the majority side of 5 minutes. Just raise your hand if you would like to jump in. We will keep it a little bit casual as we go.

I am going to ask the same question of all chairs and Ranking Members today out of the gates, which relates to cybersecurity.

Will you, Chairman Mast and Ranking Member Meeks, commit to having your systems administrator meet with the House CIO team in the first quarter to discuss cybersecurity issues?

Mr. MAST. Absolutely.

Mr. MEEKS. Absolutely.

Chairman STEIL. Thank you very much.

First question, Chairman Mast, a lot of conversation about oversight, in particular as it relates to USAID in your jurisdiction. We think about the role of Committee funding and a real opportunity to utilize that funding to actually save taxpayer dollars.

Looking through your oversight plan, do you feel you have the resources you need, knowing the heavy work you have in front of you, in particular as it relates to recent revelations at USAID?

Mr. MAST. Given the oversight plan that we gave you for the future, yes, we specifically pinpoint the individuals that we need to conduct that.

One example would be somebody that has a specific expertise in looking at the budgets of the State Department to be able to see where those dollars have been and have been tracked and not tracked in the appropriate way, which is very difficult when you consider the way foreign aid is doled out, often going to a foreign company, a foreign country, a foreign NGO who may send it on to one, two, or three more, who may send it on to one, two, or three more.

Chairman STEIL. Thank you very much. I think it is a really important part of the work of your Committee ahead.

I will recognize the vice chair, Ms. Lee.

Ms. LEE. Mr. Chairman, in your testimony, you mentioned standing up a new task force that was focused on U.S. Government process for weapon sales to foreign countries. Could you tell us more about that task force and the types of staffing needs and costs you think will be associated with standing it up?

Mr. MAST. That foreign military sales task force, which will also be looking at export controls, will be dealing with, again, everything that falls off the wing of an aircraft, out of the belly of an aircraft, something that is fired out of a weapon system, something that helps any foreign militaries, even engine systems, down to small arms, and even things when you are talking about export controls like chips that we see as so vitally important.

It is important that we understand what are going to be our controls that are needed to make sure that we do not have China advancing past us, as one example, but to make sure that we have the capabilities to make sure that we are running faster than every other country, not hindering our industry as well.

Specific individuals, professional staff members that will be working for that new task force, along with who will be the chair, Ryan Zinke, Representative Ryan Zinke, great military experience, intends on bringing that to the table to make sure everybody is up

to date on the weapon systems, what they need to know, and which individual should be receiving them so that America is not sending them to the wrong place.

Ms. LEE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

Chairman STEIL. Representative Bice is recognized.

Mrs. BICE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Chairman Mast, for being with us this morning.

In your submission you mention a specific reauthorization software that your Committee is looking to purchase. Can you talk a little bit about that and why the need for that specific application?

Mr. MAST. When you look at this reauthorization, again, we have looked at specifically many conversations with the House Armed Services Committee to understand how they do it well year after year after year, having not done it in a full scope for so many years. We did not want to reinvent the wheel; we wanted to base it upon something successful. We are looking at something known as the Dextera system.

One of the primary reasons to put forward on this is to say, there will be thousands of amendments that come in as it relates to doing the State Department reauthorization. You have to be organized in order to conduct that properly, track the changes that are made, the last-minute changes that are made right before you bring these items to the Committee for a vote, you name it.

To not be organized in that system would be to set ourselves up for failure. It is the Dextera system to look to, to advance that into the modern age so that we can do it right.

Mrs. BICE. Are you familiar, do you have any perspective on the cost of that particular software application?

Mr. MAST. The specific cost of the Dextera system—I have it on my system here—and it does go with other things as well.

Literally, the Committee has to replace every server as one. The last time our servers were replaced were in 2012, so that is a requirement.

The Dextera system, I believe, is at \$140,000 right here. A few other—\$110,000 labeled under AVATAR data systems software.

Mrs. BICE. Great.

Chairman STEIL. Thank you very much. Mrs. Bice yields back.

I will ask one maybe final question. If there is time, we can continue.

You are new as a Committee chair, but the Foreign Affairs Committee uniquely has Members that represent other Committees. Mr. Meeks and I both serve on the Financial Services Committee, for example.

Have you been utilizing the Deconflict tool? Do you have experience in that? How has it been working for you?

Mr. MAST. We have been utilizing the Deconflict tool. It is important us. You mentioned the House Financial Services Committee. That is the best example to use for my Committee.

As we all know, sometimes Members are waived onto Committees. I have more waivers than anybody, probably to the tune of about seven or eight more than any other Committee. Seven of those individuals that are on waiver to the House Foreign Affairs Committee come directly from the Financial Services Committee. That is an easy one to identify as the need to deconflict.

Chairman STEIL. Seeing none, I will now yield 5 minutes for questions to the Ranking Member.

Mr. MORELLE. Thank you.

First of all, thank you, Mr. Chair, my partner in optics and photonics in our caucus. Thanks for your work, and good luck to you in your new assignments.

Mr. MAST. Thank you.

Mr. MORELLE. To my dear friend from Queens, thank you for being here.

I also want to acknowledge our newest Member on this Committee is also a Member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, so Ms. Johnson is doing double duty in that regard.

I do want to ask, and I think the Ranking Member mentioned this, the two-thirds/one-third split, which is traditional here, that the minority be given unrestricted access to the resources they need out of that allocation. I noticed the Ranking Member mentioned this in his comments.

Mr. Chairman, are you fully in accord with that?

Mr. MAST. Absolutely. That is the way the Committee will function.

Mr. MORELLE. Very good. Thank you.

I would join with the chair in regards to concerns about cybersecurity issues. I am grateful for that.

I did want to ask a question related to security. We have seen a number of Member threats and they continue to increase, something our Committee is intimately involved in as the oversight Committee over Capitol Police.

This may not be something, Mr. Chair, that you can answer right now in your new responsibility, but certainly as we move in the future, we want to make sure that the Committee is receiving the necessary security support from United States Capitol Police, Sergeant at Arms, not only when you are convening here in D.C., but if you do field hearings. As you travel about, please make sure that the chair and I are aware of any lapses, any concerns that you have. We are very, very focused on Member security.

I do not know if you want to speak to it now or withhold your comments, but this is something that is important to us.

Mr. MAST. Mr. Ranking Member, I would speak to that on two fronts.

We do not have a large budget for field hearings, really less than \$50,000. It is not a big part of the Foreign Affairs Committee. Our foreign travel comes through a different bucket when we are conducting congressional delegations abroad.

There are probably few that deal more with foreign terrorist organizations, cartels, foreign interests in a number of different ways, that absolutely puts our Members at a risk posed by international actors that, in many cases, are trained at a high level to conduct espionage, to conduct attacks, to conduct assassinations, to harm individuals, not just as the principals but our staffs and our families as well, and this is something 100 percent that we take seriously.

Mr. MORELLE. Very good.

Mr. MEEKS. Mr. Morelle, if I could add to that.

Mr. MORELLE. I would ask the Ranking Member to comment as well.

Mr. MEEKS. Yes. That is extremely important, because we have seen because of the issues that are coming before this Committee, Members have had threats on a consistent basis, telephone, through emails. Even individuals are demonstrating before their homes or threatening and graffitiing or doing other activities that endangers the Members and their families and make them feel insecure.

That Member security at this point in time, where we are with all that is going on around the world, is extremely important for both sides, to make sure that we secure the Members, and to the degree their homes and their families, that becomes really important.

Mr. MORELLE. I just encourage you to keep us posted of any concerns that you might have.

I would ask, Ms. Johnson, if you have any questions?

Ms. JOHNSON. Sure. I can ask a question. I cannot turn this mike on, however. There we go.

I noticed that there are a lot of vacant positions here on the employee roster. Do you have anticipations of filling those slots?

Mr. MAST. Some slots we have removed individuals from. We want to make sure that any individual is the best fit, capable of doing work at the highest possible level, and in the end not have anybody on that is not, let us say, pulling their weight.

We will make sure that every person that we bring on is vital to accomplishing the mission and not have individuals on that we do not need to accomplish the mission.

Ms. JOHNSON. If those funds are not utilized for staff then what happens to that?

Mr. MAST. I do not know if we can literally return the funds and what the mechanism is for literally returning, but if it is not used, more than happy to return any unallocated funds.

Ms. JOHNSON. I am trying to understand. I do not know. OK. Thank you.

Mr. MORELLE. Yield back.

Chairman STEIL. The gentleman yields back.

We thank our witnesses for appearing before us today. We look forward to your work this Congress.

We will pause while our next panel arrives.

Chairman STEIL. I welcome our next panel of witnesses, Chairman Walberg, Ranking Member Scott of the Education and Workforce Committee.

We are moving right along. We are going to manage our time 5 minutes for questions each, 5 minutes for opening statements.

I will recognize you, Chairman Walberg, for 5 minutes for the purpose of an opening statement.

STATEMENT OF THE HON. TIM WALBERG, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF MICHIGAN

Mr. WALBERG. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thanks to the Committee as well.

Chairman Steil, Ranking Member Morelle, thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify on behalf of the Committee on Education and Workforce.

Ranking Member Bobby Scott, who also is here today, and I share a view that the Committee is one of the most important in the House of Representatives because its jurisdiction not only affects every American, but also because the issues Americans are most concerned about fall into our Committee.

For example, the Committee has jurisdiction over ERISA and welfare plans for 156 million workers, retirees, and dependents. These plans' solvency and dependability are vital for many, and the Committee plans to ensure that ERISA funds are safeguarded.

The Committee has shared jurisdiction over healthcare. High-quality, low-cost healthcare is one of the most important issues for Americans, and it is a priority in Congress.

The Committee also plans to work alongside the Trump administration to return control of education to the States. It is critical this is done so in a way that supports students, teachers, parents, and not bureaucrats.

One approach we will use to gather information needed to make important legislative decisions is to hold multiple field hearings.

For example, the Committee intends to use field hearings to gather information about our Nation's K-12 schools, including antisemitic discrimination, declining academic achievement, and successful career and technical education and apprenticeship-based programs.

Also, the Committee may hold field hearings to shine a light on the academic rot and antisemitism at colleges that continue to refuse to uphold the law and protect their Jewish students, faculty, and staff.

Information gathering is not the only way the Committee intends to strengthen its toolbox. The Committee will be working to replace approximately a dozen staffers who left to join the Trump administration.

The Committee also recognizes the Speaker of the House has issued a pay order to raise maximum annual salary to a rate equal to Level II of the Executive Schedule, effective January 1, 2025. As such, the Committee will need funding to remain competitive in maintaining employees who have policy expertise, oversight experience, or both.

Additionally, the Committee anticipates the creation of several new positions, including a healthcare policy director, to help shepherd crucial legislation now that a Republican Senate may increase the likelihood that a greater number of bills may be favorably considered in both Chambers.

Filling staffing vacancies with motivated and experienced employees, adding new positions to meet anticipated expansion in legislation that will be sent to the President, increasing the number of hearings and markups, and holding multiple field hearings will require additional resources.

It is for these reasons that we respectfully submit the Committee's budget request. I am happy to answer any questions that you might have.

[The prepared statement of Representative Walberg follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF REPRESENTATIVE WALBERGBRYAN STEIL, WISCONSIN
CHAIRMANOne Hundred Nineteenth
Congress of the United States
House of RepresentativesJOSEPH D. MORELLE, NEW YORK
RANKING MINORITY MEMBERCOMMITTEE ON HOUSE ADMINISTRATION
1309 LONGWORTH HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515-6157
(202) 225-8281 | CHA.HOUSE.GOV

January 22, 2025

The Honorable Tim Walberg
Chairman
Committee on Education and the Workforce
2176 Rayburn HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Walberg:

To assist the Committee on House Administration when considering your Committee's Primary Expenses Resolution for the 119th Congress, you are requested to prepare your budget proposal using the enclosed forms. The proposal should contain funding requests for legislative years 2025 and 2026. The following documents should be included in your budget proposal:

1. Completed Budget Request Form and Attachments
2. Responses to Committee Funding Questions
3. Primary Expense Resolution (*Note:* Resolution must be introduced prior to the submission of your budget request. A sample resolution is included in the attached materials for your reference.)

Please submit your budget requests electronically to the Committee on House Administration (janet.schwalb@mail.house.gov) by close of business on Friday, January 31, 2025. Each Chairman and Ranking Minority Member will be asked to testify before the Committee on House Administration regarding the budget request. We will work with you to determine the date and time you are expected to testify as soon as the schedule is finalized.

If you have any questions or need assistance in preparing your budget request, please contact Janet Schwalb at janet.schwalb@mail.house.gov or (202) 225-8281.

Sincerely,



Bryan Steil
Chairman
Committee on House Administration

BGS/jgs
Enclosure

Chairman STEIL. Thank you, Chairman Walberg.
 Ranking Member Scott, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF THE HON. ROBERT C. "BOBBY" SCOTT, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF VIRGINIA

Mr. SCOTT. Thank you, Chairman Steil, Ranking Member Morelle, and Members of the Committee. Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today as Ranking Member with Chairman Walberg to speak in support of our bipartisan budget for the House Committee on Education and Workforce.

I want to thank Chairman Walberg for developing our Committee budget and supporting the requests for the 119th Congress, which represents an increase over the last Congress.

Although I believe the Committee deserves more, I think the increase is sufficient enough to carry out the Committee's legislative and oversight responsibilities.

Moreover, I support Mr. Walberg's desire to hold more remote hearings in Members' districts where our issues have an acute impact.

Mr. Walberg and I want to continue to be role models for our colleagues on how to work in a productive, bipartisan manner. In short, we want to show how you can disagree without being disagreeable.

Per the past practice, one-third of the budget will be allocated to the minority. It has been the practice of the Committee to provide the minority with autonomy over its budget allocation, and I am confident that Chairman Walberg will continue to honor the Committee's tradition.

Moreover, the Committee allocation would allow the minority to continue its work with the highest level of professionalism and expertise.

As you know, the Committee has jurisdiction over matters that impact all walks of life—children, students, workers, and older Americans—by having jurisdiction over all forms of education, workforce, including civil rights and employment and pensions, healthcare, and other issues, such as juvenile justice, child nutrition, and the Older Americans Act.

As such, it is imperative that we attract, develop, and retain a diverse, highly talented, and credentialed staff who can develop evidence-based policy to improve the lives of the American people.

During the 118th Congress, our robust staff worked to present 62 Committee hearings, report out 54 bills from the Committee, pass 32 bills through the House, and ultimately five bills signed by the President.

Moving forward in the minority, Committee Democrats and our staff will not rest. We pledge to work with Mr. Walberg to find areas of commonality, especially in areas of workforce development, juvenile justice, promoting transparency in healthcare billing, and hopefully many others areas.

We will press for the protection of workers' rights to organize, earn livable wages, and work in safe environments free from harassment and discrimination.

We will continue to promote equity in education so that students can learn in a safe, welcoming environment and access high-quality public education that prepares them for the modern economy.

We will also promote food security policies and expansion of affordable healthcare.

In sum, the minority on Education and Workforce remains committed to our legislative responsibilities to build an economy where everyone can succeed. I join Chairman Walberg in asking the House Administration Committee to support our request. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

I am happy to answer any questions, and I yield back.

[The prepared statement of Representative Scott follows:]

**PREPARED STATEMENT OF REPRESENTATIVE ROBERT C.
"BOBBY" SCOTT**



OPENING STATEMENT

House Committee on Education and Workforce
Ranking Member Robert C. "Bobby" Scott

Remarks for Ranking Member Robert C. "Bobby" Scott (VA-03)

House Administration Committee Hearing
1309 Longworth House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515
Tuesday, February 11, 2025 | 10:20 am

Good afternoon, Chairman Steil, Ranking Member Morelle, and members of the Committee. I thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today as Ranking Member with Chairman Walberg to speak in support of our bipartisan budget for the House Education and Workforce.

I want to thank Chairman Walberg for developing our Committee budget and supporting the request for the 119th Congress, which represents an increase over the last Congress. Although I believe our Committee deserves more, I think this increase is sufficient to still carry out the Committee's legislative and oversight responsibilities. Moreover, I support Mr. Walberg's desire to hold more remote hearings in Member's districts where our issues have an acute impact.

Mr. Walberg and I want to continue to be role models for our colleagues and work in a productive, bipartisan manner. In short, we can disagree without being disagreeable.

Per the past practice, one-third of the budget will be allocated to the Minority. It has been the practice of the Committee to provide the Minority the autonomy over its budget allocation. I look forward to Chairman Walberg continuing to honor this Committee's tradition.

Moreover, the budget allocation will allow the Minority to continue its work with the highest level of professionalism and expertise. As you know, the Committee has jurisdiction over matters that impact all walks of life—children, students, workers, and older Americans. As such, it is imperative that we attract, develop, and retain a diverse, highly talented, and credentialed staff who can develop evidence-based policy to improve the lives of the American people.

During the 118th Congress, this robust staff worked to present 62 Committee hearings, report out 54 bills from the Committee, pass 32 bills through the House, and ultimately had five bills signed by the President.

Moving forward in the Minority, Committee Democrats and my staff will not rest. We pledge to work with Mr. Walberg to find areas of commonality, specifically in workforce development, juvenile justice, promoting transparency in health care billing, and hopefully, many other areas.

We will press for the protection of workers' right to organize, earn livable wages, and work in safe environments free of harassment and discrimination.

We will continue to promote equity in education so that students can learn in a safe, welcoming environment and access a high-quality public education that prepares them for the modern economy.

We will also promote food security policies and the expansion of affordable health care.

In sum, the Minority on Education and Workforce remains committed to our legislative responsibility to build an economy where everyone can succeed.

I join Chairman Walberg in asking the House Administration Committee to support our request. Thank you for the opportunity to testify; I am happy to answer any questions.

Chairman STEIL. Thank you very much, Ranking Member Scott. Each side will have 5 minutes for the purpose of asking questions, and I will be yielding to my colleagues on our side. I recognize myself for 5 minutes.

Quick question out of the gate, so we are asking all chairs and Ranking Members as it relates to cybersecurity. It is asking will you commit to having your systems administrator meet with the House CIO team in the first quarter to discuss cybersecurity issues?

Mr. WALBERG. Yes.

Mr. SCOTT. Yes.

Chairman STEIL. Thank you very much.

First question to you, Chairman Walberg. I was reading through and noticed that you created new positions for healthcare policy. Could you elaborate on how those positions will further the work of Education and Workforce?

Mr. WALBERG. Well, in the past, while we had dealings in that area, we had no one specifically given toward attention to that matter. We know that working with the Senate, the opportunity to move things forward in that area, we would like to enhance our ability to compete and not be seen as the second cousin in the process.

We want to expand our capabilities. We want to give intentionality to it. Frankly, we want to make the Senate deal with the people's House in a way that they have not had to in the past.

Working with the Chairman over there, who I respect and have had a friendship over the years, yet he is a doctor. We are going to have to stay ahead of the game ourselves.

Chairman STEIL. Thank you very much.

Let me now yield to Representative Miller.

Mrs. MILLER. Good morning, Chairman.

You wrote about resurrecting field hearings in the 119th Congress and your request includes a substantial travel budget of \$1.1 million.

Why do you think it is so important that Committee Members conduct hearings outside of Washington, D.C.? Can you please elaborate on how these hearings will help you further your top agenda items for the Committee?

Mr. WALBERG. Thank you for that question.

I think it is absolutely a necessary thing to go out where the issues are. Our schools are not here in D.C. specifically and in the Halls of Congress.

What is going on in our colleges and universities with anti-semitism, we took aggressive action on that last year in the Committee, and we achieved some significant results. I think there are students, as well as trustees, administrators, and hopefully some faculty, that want us to see the reality of what is going on.

I think the same is true in the workplace. Where are the workers? They are back in the districts. I think for us to not simply bring in expert witnesses who we hear often from here around the Halls of Congress, but to hear from practitioners in the field will be extremely important.

That costs something, we understand that, and we will use it expeditiously. I think it would be important for both those individuals

involved in education and in workforce areas to see us come to them and hear directly from them.

Mrs. MILLER. Great. I hope to see you in Illinois.

Would you please describe the process for putting your budget submission together? What was the biggest factor you took into consideration when preparing your budget request?

Mr. WALBERG. I think reality of what we are contending with. I mean, if you look at the fact that we have lost 12 individuals from our Committee to administration, we get that. It is an exciting time with opportunities, and they are looking for the best people, and we think we had the best people.

We have to replace that. We look at what it is going to cost. When the Speaker of the House ups the ante with the maximum pay level we have to go to, that puts a reality in place.

That is what we are looking at. We are not trying to pad; we are trying to just do what is necessary. Even as we are attempting to be more efficient with electronic voting, to be able to work better with Committees, it is time to upgrade our efforts in the trenches as well.

Mrs. MILLER. I hope that the recent increase in the Speaker's pay order will help you retain your staff. Thank you.

I yield back.

Chairman STEIL. I will now yield to Ms. Lee.

Ms. LEE. Mr. Chairman, one of the things we do in the Committee on House Administration is try to help Committee chairs schedule hearings and do it in a way that is efficient and effective.

I note in your testimony that you mentioned that the Deconflict tool was not particularly useful. Could you share with us how we could improve that and make it a better tool for you?

Mr. WALBERG. I did not hear what—what did I say was not helpful?

Ms. LEE. The Deconflict tool for Committee hearing scheduling. How could we improve that so that it is more helpful to you?

Mr. WALBERG. Well, I think it comes down to the chairmen understanding that that is an effort to make things happen more efficiently. I think we have to accept the fact that while Bobby and I believe that this is an A Committee and it is most important for our people to be there, we are dealing with life situations, we have to conform to the necessities of each Committee.

That is why we have gone this year to electronic voting. We will be trying that tomorrow for the first time in Committee, so Committees' chairmen can work together and say, "Give me 30 minutes, I will have that done. You give me 20 minutes, I will have that done. We will get your people back to your Committee."

Chairman STEIL. Thank you very much.

I now recognize the Ranking Member, Mr. Morelle, for 5 minutes for the purpose of asking questions.

Mr. MORELLE. Thank you.

First of all, congratulations, Mr. Chair. As a former Member of your Committee, I am excited for the work that you both do and all the Members do.

Mr. WALBERG. You are welcome back.

Mr. MORELLE. I am happy to hear about your thoughts about expanding some of the work that the Committee does on healthcare

policy, which I think is very, very necessary. Good for you for taking that on, both of you.

I do want to go back to something I think the Ranking Member, my friend, Mr. Scott, mentioned, which is the two-thirds/one-third split.

Mr. Chair, I just want to make sure that I understand whether or not you are prepared to give unrestricted access to the minority for the dollars that they control in the budget.

Mr. WALBERG. I believe that has been the policy over the years, and I do not plan to change that. I think Bobby and I, No. 1, we are good friends.

Mr. MORELLE. Yes.

Mr. WALBERG. We are good friends enough that we can agree to disagree at times, but we can also agree to work together.

Mr. MORELLE. Very good.

Mr. Scott, are you comfortable that that is the arrangement you have?

Mr. SCOTT. That has been the tradition of the Committee, and I do not expect a change.

Mr. MORELLE. Good.

I would like you both to comment a little bit, I know that the administration has talked about dismantling the Department of Education, clearly something that comes under your jurisdiction.

If you could just talk a little bit about how the resources here will help ensure adequate oversight of administrative policy when it comes particularly to the Department of Education.

Mr. WALBERG. We are article I. We have the most significant powers in the Constitution. We are not going to relinquish that. We will take all the help we can, resources from the outside, new eyes on the subjects, new capabilities using AI, algorithms, whatever.

In the end, I am committed as Chairman of this Committee to make the decisions based on the reality of what we can do with House of Representatives. While I may share some of the similar goals and ideas of this administration, I understand that in the end 218 votes are needed here in the House and then the Senate has the challenge as well. What can we do to foster Education and Workforce in the most positive way possible in the reality that we have?

Mr. MORELLE. Mr. Scott, do you have any thoughts on the subject of adequate oversight, whether you have the resources?

Mr. SCOTT. I am sorry. Say again?

Mr. MORELLE. Whether you feel there are adequate resources to conduct appropriate oversight.

Mr. SCOTT. I would rather have more, but I think we can fulfill our mission with the budget as it is.

Mr. MORELLE. Good.

Mr. Chairman, thank you for your comments on article I responsibility, something that I think we all need to be really mindful of at this point.

Just I want to close my questions, particularly in light of the fact that you intend to do many field hearings. I want to just make sure that you feel you have adequate security support from the United States Capitol Police and the Sergeant at Arms. I have asked this

of the previous and I will ask each of the chairs and Ranking Members.

In this case, Mr. Chairman, you have not had any field hearings yet, but I would urge you to just make sure you stay in close contact with Chairman Steil and myself.

We have oversight of the Capitol Police, and I am increasingly concerned about threats against Members and staff, both here in D.C. and as we travel. I would just ask for your commitment to stay in touch with us particularly as it relates to security.

Mr. WALBERG. I appreciate the offer, and we indeed will, even having issues in my district this week where we have had to deal with that security issue on several occasions. Yes, we are going to do what is necessary to make sure that our team that goes out is as safe as we possibly can be, and if we cannot be assured of that, we will not be going out.

Mr. MORELLE. Very good.

Ms. Johnson.

Ms. JOHNSON. Mr. Chairman, I just want to applaud you on bolstering healthcare policy in the Committee. I think there is a lot of ERISA reform that can happen in that regard, and I applaud your assertion of the priority of the House over the Senate. I think that is outstanding.

I do have a quick question, and I see that you have a civil rights counsel as a vacant position. Do you intend on fulfilling that role?

Mr. WALBERG. The civil rights counsel—

Ms. JOHNSON. Yes, sir.

Mr. WALBERG [continuing]. position?

Ms. JOHNSON. Yes, sir.

Mr. WALBERG. We will do what is necessary to administer appropriately the civil rights issue and concerns, including using the Justice Department as necessary, as well.

Ms. JOHNSON. Yes. You have a budget item to hire a civil rights counsel in the budget, and I was just wondering if you are planning on hiring and fulfilling that role.

Mr. WALBERG. I think that is up to the administrative Committee. If you give us the resources to do that, we will do that.

Ms. JOHNSON. OK. Thank you. I yield back.

Chairman STEIL. The gentleman yields back.

That concludes our questions.

Chairman Walberg, Ranking Member Scott, we appreciate you being here today. We look forward to the really important work of your Committee.

We will pause while the panel exits and the new panel arrives.

Chairman STEIL. We believe Ranking Member Huffman is just moments away, so what we are going to do is we will begin that panel and he will slide in, I think, in the next 5 minutes.

I now welcome our next panel, Chairman Westerman, Ranking Member Huffman.

Appreciate you both being here.

We are going to keep this reasonably informal on the questioning side. Each side will have 5 minutes. We will give you each 5 minutes for your opening statements.

I will recognize you, Chairman Westerman, for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF THE HON. BRUCE WESTERMAN, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF ARKANSAS

Mr. WESTERMAN. Well, thank you, Chairman Steil and Ranking Member Morelle and distinguished Members of the Committee. Appreciate you holding this hearing today to discuss funding for Committees of the House of Representatives. Ranking Member Huffman and I are pleased to submit the Committee on Natural Resources' budget request for the 119th Congress. I do recognize the challenging task that you have in allocating resources among Committees and appreciate the opportunity to testify before you.

Before I outline our budget request, I do want to familiarize you with the makeup of the Natural Resources Committee.

The Committee may not be the most well-known, but we are a high-performing Committee with jurisdiction that touches the lives of every American. The Committee's five Subcommittees have jurisdiction over American energy and minerals, Tribal and insular affairs, Federal lands and waters, wildlife and fisheries, as well as oversight of the Department of the Interior and certain agencies within the Departments of Commerce and Agriculture.

We are one of the busiest Committees in the House. During the 118th Congress, we reported 116 bills out of Committee, held 152 hearings and 21 full Committee markups. We also passed over 90 bills on the House floor, many of which were bipartisan bills that went on to become law.

Last Congress, we also held 14 field hearings—that is the most of any House Committee—including a field hearing in Guam where we examined the malign influence of the Chinese Communist Party in the Indo-Pacific region, a critical discussion as Congress worked to reauthorize the Compacts of Free Association with the Freely Associated States of Palau, the Federated States of Micronesia, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

In the first 19 days of the 119th Congress, the Natural Resources Committee has already moved 16 bills across the House floor. Yet, while we are historically at the top of the list for legislative activity and have jurisdiction spanning from the Arctic Circle to the Marianas Trench and across all 50 States and territories, we fall to number 12 amongst Committees when it comes to funding levels.

We are requesting a budget increase of 10 percent for this 2-year period based on the authorized levels for 2024. This funding will allow the Committee to attract and retain talented staff, fund a robust agenda of field hearings and site visits, and replace our two Committee servers, which is estimated to cost \$100,000.

Natural Resources has 69 staff positions for majority, minority, and nonpartisan staff. Our extremely hardworking and ambitious staff has expertise on issues vital to our Nation, including energy and critical minerals production, forest management, catastrophic wildfires, management of our Nation's fisheries and ocean resources, and the Federal Government's trust responsibility to Indian Tribes.

Having the means to recruit and retain dedicated staff is paramount to our work on behalf of the American people and to the Committee's success.

A priority for me this Congress is for the Natural Resources Committee to continue bringing Congress to the people. Issues involving natural resources are ones you really need to experience outside the Beltway.

We have our first field hearing scheduled for April 4 in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, to examine matters relating to healthcare and economic development in Indian Country.

The best way for Congress to make good policy decisions is to get into the field and understand matters on a local level.

With jurisdiction spanning from forests all across the country to the deserts of the Southwest and from the North Slope of Alaska to the far-off islands of the South Pacific, robust funding for travel is needed to implement our ambitious agenda and afford as many Committee Members as possible the opportunity to participate.

Maintaining an aggressive legislative agenda supported by skilled staff and executing the Committee's field agenda will require investments in both the Committee's personnel and travel budgets.

Thank you again for the opportunity to develop and explain this budget request. You do have a critical task, and your decision will impact the work we do at the Committee on Natural Resources.

I ask for your favorable consideration and look forward to answering any questions you may have. I yield back.

[The prepared statement of Representative Westerman follows:]

**PREPARED STATEMENT OF REPRESENTATIVE BRUCE
WESTERMAN**

**House Committee on Natural Resources
Funding Request for the 119th Congress**

*Statement of Chairman Bruce Westerman
before the
Committee on House Administration*

February 11, 2025

Chairman Steil, Ranking Member Morelle, and Members of the Committee, thank you for holding this hearing today to discuss funding for committees of the House of Representatives. Ranking Member Huffman and I are pleased to submit the Committee on Natural Resources' budget request for the 119th Congress. I recognize the challenging task you have in allocating resources among committees and appreciate the opportunity to testify before you.

Before I outline our budget request, I want to familiarize you with the makeup of the Natural Resources Committee. The Natural Resources Committee may not be the most well-known, but we are a high performing committee with jurisdiction that touches the lives of every American.

The committee's five subcommittees have jurisdiction over American energy and minerals, tribal and insular affairs, federal lands and waters, wildlife, and fisheries, as well as oversight of the Department of the Interior and certain agencies within the Departments of Commerce and Agriculture.

We are one of the busiest committees in the House. During the 118th Congress, we reported 161 bills out of committee, held 152 hearings and 21 full committee markups. We also passed over 90 bills on the House floor, many of which were bipartisan bills that went on to become law.

Last Congress we also held 14 field hearings – the most of any House committee - including a field hearing in Guam where we examined the malign influence of the Chinese Communist Party in the Indo-Pacific region, a critical discussion as Congress worked to reauthorize the Compacts of Free Association with the Freely Associated States of Palau, the Federated States of Micronesia, and the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

In the first 19 days of the 119th Congress, the Natural Resources Committee has already moved 16 bills across the House floor.

Yet while we are historically at the top of the list for legislative activity and have jurisdiction spanning from the Arctic Circle to the Marianas Trench and across all 50 states and territories, we fall to number 12 amongst committees when it comes to funding levels.

We are requesting a budget increase of 10% based on authorized levels for 2024. This funding will allow the committee to attract and retain talented staff, fund a robust agenda of field hearings and site visits, and replace our two committee servers which is estimated to cost \$100,000.

Natural Resources has 69 staff positions for majority, minority, and nonpartisan staff. Our extremely hardworking and ambitious staff has expertise on issues vital to our nation, including energy and critical minerals production, forest management, catastrophic wildfires, management of our nation's fisheries and ocean resources, and the federal government's trust responsibility to Indian tribes. Having the means to recruit and retain dedicated staff is paramount to our work on behalf of the American people and to the committee's success.

A priority for me this Congress is for the Natural Resources Committee to continue bringing Congress to the people. Issues involving natural resources are ones you really need to experience outside the Beltway. We have our first field hearing scheduled for April 4th in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, to examine matters relating to health care and economic development in Indian Country.

The best way for Congress to make good policy decisions is to get into the field and understand matters on a local level. With jurisdiction spanning from the forests of the northeast to deserts of the southwest and from the north slope of Alaska to the far-off islands of the South Pacific, robust funding for travel is needed to implement our ambitious agenda and afford as many committee members as possible the opportunity to participate.

Maintaining an aggressive legislative agenda supported by skilled staff and executing the committee's field agenda will require investments in both the Committee's personnel and travel budgets.

Thank you for the opportunity to develop and explain this budget request. You have a critical task, and your decision will impact the work we do at the Committee on Natural Resources. I ask for your favorable consideration and look forward to answering any questions you may have.

Chairman STEIL. Thank you, Chairman Westerman.
Ranking Member Huffman, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF THE HON. JARED HUFFMAN, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Mr. HUFFMAN. Thank you. Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Morelle, Members of the Committee. I am glad to be here with Chairman Westerman to ask for your support for our Natural Resources Committee's budget for the 119th Congress.

I am honored to take on the new responsibility of serving as Ranking Member of this important Committee. It is difficult to overstate the importance of the work this Committee does.

Our jurisdiction is vast. It includes vital issues that go to the heart of so many people's lives. We oversee the people's public lands and waters, including for conservation, recreation, development, and the prevention and management of wildfires.

We are stewards of the sovereignty of the Tribal Nations that were here long before this country was founded. We have the responsibility of promoting the self-determination and well-being of the U.S. territories and the Freely Associated States. We are at the center of the Federal efforts toward environmental justice, and we are a vital component of any response to the climate crisis.

Our Committee oversees national parks, wildlife refuges, fisheries, our water resources in places of severe drought. We conduct oversight of the Endangered Species Act, the National Environmental Policy Act, and an array of other bedrock statutes.

As you see in our budget request, we also value the importance of traveling to communities that are impacted by the decisions that we make and to see for ourselves the lands and the waters that the American people have entrusted to our stewardship.

I am also cognizant that our funding resources come from taxpayers, and we should use them efficiently. Our Committee is usually one of the most active on legislation in the Congress.

In my short time as Ranking Member, I have already managed two bills on the floor and two sets of suspensions. The Members and staff of this Committee are incredibly productive and work very hard.

Although—and this will not come as a shock—Chairman Westerman and I have some disagreements on policy, strong ones, but we do agree on the importance of our shared work and that sustaining this level and quality of activity requires a full roster of majority, minority, and nonpartisan staff.

We want to attract and keep the most knowledgeable, skilled, and dedicated public servants, and the budget resources we are requesting will help us to do the best possible work that we can for the American people.

I also know Mr. Westerman understands the importance of resources for the minority, having himself been Ranking Member previously.

We have a lot of work ahead of us. I want to thank you again for allowing us to present our budget request today. Chair Westerman and I are pleased to join together in this request, and thank you for your consideration.

I yield back.

[The prepared statement of Representative Huffman follows:]

**PREPARED STATEMENT OF REPRESENTATIVE JARED
HUFFMAN**

The Honorable Jared Huffman, Ranking Member, Committee on Natural Resources

Testimony Before the Committee on House Administration

February 11, 2025

Chairman Steil, Ranking Member Morelle, and Members of the Committee, thank you.

I'm glad to be here with Chairman Westerman to ask for your support for the Natural Resources Committee's budget for the 119th Congress.

I'm honored to take on the new responsibility of serving as the Ranking Member of the Committee. It is difficult to overstate the importance of the work of our Committee. Our jurisdiction includes vital issues that go to the heart of so many people's lives.

We oversee the People's public lands and waters, including for conservation, recreation, development, and the prevention and management of wildfires.

We are stewards of the sovereignty of the tribal nations that have been here since before our country was founded. We have the responsibility of promoting the self-determination and well-being of the U.S. territories and the Freely Associated States.

We are at the center of the federal efforts toward environmental justice, and we are a vital component of any response to the climate crisis.

Our Committee oversees our National Parks, Wildlife Refuges, fisheries, and our water resources in places of severe drought. We conduct oversight of the Endangered Species Act, the National Environmental Policy Act, and an array of other bedrock statutes.

As you see in our budget request, we also value the importance of traveling to communities that are impacted by the decisions we make in our Committee and to see for ourselves the lands and waters the American people have entrusted to our stewardship. I also am cognizant that our funding resources come from taxpayers and that we should use them efficiently.

Our Committee is usually one of the most active on legislation in the Congress. In my short time as Ranking Member, I have already managed two bills on the floor and two sets of suspensions. The Members and staff of the Committee are always extremely productive.

Although Chairman Westerman and I frequently disagree on policy — and quite strongly — we do agree on the importance of our shared work, and that sustaining this level and quality of activity requires a full roster of Majority, Minority, and nonpartisan staff.

We want to attract and keep the most knowledgeable, skilled, and dedicated public servants. The budget resources we are requesting will help us do the best possible work for the American People.

I also know that Mr. Westerman understands the importance of resources for the minority, having been Ranking Member previously.

We have a lot of work ahead of us.

Thank you again for allowing us to present our budget request today. Chairman Westerman and I are pleased to join together on this request, and we appreciate the consideration.

Thank you.

Chairman STEIL. Thank you very much. We appreciate both of your testimony.

I will recognize myself for 5 minutes for the purpose of asking questions. I will ask one question out of the gate before I yield to Mr. Carey.

One question we are asking all chairs and Ranking Members as it relates to cybersecurity is will you, Chairman Westerman and the Ranking Member, both commit to having your systems administrators meet with the House CIO team in the first quarter to discuss cybersecurity issues?

Mr. WESTERMAN. Yes, we are already doing that. We are working with the House cybersecurity team members. We welcome the opportunity to meet with the CIO or anybody else when it comes to cybersecurity.

Chairman STEIL. Thank you very much.

Ranking Member, you agree, as well?

Mr. HUFFMAN. I would welcome that, Mr. Chairman. Thank you.

Chairman STEIL. Thank you very much.

I will now yield to Mr. Carey.

Mr. CAREY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

One of the things that you mentioned in your questionnaire, and I am just trying to go through it, was the field hearings and the onsite educational opportunities with the increased oversight with the visits among some of your highest priorities.

I would agree with this, because I think if you are looking—having been in the mining industry myself, not being able to be on the ground, that is something that you just cannot teach in a classroom. I think it is really important.

One of the things that when I was going through your testimonies, are there any additional resources that your Committee would need to perform some of these onsite functions at all?

Mr. WESTERMAN. Well, thank you, Representative Carey.

The main thing is just funding to get more people out into the field and to do more field visits. We are not always doing a field hearing when we go to the field. A lot of it is educational. We did a trip last year where we went, and we went to the Yell forest and spent a day out in the forest learning about good forestry practices.

We travel and we pick up information that is beneficial to us formulating policy. When we do have field hearings, the only thing I can think of that we would need extra is with the House Recording Studio. To have the House Recording Studio there gives a very much higher quality video stream than if we are trying to make do.

When we are in in-session weeks and we have a field hearing, it is tough to get the House Recording Studio to get out into the

field and get set up for the hearing. If there is some way to bolster the resources of the House Recording Studio, that could help us out.

Mr. CAREY. I yield back.

Chairman STEIL. The gentleman yields back.

I yield to Dr. Murphy.

Dr. MURPHY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Just a question just about field hearings, because I think your Committee, among some of the others, are most germane about going out and seeing what is going on in the country and into our beautiful land.

Do you guys have any plans to go out and look at the California wildfires, the conditions that made them worse, et cetera, et cetera, just as something to help prevent disasters again in the future?

Mr. WESTERMAN. Dr. Murphy, we actually had a field hearing at Yosemite in this previous Congress, and we find ourselves in California quite often because there are so many resource issues out there.

Do not have anything on the books to go to southern California right now, but it is certainly an opportunity to, if the need came up, we would welcome going out there. I am more focused on going to areas that have not burned yet and looking at ways to keep things from happening like happened down in southern California.

Dr. MURPHY. Excellent.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Yield back.

Chairman STEIL. The gentleman yields back.

I will now recognize the minority, Ms. Johnson, for 5 minutes for purposes of asking questions.

Ms. JOHNSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

One of the things that we are just wanting to confirm is the two-thirds/one-third split, to make sure that the minority will have full, unrestricted access to the resources that you need. Will you both commit to that?

Mr. WESTERMAN. Yes. As Ranking Member Huffman said, I have been in the Ranking Member position before, and I know it is important to have funding when you are in the minority, and I would not want to set a precedent for something in the far, far distant future.

Mr. HUFFMAN. I have received that assurance, and I believe Mr. Westerman, so we are happy with it. Not happy with it, I mean, we are three seats short of a majority here and we are getting one-third, but we will live with it.

Ms. JOHNSON. The other issue is, when you have your field hearings, we just want to make sure that you are safe and secure and that you will advise the Committee on your needs of Capitol Police to make sure that you have adequate safety when you are out and about.

Unfortunately, we do not live in the safest of times. We have people out there that want to do us harm. We just want to make sure that you keep the Committee apprised and that you advise us of any security needs that you may have.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Yes, that is very important, and we coordinate with Capitol Police and usually with various amounts of local law enforcement.

If we are in a national park, you have got the Park Service Police, but then you have also got local law enforcement in the areas that we go. We are very cognizant of that, and we will continue to coordinate with the Committee and Capitol Police on that.

Ms. JOHNSON. Yes. Well, I applaud you for getting out and about. I think too often there is a huge disconnect from the country and D.C., and it is great that so many of the Committees are wanting to expand their field hearings. I think the role you do in particular, that is fantastic. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Chairman STEIL. The gentlewoman yields back.

I appreciate you both testifying before us today. You have very important work on the Committee on Natural Resources and appreciate you coming in with us today.

We will pause while the witness panel exits.

Chairman STEIL. We welcome our next panel. We have Chairman Green and Ranking Member Thompson from the Homeland Security Committee.

As you will see, we will manage our questions on each side, managing between the minority and majority. See if the mike volume gets back up. We will also recognize you each for 5 minutes for an opening statement.

Starting with you, Chairman Green, for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF THE HON. MARK E. GREEN, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF TENNESSEE

Mr. GREEN. Sounds good.

Thank you, Chairman Steil and Ranking Member Morelle and Members of the Committee. I thank my Ranking Member for the work that he has put in over the years, 20—how many years have you been on this Committee?

Mr. THOMPSON. Since it has been created.

Mr. GREEN. It has been a while.

I want to thank you for the leadership of this Committee and the work that you guys do to make the business of the people's House possible.

The decisions you make have a real and tangible impact on the ability of all congressional Committees to carry out the legislative duties in this House, and your efforts are greatly appreciated by all of us at the House Committee on Homeland Security.

In the 119th Congress, the Committee on Homeland Security will build upon our work from the previous Congress to oversee and improve the Federal Government's third-largest department.

The Department of Homeland Security and its component agencies—including Customs and Border Protection, the Coast Guard, the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, the Transportation Security Administration, the Secret Service, and Immigration and Customs Enforcement—play critical roles in securing the homeland land, maritime, and cyber borders, countering terrorist threats, combating transnational criminal organizations, and responding to major disasters.

Across all of these agencies and support components DHS has over 260,000 employees and a budget of more than \$70 billion, in

addition to nearly \$40 billion in disaster relief and supplemental appropriations for FEMA in Fiscal Year 2024 alone.

The threats to the homeland are ever-present and come from many different actors. In just the last year we have witnessed major cyber attacks, such as Salt Typhoon; an assassination attempt that nearly took the life of President Trump in Butler, Pennsylvania; last month's terrorist attack in New Orleans; and devastating natural disasters that have destroyed homes in communities in North Carolina, Florida, California, and in my home State of Tennessee.

By supporting the Homeland Security Committee you will enable the Committee to take an active role in overseeing and evaluating the efforts of DHS to safeguard the American people.

In the 118th Congress, the Homeland Security Committee held a total of 87 hearings and ordered 57 bills to be recorded with a favorable recommendation. Over the next 2 years the Committee plans to continue its agenda of developing and advancing legislation on issues ranging from border security and counterterrorism to strengthening our cyber workforce and protecting our Nation's critical infrastructure.

The Committee's budget request focuses on recruiting and retaining critical talent to support an aggressive agenda of legislative and oversight activities across the Committee's jurisdiction.

Additionally, the Committee on Homeland Security requires resources to travel to engage with DHS personnel serving on the front lines of operations to protect the homeland in a variety of roles and agencies. We are planning an active schedule of site visits and investigative travel to inform our legislative work with the observations and information gained from these visits.

Furthermore, during the 118th Congress events such as the attempted assassination on President Trump in Butler and the aftermath of hurricane damage in North Carolina necessitated site visits to be arranged at short notice for Members of the Committee and staff in order to further the Committee's oversight responsibilities following these situations.

Investing in the Committee on Homeland Security will equip the Committee to carry out its critical legislative role with respect to the important mission of DHS.

In a world where the United States faces serious and complex threats to the homeland, this mission to protect the American people requires a strong commitment to ensuring that the Department of Homeland Security is prepared to carry out the responsibilities entrusted to it by Congress and act as a sound steward of taxpayer dollars.

As we pursue this task, we will manage our resources responsibly, with an aim toward maximizing the value that we contribute to Congress and the security of the American people.

Thank you for your consideration of our funding request, and I look forward to answering any questions you may have about this request.

Chairman STEIL. Thank you, Chairman Green.

Ranking Member Thompson, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF THE HON. BENNIE G. THOMPSON, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI

Mr. THOMPSON. Thank you, Chairman Steil and Ranking Member Morelle. I appreciate the opportunity to come before you to speak in support of the Committee on Homeland Security's funding request.

I have been on the Committee for over 20 years. What was started in 2003 as a temporary select committee formed to oversee the newly created Department of Homeland Security has matured into a standing panel with broad oversight and growing legislative responsibilities.

In the Committee's earliest days, our work was primarily focused on bolstering security and information sharing to prevent future attacks by foreign terrorist organizations like al-Qaida.

Today, with the threat landscape far more divisive and complex, our oversight responsibilities have expanded to include DHS' efforts to detect, prevent, and respond to threats posed by domestic violent extremists, transnational criminal organizations and hostile nation-states, cybersecurity, the security of our air, land, and sea borders, the security of air, rail, mass transit, pipelines, and all other transportation modes, emergency preparedness response and recovery, nuclear, biological, radiological, chemical, and explosive threats.

We have conducted site visits throughout the country, including visits to the border. We have also held field hearings in various Members' districts.

This Congress, with additional resources, we are well positioned to build on the Committee's longstanding record and to increase our oversight of DHS' efforts in the field as well as international engagement with foreign partners.

We know that we cannot predict when a natural disaster or terrorist attack on our soil will occur, so increased resources will improve our ability to conduct timely, robust oversight in the field when necessary.

I can say with certainty that Democratic Members on the Committee are concerned about border security and will travel to the border to speak with local stakeholders and Border Patrol agency.

Also, given the recent terrorist attack in New Orleans, the Committee must have more oversight of soft targets, vehicular attacks, and terrorism inspired by ISIS.

Further, given the devastating disasters, such as tornadoes in North Carolina and the wildfires in California, the Committee will need to continue to direct its attention to oversight of disaster recovery and response.

Mr. Chairman and Mr. Ranking Member, this year marks the 20th anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, and disaster response and resiliency is still an ongoing issue in many areas of the country, including my district, which is still rebuilding from a tragic storm that occurred in March 2023. I hope the Committee can contribute to creating more pathways for equitable response for disasters.

On the legislative front, an increase in budgetary resources will help ensure the Committee has adequate resources to advance timely legislative initiatives.

Going into the 119th Congress, we will be looking to build upon achievements from previous Congresses. I do not need to tell you that it takes a lot of staff and resources to carry all the great oversight and legislative work we do. Those staff deserve to be compensated appropriately for their work.

With respect to CHS, I am fortunate to have Hope Goins lead the talented and diverse professionals who make up the Democratic staff.

Thank you for allowing me to testify in support of the budget proposal Chairman Green submitted. The resources sought are critical to ensuring the Committee can continue to effectively carry out its responsibility as the primary authorizer of the Nation's third-largest Federal department.

With that, I yield for any questions.

Chairman STEIL. Thank you very much. The gentleman yields back.

I appreciate both of your testimony, Chairman Green and Ranking Member Thompson. I will begin. I yield to myself for 5 minutes for the purpose of asking questions. I will be yielding amongst my colleagues.

Out of the gates, I have asked every chair and Ranking Member the same question, which is: Can you both commit to have your systems administrator meet with the House CIO team in the first quarter to discuss cybersecurity issues?

Mr. GREEN. Well, that is a great question. Thank you for asking it. The answer is an absolute yes.

Cybersecurity is one of my big issues in this current role and a big concern for me. I often consider it our Nation's, I guess, fifth border, fourth border. It is critical. Obviously we have had Congressmen compromised before with the Microsoft hit. We will work very closely with the CIO.

Chairman STEIL. Thank you.

Yes, also, Mr. Thompson?

Mr. THOMPSON. Yes.

Chairman STEIL. Thank you.

Chair Green, I am going to want to dive in because you have a lot of travel scheduled. You also have done a lot of travel last Congress. I want to get your feedback on your experience and the importance of having boots on the ground, not only to inform staff, but Members as well, about the issues that are taking place at the U.S.-Mexico border.

Could you share with us some of your perspective of the importance of having boots on the ground both at the staff and Member level?

Mr. GREEN. Yes, absolutely. I am informed by my years in the military of the leader's reconnaissance, going to the ground, looking at the ground before you plan the mission.

Obviously, you cannot sometimes in the military, so you rebuild the sand table or you rebuild the building and do your models in order to train and prepare for what you have to do.

There is nothing replacing the leader's boots on the ground. I can cite a very specific example when it came to the Butler assassination attempt. Standing where the President stood and looking at that building, every single person—and it was a huge group of us

from the Committee that went, Republicans and Democrats—standing in that site, going, “Oh, my gosh, this was a massive failure.”

In our oversight and in our policy responsibilities to the country, being able to stand there and look at it is critical.

We did a field hearing at the border. That was one of our first activities last Congress and it was very helpful. Here in a few weeks we will be doing a trip to Palo Alto for cybersecurity.

Chairman STEIL. Thank you very much.

I will yield to Representative Bice.

Mrs. BICE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

In your request you mentioned that it would be helpful if the House provided more Committee-specific type of training, as most of the training that is put on is actually geared toward personal offices.

What type of Committee training would you be interested in seeing?

Mr. GREEN. One of the challenges for us, for example, and this is just an example, cybersecurity, is AI and how AI is being used to pit machine against machine.

Our staff, both on the right and the left, have to grapple with how AI is being utilized. We can bring witnesses and the staff get educated that way. It would be really good to be able to send folks to the MIT course, the 4-to 6-week course at MIT.

These types of trainings make a huge impact for the staff for two reasons. One, it makes them better at doing their jobs. Two, it helps us retain them.

When we invest in our people, they want to stay on the team. I believe the Ranking Member would agree with me on that.

That is one example of some Committee-specific training that could happen for our folks.

Mrs. BICE. Thank you.

With that, I yield back.

Chairman STEIL. We could have a broader conversation, but some of the adjustments we have made inside the reop may provide some of that funding opportunity as it relates to staff, which I think is a real reason that we are making those types of adjustments, to make sure that we have adequate funding for staff training.

Before our time expires, I just want to touch base in particular on the importance of the pay scale. In particular, when we look at the administration, maybe as we have seen in other Committees, maybe it is the case in your Committee as well, where Members of your Committee, experienced staff members, are now joining the Trump administration, on how that compensation piece is impacting your ability to retain staff.

Mr. GREEN. Well, it is not just the new administration or the change over there. There is a labor workforce shortage in the country.

Folks who work on Committees, I have discovered this in my time, my few years here, I came in with you, of course, and we are going on 7 years now, but our Committee staff seems to be more broadly developed and our—or, I am sorry, our congressional staff, our Committee staff, they become experts and they become highly

sought after. Their salaries have to adjust to keep pace with what is happening in corporate America.

Not just the administration, although that is an issue, we have a challenge because we have experts in fields that become very marketable for salaries that are much higher than what we probably could ever attain, but that buffer becomes service to the country.

At some point an individual goes, "Gosh, this could be life changing for my family. I have served. I am going to go work."

The more competitive we can make it, the better folks we get to keep.

Chairman STEIL. Thank you very much.

I will now recognize the Ranking Member, Mr. Morelle, for 5 minutes to ask questions.

Mr. MORELLE. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, thank you, Mr. Ranking Member, for being here.

I want to start with the—I know the traditional split among Committees is two-thirds majority/one-third minority. I also am cognizant of the fact that most Committees allow the minority unrestricted access to their funds. I want to make sure, Mr. Chairman, that that is something that you will continue to recognize.

Mr. GREEN. Absolutely.

Mr. MORELLE. Mr. Thompson, are you confident, have an agreement with the Chairman?

Mr. THOMPSON. We have an agreement.

Mr. MORELLE. I would like to ask you both to just comment on the requested budget providing you with the adequate resources to be able to enhance and build oversight capabilities. A lot going on in terms of Homeland Security, as you both rightly identified.

I continue to want to make sure that our article I responsibilities of oversight are protected, our prerogatives are protected as a Congress, and we are doing everything we can to make sure that adequate oversight exists.

If you could talk about within your budget request how comfortable you feel that you have the resources to continue to provide that article I oversight responsibility.

Mr. GREEN. The budget request we put in this cycle is reflective of a great deal of oversight that happened last time, and we are committed to continuing that same level of oversight and it is informed by what we did last cycle. I think the answer to that is, yes, we will be very aggressive in that area.

Mr. MORELLE. I wonder if the Ranking Member has any comment in that regard.

Mr. THOMPSON. Well, we have a standing Oversight Committee. It is staffed. In conjunction with that, sometimes Members and staff need to go out in the field, see what is occurring. Some of it occurs with respect to disasters, which we know will happen, we just cannot predict when.

We need to have the resources to do the necessary oversight, especially with disasters. With cyber coming nonstop, we need to have the responsibility to be as fast and nimble in that response.

Mr. MORELLE. Very good.

Last thing. As it relates to—and you have done a number of field hearings. I want to make sure that you feel comfortable, first of all, with security arrangements for Members and staff traveling. It has been increased throughout assessments that we have gotten from the U.S. Capitol Police as well as the Sergeant at Arms.

Any concerns about that? If not, just an open invitation to make sure you communicate, both of you, with the chair and with me so that we can make sure that Members and staff, as you travel around the country, are safe. I do not know if you wanted to comment on that at all.

Mr. GREEN. No, I cannot thank you enough for that question. Let me apologize for mispronouncing your name at the beginning.

But, yes. No, I cannot thank you enough for that question. We think about that all the time.

Your security posture should be driven by the threat at the time. I think if either of us have a concern, we are going to come talk to both of you and get the resources that we need.

Mr. MORELLE. Very good.

I meant to identify Ms. Johnson is also a Member of the Homeland Security Committee.

Mr. GREEN. She is.

Mr. MORELLE. She is very busy. Our newest Member here. She is serving on three different Committees. I wanted to make sure that she and Mrs. Torres, if they have any questions.

Mrs. TORRES. I do not have a question. I just want to say thank you for the work that you do.

I was once a Member of the Homeland Security. I like to sleep at night. I like to talk about my work. I left that Committee because I just did not like being in classified briefings.

You have to work really hard to keep us safe in the homeland. I hope that this one area where we can work in a bipartisan way.

Thank you again, Chairman and Ranking Member Thompson.

I yield back.

Ms. JOHNSON. I just want to make a comment on the importance of the field hearings. I had the privilege to go to New Orleans on a field hearing, a mission just to inspect the Super Bowl, and I found it immensely helpful. I learned so much to meet with all the various law enforcement agencies to see how hard they are working to keep us safe and the security there. It came off without a hitch. It was very informative for me.

Just to say how significant these hearings are. I am looking forward to getting to the border and some of these other issues. I just think they are really important. I am really glad that you, Mr. Chairman and Mr. Ranking Member, are facilitating those opportunities for us.

I yield back.

Mr. GREEN. Yes, we have our border boot camp for any Member. All the new Members will get a personal invitation. Really anyone who wants to go can go. That is March 17 through 19.

Mr. MORELLE. I yield back, Mr. Chair.

Chairman STEIL. The gentleman yields back.

We appreciate your testimony, Chairman Green, Ranking Member Thompson. Really important work before you this Congress. We appreciate you being here.

We will pause while the witness panel exits.

Chairman STEIL. We are joined by our next panel, the Science, Space, and Technology Committee.

We welcome you, Chairman Babin, and congratulations on your Chairmanship.

Ranking Member Lofgren, welcome back to the Committee on House Administration's hearing room. It is good to have you here. We miss you here on the Committee on House Administration.

We will recognize each of you for 5 minutes for an opening statement. Then we will do 5 minutes of questioning on each side and then yield between our colleagues.

I will now recognize you, Chairman Babin, for 5 minutes for an opening statement.

**STATEMENT OF THE HON. BRIAN BABIN, A REPRESENTATIVE
IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF TEXAS**

Mr. BABIN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate it. It is good to be here with you all. Appreciate it.

Ranking Member Morelle, it was good to sit next to you at the inauguration the other day too.

Mr. MORELLE. You too, sir.

Mr. BABIN. Yes, sir.

Chairman Steil, Ranking Member Morelle, thank you so much for the opportunity to testify today regarding the budgetary needs of our House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology, also known as SST. It is a privilege to serve as Chairman of a Committee dedicated to advancing America's leadership in science, in innovation, in space exploration.

I appreciate your consideration of our request for increased funding to support our Committee's vital work going forward.

I want to begin by thanking my colleague, Ranking Member Zoe Lofgren from California, for her cooperation in building out the SST budget request.

Thank you and your staff for working with us.

Our shared commitment to ensuring the Committee operates effectively is essential, and I deeply appreciate her partnership. Under my leadership, I will absolutely maintain to Ranking Member Lofgren and the minority that they will have a full one-third share of the Committee's budget and staff allocations.

SST oversees Federal research, space policy and energy innovation, critical areas for national security and economic competitiveness. When I look at your membership up there I know there are a lot of folks that are interested in those issues.

To fulfill our mission, we must recruit and retain highly qualified staff, conduct thorough investigations, and engage with stakeholders nationwide.

One of the most pressing challenges that we face is the need to offer competitive salaries to attract and retain the top talent, especially in the fields that we have jurisdiction over.

Staff with science, engineering, and research backgrounds demand higher salaries, and the job market for these individuals is highly competitive.

The reality is, without appropriate compensation, this Committee will lose experienced professionals to the private sector or over to

the executive branch, which specifically carves out special compensation packages for individuals with these backgrounds.

Our Committee must be able to recruit and retain qualified staff with the expertise necessary for sound policymaking and oversight. Failing to offer competitive salaries will weaken SST's ability to legislate effectively on extremely complex issues.

A key component of our budget request is funding for increased travel, including two field hearings per Subcommittee for the 119th Congress. Given the rapidly evolving nature of this Committee's issues, we also plan to retain funding for two additional field hearings so the Committee can promptly respond to an emergency or to a critical event.

I strongly believe that firsthand engagement is critical, especially as we work to inform and include new Members of the Committee. Field hearings allow us to interact directly with scientists, engineers, and industry leaders, providing deeper insights into challenges and opportunities.

From research laboratories to commercial space flight facilities, travel is vital to have effective oversight. As Chairman, I am committed to being a responsible steward of our taxpayers' moneys. Every request that we make is based on a clear need to enhance the Committee's ability to accomplish our mission, and that is to serve the American people.

We are not seeking additional funding frivolously, but to ensure that we fulfill our oversight and legislative responsibilities at the highest standards. The issues within the Science, Space, and Technology Committee's jurisdiction are more pressing now than ever before. Rapid advancements in artificial intelligence, space exploration, quantum computing, and energy innovation require proactive legislative efforts to keep up with our enemies, if you want to say.

These fields are not just about technological progress. They are about national security. They are about economic prosperity and maintaining America's leadership in global science and innovation.

For these reasons, as laid out by my formal budget submission, I respectfully request an increase in the Committee's budget. This investment will allow us to retain top tier staff, conduct essential travel and field hearings, and provide the necessary resources to advance American leadership in science and technology.

I appreciate so much your time, Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, and look forward to working with you all to ensure that our Committee has the resources necessary to continue the important work that we do.

With that, I will welcome your questions.

[The prepared statement of Representative Babin follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF REPRESENTATIVE BRIAN BABIN**Chairman Brian Babin
Testimony
SST Budget Request Justification**

*Committee Funding for the 119th Congress
House Administration Committee*

Chairman Steil, Ranking Member Morelle, thank you for the opportunity to testify today regarding the budgetary needs of the House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology (SST). It is a privilege to serve as Chairman of a committee dedicated to advancing America's leadership in science, innovation, and space exploration, and I appreciate your consideration of our request for increased funding to support the committee's vital work.

I want to begin by thanking my colleague, Ranking Member Zoe Lofgren, for her cooperation in building out the SST budget request. Our shared commitment to ensuring the committee operates effectively is essential, and I deeply appreciate her partnership. Under my leadership, I will absolutely maintain that Ranking Member Lofgren and the Minority will have a full one-third share of the committee's budget and staff allocations.

SST oversees federal research, space policy, and energy innovation – critical areas for national security and economic competitiveness. To fulfill our mission, we must recruit and retain highly qualified staff, conduct thorough investigations, and engage with stakeholders nationwide.

One of the most pressing challenges we face is the need to offer competitive salaries to attract and retain top talent. Staff with science, engineering, and research backgrounds demand higher salaries, and the job market for these individuals is highly competitive. The reality is, without appropriate compensation, this committee will lose experienced professionals to the private sector or executive branch, which specifically carves out special compensation packages for individuals with these backgrounds. Our committee must be able to recruit and retain qualified staff with the expertise necessary for sound policymaking and oversight. Failing to offer competitive salaries will weaken SST's ability to legislate effectively on extremely complex issues.

A key component of our budget request is funding for increased travel, including two field hearings per subcommittee for the 119th Congress. Given the rapidly evolving nature of this committee's issues, we also plan to retain funding for two additional field hearings so the committee can promptly respond to critical events.

I strongly believe that firsthand engagement is critical – especially as we work to inform and include new members of the committee. Field hearings allow us to interact directly with scientists, engineers, and industry leaders, providing deeper insights into challenges and opportunities. From research laboratories to commercial spaceflight facilities, travel is vital to effective oversight.

As Chairman, I am committed to being a responsible steward of taxpayer dollars. Every request we make is based on a clear need to enhance the committee's ability to serve the American people. We are not seeking additional funding frivolously, but to ensure we fulfill our oversight and legislative responsibilities at the highest standard.

The issues within the Science, Space, and Technology Committee's jurisdiction are more pressing than ever. Rapid advancements in artificial intelligence, space exploration, quantum computing, and energy innovation require proactive legislative efforts. These fields are not just about technological progress; they are about national security, economic prosperity, and maintaining America's leadership in global science and innovation.

For these reasons, as laid out in my formal budget submission, I respectfully request an increase in the committee's budget. This investment will allow us to retain top-tier staff, conduct essential travel and field hearings, and provide the necessary resources to advance American leadership in science and technology. I appreciate your time and consideration and look forward to working with you to ensure our committee has the resources needed to continue this important work.

Thank you, and I welcome any questions you may have.

Chairman STEIL. Thank you, Chairman Babin.

Ranking Member Lofgren, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

**STATEMENT OF THE HON. ZOE LOFGREN, A REPRESENTATIVE
IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA**

Ms. LOFGREN. Thank you, Chairman Steil and Ranking Member Morelle. It is good to be back in the hearing room where we had so many wonderful experiences.

At the outset, I would like to say that Chairman Babin and his staff collaborated with me and my staff in formulating this request and I fully support it. Because we are in agreement, I will keep my remarks brief.

The Science Committee bore the brunt of some very steep Committee budget cuts from the year 2010 to 2013. The Committee's budget was cut by over 26 percent, and that is even not accounting for inflation, although in recent years the House Admin Committee has tried to consistently increase the Science Committee's budget, which is very much appreciated.

The Science Committee's budget in real dollars has only just began to recover from those cuts. Last year was the first year where our budget was as high as the budget in 2010, and that is in real dollars, not adjusted for inflation.

The budgets of the Federal agencies that the Science Committee oversees have seen very large increases in recent years to increase regular appropriations.

While I was a strong supporter of this increased funding, we need to be good stewards of the taxpayers' money for these programs. Quite frankly, I think that will be hard to do without bringing on additional professional staff to the Committee to conduct oversight.

The last point I would like to make, and it is the same that our Chairman has made, is that the quality of the staff is also a factor in our ability to conduct oversight. Due to the highly technical programs the Science Committee oversees, we need people with specialized expertise. I will say the majority of my staff have advanced degrees or backgrounds in the technical fields that they oversee.

We simply have to be able to offer candidates competitive salaries, if we want to retain our current staff and attract qualified professionals to the Science Committee.

As just one example, as the Chairman has mentioned, we are heavily focused on the issue of artificial intelligence. This is a very serious competitive priority for our country with regards to Communist China.

Bringing on qualified staff who understand this issue is not cheap, but it is vital for us to ensure our public policy keeps us competitive in this emerging field.

The budget that Chairman Babin and I have jointly submitted would allow the Committee to fully staff up and conduct the skilled oversight of the technical programs within our jurisdiction and, as has been mentioned, would also allow for increased site visits to our Nation's various laboratories and field centers, which is critically important for effective oversight.

The minority side alone has nine new Members this Congress, and it is important for Members and staff to undertake oversight visits to Government research facilities and laboratories under the jurisdiction of the Committee.

It has been years since Members and staff have visited some of those facilities, and it is important that our policy initiatives be informed by an understanding of the actual work being undertaken at our Federal laboratories and research universities.

I want to thank you for allowing me to testify. I am happy to answer any questions. I yield back.

[The prepared statement of Representative Lofgren follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF REPRESENTATIVE ZOE LOFGREN

Committee Budget Testimony for the Committee on House Administration

Ranking Member Zoe Lofgren

Committee on Science, Space, and Technology

Chairman Steil and Ranking Member Morelle, thank you for having me here today to testify about the Science, Space, and Technology Committee's budget request for the 119th Congress. I would like to say at the outset that Chairman Babin and his staff collaborated with me and my staff in formulating this request, and I fully support it. Because we are in agreement, I will keep my remarks brief.

The Science Committee bore the brunt of some very steep committee budget cuts from 2010 to 2013. The Committee's budget was cut by over 26%, not accounting for inflation. Although in recent years, the Committee on House Administration has tried to consistently increase the Science Committee's budget, which is much appreciated, the Science Committee's budget in real dollars has only just begun to recover from those cuts. Last year was the first where our budget was as high as the budget in 2010 - in real dollars, not inflation adjusted.

The budgets of the Federal agencies that the Science Committee oversees have seen very large increases in recent years through increased regular appropriations as well as additional monies found in bills like the Chips and Science Act and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law. While I was a strong supporter of this increased funding, I also want to be a good steward of taxpayer funding for these programs. Quite frankly, I think that will be hard to do without bringing on additional professional staff to the Committee to conduct oversight.

The last point I'd like to make is that the quality of the staff is also a factor in our ability to conduct oversight. Due to the highly technical programs the Science Committee oversees, we have the need for people with specialized expertise. The majority of my staff have advanced degrees or backgrounds in technical fields. We simply have to be able to offer candidates competitive salaries if we want to continue to retain our current staff and attract qualified professionals to the Science Committee. As just one example, we are heavily focused on the issue of artificial intelligence. This is a very serious competitive priority for our country with regards to Communist China. Bringing on qualified staff who understand this issue isn't cheap, but it's vital for us to ensure our public policy keeps us competitive in this emerging field.

The budget that Chairman Babin and I have jointly submitted would allow the Committee to fully staff up and conduct the skilled oversight of the technical programs within our jurisdiction. This budget request would also allow for increased site visits to our nation's various laboratories and field centers which is also critically important for effective oversight. The Minority side alone has nine new Members this Congress. It is important for Members and staff to undertake oversight visits to government research facilities and laboratories under the jurisdiction of the Committee in the 119th Congress. It has been years since Members or staff have visited some of those facilities, and it is important that our policy initiatives be informed by an understanding of the actual work being undertaken at our federal laboratories and our research universities.

I want to thank you again for having me testify today, and I'm happy to answer any questions.

Chairman STEIL. Thank you, Ranking Member Lofgren.

We will now take 5 minutes each for the majority and minority for questions, yielding between our colleagues. I will now recognize myself for 5 minutes for the purpose of asking questions.

A question that I have asked every chair and Ranking Member, simple yes or no, as relates to cybersecurity, will you commit to having your systems administrator meet with the House's CIO team in the first quarter to discuss cybersecurity issues?

Mr. BABIN. Absolutely yes.

Ms. LOFGREN. Yes.

Chairman STEIL. Thank you very much.

I will yield to Dr. Murphy.

Dr. MURPHY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Congratulations, Dr. Babin. You will do a great job. I miss my days back on Science and Technology. Actually, given my past, I love a good science thing.

CODELS. As you guys move forward, we have seen the requests more and more. You have asked for \$1.7 million; you used \$100,000 last session. Can you tell us a little bit more about why you feel this is needed, what you plan to do, et cetera?

Mr. BABIN. Absolutely. You are asking me, right?

Dr. MURPHY. You are the Chairman.

Mr. BABIN. We are absolutely in need of more travel. Last Congress, in the 118th, our Committee chair was injured severely by a bull and I do not think that we took a single congressional delegation trip. I am not sure. I think we might have had some field hearings, but the travel was absolutely basically zero. You can confirm that if you would.

We need to, with what is going on worldwide, when it comes to space, when it comes to science, when it comes to the technological developments and advancements by searching—I said enemies a while ago, by our adversaries—we certainly need to get out and travel and find out weather reporting, meteorology satellites, you name it. We have to go and get our feet on the ground and talk to the folks that are necessary to get this information to help. It is vital information that is national security.

Dr. MURPHY. Thanks, Mr. Chairman.

I yield back.

Chairman STEIL. The gentleman yields back.

Anybody else?

I will jump in. Let me follow up with you on that, Chairman Babin.

Mr. BABIN. Sure.

Chairman STEIL. Ranking Member Lofgren, you are welcome to join in here.

When we think about retaining staff, in particular in the space of AI, I think that is an area that is absolutely critical and it is an area you are studying. It is a challenge to find staff members with expertise in that space. How do you think about retention of staff in that regard?

Mr. BABIN. Well, this is something that is extremely important, and we addressed it in our opening statements, Mr. Chairman.

I think that this is a cutting-edge development that if we fail to take the lead—or keep our lead, I should say, I think we are in the

lead right now—but we have adversaries that are absolutely intent on replacing and supplanting us as the No. 1 power, and AI is going to be huge.

We have to have the personnel working for us that can address these developments so that we can keep abreast, not only abreast, but out in front of these developments. We have very good staff members. We have Members who sit on our Committee who are well versed in AI. I am not going to tell you that I am an expert in AI, but I can tell you that I am well aware of the importance of it as we move forward.

We use AI every day. Most people do not even realize the things that we do in everyday life that absolutely has that function.

We have got to keep the right people working at the Committee, Mr. Chairman and Members. That is why we have asked for this increase in our budget.

Chairman STEIL. Thank you.

Ms. LOFGREN. I would just add that on the minority side we have individuals with advanced degrees in the area of AI, quantum, as well as fusion, which are the three elements where we are in a race with China. They love the work. They are committed to public policy. They also have to support their families.

We have to at least have a stab in the direction of competitiveness. They could all earn a lot more in the private sector. I am glad that they are willing to stick with us. I will say our staffs work very well together. The Republican staff is also very skilled.

Chairman STEIL. Thank you very much.

I yield back.

I recognize the Ranking Member for 5 minutes.

Mr. MORELLE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Mr. Chair. Congratulations. I did indeed appreciate the time we got to spend together on inauguration day. As a member of CJS on the Appropriations Committee, we have many mutual interests. I appreciate that. Of course it is always great to see my friend and the former chair of the Committee here, Ms. Lofgren.

I want to just quickly ask some questions I have asked each of the Committee chairs as it relates to, and I think, Mr. Chairman, you mentioned the two-thirds/one-third split. I just want to make sure that you are going to continue the tradition of allowing independence of the minority to spend their money in the way that they feel is appropriate.

Mr. BABIN. Yes, sir.

Mr. MORELLE. Thank you.

I am interested. I talked a little bit about our article I responsibilities as oversight. Clearly in the case of the administration, with particularly someone who is very, very involved in space, space, space, space, with SpaceX, who is also now a special governmental employee, whether you feel you have adequate resources on the Committee to discharge your article I responsibilities of oversight.

I know there could be conflicts and challenges. Do you feel this adequately funds your ability to dispense our responsibilities as Congress for oversight of the administration, particularly in the critical areas you mentioned.

Mr. BABIN. I think our budget is sufficient for that, yes.

Mr. MORELLE. Very good.

Ms. Lofgren, does the Ranking Member have any comments?

Ms. LOFGREN. Well, we have had a fire hose experience here these last few weeks. I do think that the training we were recently offered on whistleblowers is very helpful because certainly there are people who want to explain what they are seeing inside the science enterprise. We have had a hearing just last week and we are having another one tomorrow on where we are in the science enterprise.

I would be lying if I did not note that I have some grave concerns about some of the activities in the last few weeks and their impact on our competitiveness. We are in a race with the Communist Party of China, and kneecapping the science enterprise is not going to help us win that fight.

I do think, I will say in the last Congress I would say all but one of the bills in the Committee was passed unanimously. We worked very closely to have bipartisan agreement on each and every matter.

The Chairman and I talk frequently and we have every hope that that past experience was not just the last Congress but decades of bipartisanship and the Committee will be able to be sustained in this Congress, although I am sure there will be challenges.

Mr. MORELLE. Yes. I thank you both for that. There is no question, particularly in the area of AI and the emergence of quantum computing, when those two technologies sort of come together, that is an incredibly powerful tool. We have to be the ones to harness that before any of our adversaries do. That is clearly a game changer. I appreciate that.

The last question I have is just as it relates to field hearings, and you may not have had run into this yet, but I guess this is as much an invitation as it is a request for information. We are increasingly concerned with threats against Members and staff. As you are planning your field hearings, we would love that you communicate with the Chairman and myself.

We have oversight over the Capitol Police and the Sergeant at Arms. We want to make absolutely certain Members and staff have the resources they need and that we have thought about field hearings to protect people.

There is a little more protection just built into being here in D.C., although it is not without risk. Certainly as you are moving about, we want to make sure that have you adequate security. Frankly, if there are any concerns you have, now would be the time to express it. Certainly moving forward I would urge you to continue to communicate with us.

Mr. BABIN. Absolutely.

If you do not mind—

Ms. LOFGREN. Go ahead.

Mr. BABIN [continuing]. take a dig at that, if you do not mind.

Yes, I think today we have increased threats all around the world. Of course some of the issues and subjects that we are going to be looking at absolutely have to do with those types of threats.

One of you all had mentioned a while ago we want to go not only to have field hearings in our National Laboratories, NASA centers,

but at these National Labs, I do not think I have visited one, quite frankly. We have neglected that. We want to make sure that we go.

There have been some great developments that have happened at our National Laboratories. We want to stay on top of that. To do our duty in oversight, I think it is imperative that we take these field hearings to this, and some of our Subcommittees will be doing so.

Ms. LOFGREN. Could I flag just one potential issue? The Third Street Southwest entrance to the Ford Building, which is where the minority staff is housed, has been closed for several Congresses.

What that means is the staff has to walk around the building, stand in line. Especially during inclement weather, that is not fun. It is to enter the building and it has impact on staff morale.

I do not think it is the very safest way for cleared staff to get in. Either opening the door, at least in the morning, so people can get in might be a good help. If someone could take a look at that, I think that would be super.

Mr. MORELLE. OK. We will take a look at it.

Chairman STEIL. Yield back?

Mr. MORELLE. Thank you. Yes, I yield back.

Chairman STEIL. The gentleman yields back.

Agreed, more than happy to look into it. Good to see you still have a little House Admin going on in the brain. That is great. We miss you here on the Committee.

We will pause while the panel exits and the next panel arrives.

Ms. LOFGREN. Thank you.

Mr. BABIN. Thank you all.

Chairman STEIL. I welcome our next panel to the Committee.

Chairman Moolenaar, Ranking Member Krishnamoorthi, thank you both for joining us here today. We will recognize each of you for 5 minutes for an opening statement. We will have 5 minutes on the majority and the minority for questions shared between the Members in total.

I will now recognize you, Chairman Moolenaar.

STATEMENT OF THE HON. JOHN R. MOOLENAAR, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF MICHIGAN

Mr. MOOLENAAR. Thank you, Chairman Steil and Ranking Member Morelle and Members of the Committee. We appreciate this opportunity to testify on the funding request for the select committee.

The select committee's recent authorization by the full House reflects the reality that the Chinese Communist Party represents an unprecedented urgent threat to our national security, our economy, and our values.

I am proud of the work that my teammate, Ranking Member Raja Krishnamoorthi, and I have advanced to combat this threat on behalf of the American people. Raja's clear-eyed recognition of the CCP threat, coupled with his courage and creativity, make him the ideal Ranking Member.

Through close collaboration and diligence, we have leveraged the full range of available tools to investigate, conduct oversight, de-

velop actionable policy recommendations, and inform the American people of the high stakes involved.

Our work is illuminating the true nature of the CCP and its dangerous actions, forging bipartisan consensus and resulting in critical steps to safeguard our Nation.

Our funding request for the 119th Congress reflects this strong foundation. It also reflects a vision for further delivering on our mandate to counter the economic, technological, security, and ideological threats posed by the CCP.

As we carry out our mission, the Ranking Member and I are committed to being faithful stewards of our resources and doing right by the taxpayers through efficient and effective operation of the select committee.

Our budget request for this new Congress has the benefit of experience gained in the first 2 years when we built a new Committee from scratch.

What we learned last Congress about our scope of work, staffing demands, and operational rhythm has helped inform a request that responsibly meets the Committee's operational requirements. This includes having a bipartisan staff with specialized expertise and robust experience in the relevant areas, which comes at a higher cost in salaries to attract and retain talent.

Additionally, this year and next our investigative work, central to the Committee's mandate, will increase in scale, scope, and complexity. The request therefore accounts for necessary personnel and related resources, including some new investigative tools.

With the resources provided to us, we will work diligently to hold the CCP accountable for its threatening actions, including fueling the fentanyl crisis and engaging in malign trade practices.

Two, stem the flow of American capital and technology boosting the Chinese military buildup.

Three, strengthen deterrence against the CCP's military aggression.

Four, address the CCP's brutality and human rights abuses.

Five, position the United States to win the competition against the CCP.

This task is a significant one, but I am confident that we have the Members, the staff plan, and partnerships with the standing Committees of jurisdiction to help deliver national security wins for the American people.

In closing, let me also express deep appreciation on behalf of the select committee for your vital work. Under your leadership, important tasks such as making our legislative branch more cost effective and efficient are in capable hands.

I want to thank you for your time and your consideration of our funding request. I look forward to answering any questions you might have.

[The prepared statement of Representative Moolenaar follows:]

**PREPARED STATEMENT OF REPRESENTATIVE JOHN R.
MOOLENAAR**

**Testimony of Chairman John Moolenaar Before the Committee on House Administration
*Biennial Funding Request for the Select Committee on the Strategic Competition Between the
United States and the Chinese Communist Party***

February 11, 2025

Chairman Steil, Ranking Member Morelle, and Members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify on the biennial funding request for the Select Committee on the Strategic Competition Between the United States and the Chinese Communist Party in the 119th Congress.

The Select Committee's recent reauthorization by the full House reflects the reality that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) represents an unprecedented, urgent threat to our national security, our economy, and our values.

I am proud of the work that my teammate, Ranking Member Raja Krishnamoorthi, and I have advanced to combat this threat on behalf of the American people. Through close collaboration and diligence, we have leveraged the full range of available tools to investigate, conduct oversight, develop actionable policy recommendations, and inform the American people of the high stakes involved. Our work is illuminating the true nature of the CCP and its dangerous actions, forging bipartisan consensus, and resulting in critical steps to safeguard our nation.

Our funding request for the 119th Congress reflects this strong foundation. It also reflects a vision for further delivering on our mandate to counter the economic, technological, security, and ideological threats posed by the CCP. As we carry out our mission, the Ranking Member and I are committed to being faithful stewards of our resources and doing right by the taxpayers through efficient and effective operation of the Select Committee.

Our budget request for this new Congress has the benefit of experience gained in our first two years when we built a new committee from scratch. What we learned last Congress about our scope of work, staffing demands, and operational rhythm has helped inform a request that responsibly meets the committee's operational requirements. This includes having a bipartisan staff with specialized expertise and robust experience in the relevant areas, which comes at a higher cost in salaries to attract and retain talent. Additionally, this year and next, our investigative work—central to the committee's mandate—will increase in scale, scope, and complexity. The request therefore accounts for necessary personnel and related resources, including some new investigative tools.

With the resources provided to us, we will work diligently to (1) hold the CCP accountable for its threatening actions, including fueling the fentanyl crisis and engaging in malign trade practices, (2) stem the flow of American capital and technology boosting China's military buildup, (3) strengthen deterrence against the CCP's military aggression, (4) address the CCP's brutality and human rights abuses, and (5) position the United States to win the competition against the CCP.

The task is a significant one. But I am confident we have the Members, the staff plan, and partnerships with the standing committees of jurisdiction to help deliver national security wins for the American people.

In closing, let me also express deep appreciation on behalf of the Select Committee for your vital work. Under your leadership, important tasks such as making our legislative branch more cost-effective and efficient are in capable hands.

Thank you for your time and consideration of our funding request. I look forward to answering any questions you may have.

Mrs. BICE.

[Presiding.] Thank you, Chairman Moolenaar.

At this time I recognize Ranking Member Krishnamoorthi for 5 minutes for opening remarks.

STATEMENT OF THE HON. RAJA KRISHNAMOORTHY, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF ILLINOIS

Mr. KRISHNAMOORTHY. Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you to all of you for your distinguished service.

I want to thank my good friend and colleague, Chairman John Moolenaar, for his bipartisanship and just the way he has conducted this Committee.

Thank you so much for everything you do. Thank you to your staff as well. Thank you to mine.

The mandate of this Committee as written in the House rules package is to help study, investigate, and make policy recommendations on our strategic competition with the CCP.

I am proud to say that over the course of the last Congress our Committee conducted 18 hearings, produced five groundbreaking investigative reports, three bipartisan policy recommendation reports, and significant legislative measures that meaningfully advanced our strategic competition.

Our work is not yet finished. In fact, the recent Salt Typhoon attacks—and I hope that all of you pay close attention to this particular issue—only remind us of how we must be prepared even more so now than ever for the competition ahead, as well as aggression on the part of the CCP, technologically, economically, and militarily.

With the evolving work in mind, we work very closely with the Chairman and the majority staff on a host of issues, including this budget, to have it reflect the demands of the work ahead.

As we work together to meet the challenges and the mandate posed to this Committee, I am very pleased to join Chairman Moolenaar in supporting this funding request, and I believe that it reflects the sobering realities of the threats posed by the CCP.

This competition will be the defining geopolitical challenge of the 21st century, from unfair trade practices and supply chain vulnerabilities—and thank you to Ranking Member Morelle for pointing out some of these challenges in his own district, and he has worked very closely with our staff, and thank you so much—to intellectual property theft, to human rights violations, we must remain vigilant in defending American interests, protecting workers, and upholding our values.

At the same time, our approach must continue to be measured, strategic, and solutions oriented, rooted in strengthening America, working with our partners and allies, and always taking a powerful position in defending America.

The CCP poses major economic and security threats to our Nation, as well as to democracy and prosperity throughout the world. Those dangers are illustrated by the CCP's threats to Taiwan, its escalating posture in the South China Sea, and its numerous human rights abuses, including the Uyghur genocide, which again I respectfully request all of you to pay close attention to. It is something that Chairman Moolenaar and I talk about at every possible venue.

Using the resources provided to this Committee, we will study and develop the policy tools we need to continue to protect our Nation and outcompete the PRC by rebuilding our industrial capacity, upskilling our workforce, cooperating with our partners, and countering the CCP's nonmarket policies that hurt American workers.

We will pursue this agenda while rejecting the dangers of xenophobia and division. Thank you, Chairman Moolenaar, for your strong condemnation of any kind of xenophobia, discrimination, hate, or prejudice toward anybody, including Asian Americans.

The tasks before this Committee are significant, but Chairman Moolenaar and I know that the budget that we have proposed will enable our Committee to continue to deliver the actionable policy recommendations necessary to ensure security and prosperity for our country.

I want to say thank you again to Chairman Steil, thank you to Ranking Member Morelle, to all the distinguished Members of this Committee, and thank you to our staffs.

I yield back. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Representative Krishnamoorthi follows:]

**PREPARED STATEMENT OF REPRESENTATIVE RAJA
KRISHNAMOORTHY**

Draft Testimony

Thank you, Chairman Steil, Ranking Member Morelle, and members of the committee. We are grateful for the opportunity to testify before you today regarding the Select Committee on the Strategic Competition between the United States and the Chinese Communist Party, and our budget submissions for the 119th Congress.

I want to begin by thanking Chairman John Moolenaar for his leadership, as well as his collaboration. The mandate of this committee, as written in the House Rules package, is to help study, investigate, and make policy recommendations on our strategic competition with the CCP. I'm proud to say that over the course of the last Congress, our committee conducted 18 hearings, produced 5 groundbreaking investigative reports, 3 bipartisan policy recommendation reports, and significant legislative measures that meaningfully advanced our strategic competition. But our work is not yet finished. In fact, the recent Salt Typhoon attacks on our critical infrastructure and the ongoing threats of a 'second China Shock' threaten the well-being of American's privacy and American workers.

With this evolving work in mind, we've worked very closely with the Chairman and the Majority staff on a host of issues, including this budget, to have it reflect the demands of the work ahead. As we work together to meet the challenges and the mandate posed to this committee, I'm very pleased to join Chairman Moolenaar in supporting this funding request. And I believe that it reflects the sobering realities of the threats posed by the CCP.

Our competition with the Chinese government is THE defining geopolitical challenge of the 21st century. From unfair trade practices and supply chain vulnerabilities to intellectual property theft and human rights violations, we must remain vigilant in defending American economic interests, protecting workers, and upholding democratic values. At the same time, our approach must continue to be measured, strategic, and solutions-oriented—rooted in strengthening America, working with our partners and allies, and always taking a powerful position in defense of American values.

The CCP poses major economic and security threats to our nation as well as to democracy and prosperity around the world. Those dangers are illustrated by the CCP's threats against Taiwan's democracy, its escalating posture in the South China Sea, and its numerous human rights abuses, including transnational repression of people here in the United States who have the temerity to advocate against, for instance, the genocide against Uyghur people in the People's Republic of China. As the committee focuses on bolstering our diplomatic ties and deterring CCP economic coercion and military aggression, travelling for field hearings and investigations will be a critical part of our work.

Using the resources provided to this committee, we will study and develop the policy tools we need to continue to protect our nation and outcompete the PRC by rebuilding our industrial capacity, upscaling our workforce, cooperating with our partners across the Indo-Pacific region, and countering the CCP's non-market policies that hurt American workers. We will pursue this agenda while rejecting the dangers of xenophobia and division in America, which are not only destructive, but would play into the CCP's hands. Our competition is between us and the CCP; it is not a quarrel with the Chinese people or people of Chinese origin.

The tasks before this committee are significant, but Chairman Moolenaar and I know that the budget that we have proposed will enable our committee to continue to deliver the actionable policy recommendations necessary to ensure the security and prosperity of our nation in the face

of serious threats from the CCP. Thank you again for your time and consideration of our committee's requests, and I yield back.

Chairman STEIL.

[Presiding.] Thank you, Ranking Member Krishnamoorthi, Chairman Moolenaar, for being here.

We will now take 5 minutes each between the majority and minority. I will recognize myself for 5 minutes.

We have asked every chair and Ranking Member the same question, yes/no, as it relates to cybersecurity. Will you commit to having your systems administrator meet with the House's CIO in the first quarter of this year to discuss cybersecurity?

Mr. MOOLENAAR. Yes.

Mr. KRISHNAMOORTHY. Yes.

Chairman STEIL. Thank you very much.

I will yield to Representative Bice.

Mrs. BICE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I do not think that there is a more important Committee for oversight or working together with our CIO to ensure the safety and security of your systems than this particular select committee.

If I can just jump in, you are requesting a 20-percent increase to your budget. You noted it in the budget request that you intend the spending increase to be a one-time bump and really to correct the baseline. Can you briefly let us know why that increase is necessary?

Mr. MOOLENAAR. Sure. When the Committee was established and the scope was established the starting point was let us build a team and these are some of the areas we want to be involved in. Over time we have learned the importance of these investigations.

For instance, on the fentanyl investigation that we did, that required people who spoke Mandarin, investigating Chinese websites, people who understand our intelligence operations. The experience in a wide variety of areas has become very clear.

I think the initial estimates did not reflect the expertise that is required for investigations and knowledge of whether it is the financial markets or trade policy, such a broad range of things that this Committee is looking at, that this is really a correction, if you will.

Mrs. BICE. Thank you. I yield.

Chairman STEIL. Let me build on that a little bit, Chairman Moolenaar, because the work you and Ranking Member Krishnamoorthi are doing is really important.

Inside this grown jurisdiction as it started with then-Chairman Gallagher working with the Ranking Member, what else are you utilizing in this broader jurisdiction, trips, field hearings, investigative work, site visit, in addition to the staff?

Mr. MOOLENAAR. Yes. We have done different field hearings, we have done roundtables in different sectors. Because one of key things is to understand, whether it is the automotive, agriculture, biotech, even entertainment, we spent some time talking with film producers about how they are self-censoring just so that they can show their movies in China, but then also the threats of retaliation.

Each of these areas. The automotive sector was very revealing considering what China is doing to subsidize their automotive industry. These trips around our country that have these various sectors have been very, very key.

Chairman STEIL. Thank you very much.

I will yield back and recognize the Ranking Member for the purpose of asking questions.

Mr. MORELLE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Mr. Ranking Member, for being here and for all the great work that you do.

A special thanks to both of you for the conversations we have had relative to liquid crystal displays in other forms, most of which now are being produced in China, whereas I think 12 percent a decade ago, now over 50 percent are. You have both been kind to listen to the thoughts I have about it and I appreciate all the work you do.

I want to start, generally Committees follow a two-third/one-third distribution. This Committee does as well. Mr. Chairman, are you committed to allowing independence of the Democratic side when it comes to spending their third of the budget?

Mr. MOOLENAAR. Absolutely.

Mr. MORELLE. OK. Mr. Krishnamoorthi, are you confident that you have got an agreement with the chair on that subject?

Mr. KRISHNAMOORTHY. Yes.

Mr. MORELLE. Thank you.

The select committee is interesting in that most of the Committees that have jurisdiction, authorizing jurisdiction within the Congress, are to some degree siloed, but you are crosscutting. You go across many different areas when you talk about competition with China. Trade policy, tariffs, the question of military readiness, supply chain. There is a lot happening right now, even within the executive departments, that will touch on these subjects.

Do you feel you have adequate resources in this budget to make sure your article I responsibilities of oversight and the implications of the decisions being made vis-à-vis China, that those are adequate?

Mr. MOOLENAAR. I believe with this budget request that we will meet the needs. To build on your point, this is going to require an all-hands-on-deck House, Senate, White House working together for a bipartisan united front in addressing this threat.

I believe oversight is going to be very important. I feel that this Committee has been probably the most bipartisan effort that I have been involved in here in Congress and with the goal of winning this competition. We need kind of our best foot forward.

I believe this request meets the needs. It is an increase, as you pointed out. I feel, based on what we have learned these past 2 years and to be a force multiplier for the Committees of jurisdiction in each of these specialized areas, I think this is a good goal.

Mr. MORELLE. Mr. Krishnamoorthi, do you have any thoughts about oversight responsibilities?

Mr. KRISHNAMOORTHY. Yes, I think so. I think that the answer is yes. I think part of the reason why the budget increase is requested is because I think the technologies, the emerging technologies are so—I mean, they are just outside the norm of what we

are normally dealing with in Congress, whether it is the DeepSeek technology that we are all hearing about in the news right now.

First we have to translate. First we have to get Mandarin speakers who can actually understand what is going on with the underlying AI model. Then we have to be able to have some AI specialists.

We actually have an AI specialist on staff who is working with the modeling to understand what are the risks. As far as oversight, yes, we have the sufficient staff for that. I think this budget will allow us to do more of that going forward.

Mr. MOOLENAAR. Could I just add something?

Mr. MORELLE. Of course, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. MOOLENAAR. Just on the point the Ranking Member was making, so you have got the AI technology. Then the question is export controls, where did they fail, what chips were being used, was there an end around.

Then you look at what DeepSeek did to try and influence the markets. Then you are talking about the whole stock market and that misinformation manipulation. To do a comprehensive look at this, it requires a lot of varied expertise.

Mr. MORELLE. Which is why I asked the question. I am really worried, as I am sure you are, with the convergence—I mentioned this to the previous panel, to the Science, Space, and Tech chair and Ranking Member, that the convergence of AI and quantum computing, when that happens, is really a game changer in the world. No one has achieved it quite yet but it is getting closer and this is one we cannot afford to lose. I appreciate both your comments in this regard.

Look, without taking specific views on what the administration is doing, there are a lot of implications, some of the intended consequences, and then there may also be unintended consequences, and it is your responsibilities both and your Committee Members to continue to observe and to provide that oversight.

Last thing I just want to do, and I apologize, if I can just indulge for a second. This is just more of an invitation for both of you, as you do your field hearings, while the chair and I continue to be concerned about threats against Members and staff, which are on the rise, here in Washington we have a little more control.

When you do field hearings we would like you to coordinate with us to make sure that you have adequate support and you feel protected when you are out doing whatever hearings you do. I would just offer that invitation.

Thank you. I yield back.

Chairman STEIL. The gentleman yields back.

Chair Moolenaar, Ranking Member Krishnamoorthi, appreciate both of you being here today.

The Committee will pause while the witness panel exits.

Thank you.

I now welcome our next panel of witnesses, the chair and Ranking Member of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure.

Mr. Graves and Mr. Larsen, we appreciate you being here today. We will give you each 5 minutes for an opening statement. The Ranking Member and myself will each control 5 minutes total for

questions. We will be yielding between the Members. We appreciate you being here.

We will recognize you, Mr. Chairman, Chairman Graves, for 5 minutes.

**STATEMENT OF THE HON. SAM GRAVES, A REPRESENTATIVE
IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF MISSOURI**

Mr. GRAVES. Thank you, Chairman Steil and Ranking Member Morelle. I appreciate it very much, the opportunity obviously to share with you the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure's budget request for the 119th Congress. In consultation with the Ranking Member, the Committee has requested a 7-percent increase over funding levels for the Committee last year, and those levels reflect an increase that is going to provide the Committee with the necessary resources to tackle our aggressive agenda that we have in the 119th Congress.

On the legislative front, we have already begun discussions on reauthorizing several major agencies and programs under the Committee's jurisdiction. These include Coast Guard reauthorization, pipeline and hazardous safety materials administration reauthorization. The Committee also plans to undertake the regular review of the Army Corps' projects and programs and other water infrastructure legislation.

The Committee's biggest undertaking is obviously going to be the reauthorization of the Nation's surface transportation programs, which are set to expire October 1 of next year. Equally important, the Committee has to provide oversight over the many laws and funding that was passed in the Congress—in this last Congress, including the following: We had implementation of the 5-year FAA reauthorization; WRDA 2024; reauthorization of the Economic Development Agency, which I might point out was successfully reauthorized for the first time since 2008; and our public buildings reform efforts to ensure that efficient utilization of Federal real estate.

As part of developing our robust infrastructure agenda, the Committee plans to travel extensively to conduct field hearings. We are going to do roundtables, listening sessions across America, and provide opportunities to visit and review infrastructure projects and programs. Infrastructure impacts every corner of the country, and each community has diverse needs, and we intend to get out there and see firsthand what we did in the 118th Congress.

In addition, the budget accounts for the fact that the staff's salary cap has raised again, and the Committee is lucky to have many long-tenured staffers and vast institutional knowledge. Our proposed budget will help the Committee with staff retention but also allows us to be competitive in bringing on new staff to deliver our agenda this Congress.

Particularly on the majority side, we are having to compete directly with the new administration, with the new Senate majority, and bring in and retain top staff. This is in the best interest of the House for both sides to continue to have strong teams that are so necessary for the important work that we obviously do.

With that, I look forward to answering your questions and yield back the balance of my time.

[The prepared statement of Representative Graves follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF REPRESENTATIVE SAM GRAVES

Chairman Sam Graves
Testimony before the Committee on House Administration
119th Committee Funding Proposal
Tuesday, February 11, 2025

Chairman Graves Statement on the Committee's Budget

Submission:

- Thank you, Chairman Steil and Ranking Member Morelle.
- I appreciate the opportunity to share with you the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure's budget request for the 119th Congress.
- In consultation with the Ranking Member, the Committee has requested a 7 percent increase over funding levels for the Committee last Congress.
- That level reflects an increase that will provide the Committee with the necessary resources to tackle our aggressive agenda for the 119th Congress.
- On the legislative front, we have already begun discussions on reauthorizing several major agencies and programs under the Committee's vast jurisdiction.
- These include the following:
 - The Coast Guard for Fiscal Years 2024 and 2025;
 - The Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA);

Chairman Sam Graves
Testimony before the Committee on House Administration
119th Committee Funding Proposal
Tuesday, February 11, 2025

- **The Committee also plans to undertake the regular review of Army Corps projects and programs and other water infrastructure legislation.**
- **And the Committee's biggest undertaking, the reauthorization of our nation's surface transportation programs, which are set to expire on October 1, 2026.**
- **Equally important, the Committee must provide oversight over the many laws and funding that was passed last Congress including the following:**
 - **Implementaiton of the 5-year FAA reauthorization;**
 - **WRDA 2024;**
 - **Reauthorization of the Economic Development Agency (EDA) which I might point out was successfully reauthorized for the first time since 2008;**
 - **And our Public buildings reform efforts to ensure efficient utilization of federal real estate.**
- **As part of developing our robust infrastructure agenda, the Committee plans to travel extensively to conduct field hearings, roundtables and listening sessions across America and provide opportunities**

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to visit and review infrastructure projects and programs.

- **Infrastructure impacts every corner of the country, and each community has diverse needs. We intend to get out there and see that firsthand as we did in the 118th Congress.**
- **In addition, the budget accounts for the fact that the staff salary cap was again raised, and the Committee is lucky to have many long tenured staffers with vast institutional knowledge.**
- **Our proposed budget will help the Committee with staff retention but also allows us to be competitive in bringing on new staff to deliver on our agenda this Congress.**
- **Particularly on the Majority side, we are having to compete directly with the new Administration and new Senate Majority to bring in and retain top staff.**
- **It is in the best interest of the House for both sides to continue to have strong teams that are so necessary for the important work we do.**
- **With that, I look forward to answering your questions and I yield back the remainder of my time.**

Chairman STEIL. The gentleman yields back.
 Ranking Member Larsen, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

**STATEMENT OF THE HON. RICK LARSEN, A REPRESENTATIVE
 IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF WASHINGTON**

Mr. LARSEN. Thank you, chair. Chair, Ranking Member, and other Members of the Committee, I appreciate the opportunity to join Chair Graves in presenting the Committee's budget request for the 119th.

The Transportation and Infrastructure Committee has a long history of bipartisan cooperation with both sides, realizing the importance of investing in our Nation's infrastructure, ensuring the safety of our transportation system, and creating jobs. Chair Graves and I will continue this tradition that we started in the 118th.

We passed the bipartisan legislation reauthorizing the Federal Aviation Administration, which provides critical safety enhancements, grows America's aviation workforce by creating good-paying jobs, invests in resilient infrastructure at U.S. airports of all sizes, sets clear priorities for advancing innovative aviation technologies and provides robust protections for airline customers.

We also passed the sixth consecutive bipartisan Water Resources Development Act, or WRDA, which invests in protecting communities from flooding and droughts, restores our environment and ecosystems, and keeps our Nation competitive by supporting our ports and harbors. WRDA 2024 included provisions to grow the economy and create jobs as well by reauthorizing the Economic Development Administration, improving the operations of the General Services Administration's Public Buildings Service, and redistributing \$1.8 billion in unused funding from the Department of Transportation's TIFIA program to local transportation projects.

As Chair Graves has noted, we do have a full legislative agenda for the 119th Congress. First and foremost is the surface transportation programs expire in September 2026, and the Committee needs to act on that. We also intend to reauthorize the U.S. Coast Guard, Maritime Administration, the Federal Maritime Commission, and the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration's pipeline and safety programs.

For us to do our jobs for the American people, we request you fund the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure requests of a modest increase of 7 percent over the funding levels from the 118th. This funding will ensure that we can retain the oversight and infrastructure specialists who can help us achieve our objectives and accommodate as well an increase in travel costs. We have a robust and bipartisan travel plan, to include both domestic and international travel, that will inform our legislative agenda and allow for greater oversight of the projects and programs under the jurisdiction of the Committee.

As in the past, the Committee will continue to provide two-thirds of the personnel budget to majority and one-third to the minority. The nonpersonnel budget, like the travel budget, will continue to be shared fairly between the majority and the minority.

I look forward to continuing a strong partnership with Chair Graves in the 119th Congress. With your help, I know the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure will achieve our

shared objectives and be one of the most productive Committees in Congress. I want to thank you for the opportunity to appear before the Committee today, and I am happy to answer any questions you might have.

[The prepared statement of Representative Larsen follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF REPRESENTATIVE RICK LARSEN

THE HONORABLE RICK LARSEN
RANKING MEMBER
COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE
TESTIMONY BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON HOUSE ADMINISTRATION
FEBRUARY 11, 2025

Chairman Steil, Ranking Member Morelle, and distinguished Members of the Committee, I appreciate the opportunity to join Chairman Graves in presenting the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure's budget request for the 119th Congress.

The Transportation and Infrastructure Committee has a long history of bipartisan cooperation, with both sides realizing the importance of investing in our nation's infrastructure, ensuring the safety of our transportation systems and creating jobs. Chairman Graves and I continued this tradition in the 118th Congress. We passed bipartisan legislation reauthorizing the Federal Aviation Administration, which will provide critical safety enhancements, grow America's aviation workforce by creating good-paying jobs, invest in resilient infrastructure at U.S. airports of all sizes, sets clear priorities for advancing innovative aviation technologies and provides robust protections for airline customers.

We also passed the sixth consecutive bipartisan Water Resources Development Act (WRDA), which will invest in and protect our communities from flooding and droughts, restore our environment and ecosystems, and keep our nation competitive by supporting our ports and harbors. WRDA 2024 also included provisions to grow the economy and create jobs by reauthorizing the Economic Development Administration, improving operations of the General Services Administration's Public Buildings Service and redistributing \$1.8 billion in unused funding from the Department of Transportation's TIFIA program to local transportation projects.

As Chairman Graves noted, we have a full legislative agenda for the 119th Congress. First and foremost, surface transportation programs expire in September 2026, and the Committee will need to act. We also intend to reauthorize the U.S. Coast Guard, Maritime Administration, Federal Maritime Commission, and the Pipeline and the Hazardous Materials Safety Administration's pipeline safety programs.

For us to do our jobs for the American people, we request that you fund the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure at a modest increase of seven percent over the funding levels from the 118th Congress. This funding will be used to ensure we can retain the oversight and infrastructure specialists who can help us achieve our objectives and accommodate an increase in travel costs.

The Committee has a robust and bipartisan travel plan to include both domestic and international travel that will help inform our legislative agenda and allow for greater oversight of the projects and programs under the jurisdiction of the Committee.

As in the past, the Committee will continue to provide two-thirds of the personnel budget to the Majority, and one-third to the Minority. The non-personnel budget, like the travel budget, will continue to be shared fairly between the Majority and Minority.

I look forward to continuing a strong partnership with Chairman Graves in the 119th Congress. With your help, I know the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure will achieve our shared objectives and be one of the most productive committees in Congress.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the Committee on House Administration today. I am happy to answer any questions you might have.

Chairman STEIL. Thank you very much. The gentleman yields back.

We will each take 5 minutes for questions. I will start with myself, yield myself 5 minutes.

If I could, I will start with you, Chairman Graves. You referenced some of the work that you have done before on reauthorization. You have a robust agenda on reauthorization in this Congress. You have a request as it relates to additional software necessary to do this. Could you provide a little color on that request?

Mr. GRAVES. Yes. We utilized new technology when it came to setting up the portals to allow Members to be able to access or provide us with their priorities and their projects and their sorts of things. In FAA reauthorization and in WRDA, we had some pretty robust—I mean, literally, hundreds of requests from Members. We expect, with the surface transportation reauthorization, it is going to be even more robust. This just makes this process so much easier for both Members doing it and then us putting the legislation together in the, you know, in the process. Yes, we are going to be using technology quite a little bit.

Chairman STEIL. Thank you very much.

I will yield to Representative Bice.

Mrs. BICE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Chairman Graves and Ranking Member Larsen, for being with us this afternoon.

I hail from the great State of Oklahoma, and my district actually has what I would consider to be the crossroads of America running through it, I-40, I-35, and I-44. Literally east to west, north to south. You can get anywhere from my State by truck in about 2 days. I really appreciate the opportunity for you all to do field visits because I think that does really give a hands-on view of what is happening in our States.

I certainly know that the—there has been lots of conversation around the FAA over the last, you know, couple of weeks. I would be delighted to host you in Oklahoma City for review of some of the infrastructure in my district and also to visit the Mike Monroney Aeronautical Center, which is located in Congressman Lucas' district, to see the work firsthand on their training center capabilities. Thank you for the work that you are doing. I look forward to working with you both in the future.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I yield.

Chairman STEIL. The gentlewoman yields back.

If I can jump on a question that I think builds on what Representative Bice was speaking about, the travel budget, but also the expertise of the staff. The Speaker's pay order has adjusted this. It is a highly competitive labor market right now. In particular, I know, on the majority side, where many individuals are choosing to go into the administration or private sector jobs for both majority and the minority. Could you comment—let me start with you, Chairman Graves—on the impact that the pay order may have or how we should be thinking about that from the Committee standpoint.

Mr. GRAVES. Yes. It is—you know, probably more so than even when it comes to the administration or the Senate, it is a private sector, and it is just hard to compete with that. Without that abil-

ity and that help, we are going to lose all of this incredible talent that we have both in the majority and minority side being able to move forward. This is important as anything else, and we do have a lot of long-term tenured staff on our Committee, and I do not want to lose that. I do not want to lose that.

You know, right now, if you look, obviously, our increase is going to be spread all over, but the fact of the matter is 95 percent of our budget goes to staff salaries, and so, you know, we have—again, we have to compete. That is the bottom line. We have to compete.

Chairman STEIL. Ranking Member Larsen, do you want to comment briefly?

Mr. LARSEN. Yes. I would just note that, obviously—it might be obvious to say the pressure is a little less on the minority side but still an important pressure about going off the Hill to work. Like the chair has said, we also on the minority side have a long-tenured staff whose expertise we do not want to lose, and we do not want to lose it because we have a lot of work to do.

I think one of the successes of the bipartisanship on our Committee is not just that Sam and I work together but the staffs take that message and work together as well. We need to continue to have the expertise on both sides of the aisle among staff who also have great relationships off the Hill to produce the kind of legislation, do the kind of work that we have been doing.

Chairman STEIL. Thank you very much. I will yield back. I recognize the Ranking Member for 5 minutes for questions.

Mr. MORELLE. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I may have missed this, but I think we have been asking each of the chairs and Ranking Members on the issue of cybersecurity. Did you ask that question? I apologize if you did.

Chairman STEIL. Maybe I did not.

Mr. MORELLE. I do not think you did, but whether—

Chairman STEIL. You can take it for me.

Mr. MORELLE. Yes, whether or not you would make available the staff administration on both sides to meet with the CIO to talk about cybersecurity issues and make sure that we are doing everything we can to make sure that we are secure.

Mr. GRAVES. Absolutely, yes.

Mr. LARSEN. I make that commitment as well.

Mr. MORELLE. Great. Thank you.

I think this is directed more to the chair, the standard of two-thirds/one-third split between the Committees. I just want to make sure that the Democratic side, Mr. Larsen, has independence over his third of the budget, and whether you would commit to that, sir.

Mr. GRAVES. Yes, that is a given. Rick and I, look, we work great together. We came in together a long time ago, but, you know, I do not have the least bit of worry about any of that or problem with it.

Mr. LARSEN. I will just note, Ranking Member, we have not had a problem with it as well.

Mr. MORELLE. Good.

Mr. LARSEN. We probably work more together, the staff side, than some Committees do.

Mr. MORELLE. Good. Well, thank you for that.

I wanted to just pick up a little bit, I think Mrs. Bice may have mentioned some of the things that have happened, obviously with regard to FAA and the tragedies that have occurred recently. One of the things I want to make sure that we are all focused in is on our article I response as it relates to oversight of the administration. There is a lot going on. People have differences of opinions on whether it is appropriate or not, but we still have a job to do. I want to just ask whether or not you feel you have adequate resources to do the job necessary in carrying out our article I responsibilities on it. I would like you to both comment.

Mr. GRAVES. Oversight is obviously a very big part of what we do when we do reauthorizations. I will be honest with you, what my concern is, and it is not administration-related in terms of, you know, Democrat side or Republican side. What I see as the problem are the lifelong bureaucrats that move from administration to administration that try to change what we do as Congress in their eyes, in what they want to see, rather than what the intent of the law is.

Now, we wrote—the FAA bill we got very technical in for that reason, because we got—I got frustrated at the fact that the FAA did not implement a lot of the stuff we did in the last FAA reauthorization. You know, they drag their feet or they changed what the intent of the law was. I believe in legislative intent and congressional intent, and I want it followed, and so that is where the focus of a lot of our oversight will be is just making sure they follow the letter of the law and what we decided, as a Congress, the legislative body, what we decided it should be, not what they think it should be.

Mr. MORELLE. Well, I agree.

Mr. Larsen?

Mr. LARSEN. Yes. I think one of the benefits of the work that we have done on the Committee is that we have produced largely bipartisan products, and the FAA bill is one of those. Because it passed 387 to 26 out of the House, and then I think some number, 4 against in the Senate, we know we have a strong bipartisan direction that we gave to the FAA, regardless of who is there.

To bring it closer to home, over the last couple of weeks, we have produced bipartisan statements on, you know, the horrible tragedies that have taken place and the support we want to show the FAA and NTSB to do its job. But, also, because of the FAA bill, there is a list of things that we directed the FAA to do to improve its operations, to improve technology investment, to improve its safety oversight. It has the to-do list. The FAA has the to-do list that we have created for it, and so part of that oversight will be to, certainly, strongly encourage—would be a nice way to put it—strongly encourage the FAA to take care of that list.

Mr. MORELLE. All right. One last point, which is less a question and more, I guess, an invitation. As you not only hold hearings in D.C. but field hearings, the level of Member threats has gone up considerably. Our Committee has oversight of the United States Capitol Police and the Sergeant at Arms. We would just invite you to communicate with the chair and myself to make sure we have adequate security, and we are paying particular attention to mak-

ing sure that Members and staff are secure as they travel and as you do hearings around the country.

Mr. GRAVES. Well, that is something I do appreciate from this Committee and looking out for all Members. I agree, and I have seen it personally is the uptick in, you know, in threats and security issues, and so I appreciate what you all do to keep us safe.

Mr. MORELLE. OK. Thank you, both.

I yield back.

Chairman STEIL. The gentleman yields back.

We appreciate you both being here with us today. You have got big work at the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure. I look forward to your work this Congress.

For Members of the Committee, momentarily we will recess subject to call of the chair. We are going to reconvene by 12:50 sharp; that is 10 minutes ahead of schedule for the Financial Services Committee, with the hope of getting through as many of the Committees as we can prior to votes being called on the House floor.

The Committee on House Administration stands in recess subject to the call of the chair.

[Recess.]

Chairman STEIL. The Committee will come to order.

We appreciate you being here, Chairman Hill. I know Ranking Member Waters is on her way. Cognizant of the time, we are going to move right along. We have been giving the chair and Ranking Member 5 minutes each, 5 minutes total for questions for the majority and minority, and then yielding between our colleagues, so we appreciate you being here.

We will recognize you, Chairman Hill, for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF THE HON. FRENCH J. HILL, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF ARKANSAS

Mr. HILL. Well, thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Morelle. Thank you very much for inviting us to testify to the Committee on House Administration on the budget request for the 119th Congress for the House Committee on Financial Services. I have outlined a broad, comprehensive agenda for the Committee for the next 2 years.

Under my leadership, the Committee will seek to rightsize the regulatory system particularly for community banks, create a regulatory framework for digital assets that will protect consumers and investors while maintaining America as a leader in innovation, and ensure that agencies in the Committee's oversight jurisdiction are focused on their core statutory directed missions.

There are also items that are in the Committee's jurisdiction that simply must get done in the 119th Congress. First, the reform of the National Flood Insurance Program, something that has been on its ongoing, continuing resolution now, I think, for 6 years, and a reauthorization of the Export-Import Bank. The last time we did that was in the first term of President Trump.

The Committee must also work that it is prepared with the relevant Appropriations Subcommittees and the Trump administration to ensure that any negotiation over the capital replenishments are accompanied by significant and much-needed reforms for our multinational, multilateral development banks, and the inter-

national financial institutions, such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

Additionally, I have asked the Committee to be prepared for black swan events, such as the long-tailed impact of quantitative easing, severe fiscal spending, and the result of inflation, the refinancing risk associated with commercial real estate in the United States as a result of the declining need for space and increased interest rates, the risks associated with Treasury's refunding challenge of a \$2 trillion unsustainable annual budget deficit, and the other international shocks brought about by collapsing growth in Europe and significant debt and structural weakness elsewhere, such as in the People's Republic of China.

The Committee also must be prepared to consider reform and restructuring proposals related to the mortgage Government-sponsored enterprises, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, should this become a priority of the Trump administration.

In order to accomplish this broad set of objectives and necessary tasks, I am requesting a 10-percent increase in funding for the Committee's budget from the previous Congress. This increase would put the Committee in line with the historic average. In the 118th Congress, we were the eighth highest-funded Committee. This is a decrease compared to the 117th and 116th Congresses when the Financial Services Committee was the fifth highest funded.

This increase would allow the majority to fully staff 57 allotted slots. In the previous Congress, the majority had 42 personnel on staff. I am seeking to recruit talent so that we can fulfill and deliver what was promised to the American people. Currently, there are two Subcommittees that only are staffed by two people. As we look to properly hire for these positions, it is critical that we are not forced to cut staff elsewhere or limit our hiring in some of the other Subcommittees.

Additionally, the Committee has created a new task force examining both monetary policy and the Treasury debt markets, particularly in light of the decisions during the past few years as it relates to both monetary and fiscal policy. I am proposing to hire a chief economist to oversee this effort as well as in policy analysis to work in our—work across the Committee in light of the Loper decision and the decline in the Chevron deference. We want to make sure we have the cost-benefit, economic talent on board our Committee as well. This task force will be critical in examining the mistakes of the past so the American people are not struck with stubbornly high inflation as a result of furthering misguided monetary policy decisions.

Finally, I have requested an increase in travel. As demonstrated by the recent success of the House Ways and Means Committee, field hearings will be critical at getting our positive message out to the American people. I am encouraging all of our Subcommittees to take advantage of these opportunities to fully demonstrate the Committee's effort on behalf of our citizens by meeting outside the beltway.

The financial services industry helps drive economic growth, support small business, and is at the forefront of innovation in our

country. It is imperative that this Committee can thoroughly examine the policies affecting this critical sector of the economy.

I am grateful, Mr. Chairman, for your time, the consideration of this request, and I am prepared for your questions.

[The prepared statement of Representative Hill follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF REPRESENTATIVE FRENCH J. HILL

FRENCH HILL, AR
CHAIRMAN



MAXINE WATERS, CA
RANKING MEMBER

United States House of Representatives
One Hundred Nineteenth Congress
Committee on Financial Services
2129 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Testimony of Chairman French Hill Before the Committee on House Administration

February 11, 2025

Good afternoon, Chairman Steil and Ranking Member Morelle. Thank you for inviting me to testify before the Committee on House Administration on the budget request for the House Financial Services Committee in the 119th Congress.

I have outlined a broad and comprehensive agenda for the Committee for the next two years. Under my leadership, the Committee will seek to right-size the regulatory system, particularly for community banks, create a regulatory framework for digital assets that will protect consumers and investors while maintaining America as a leader in innovation, and ensure agencies in the Committee's oversight jurisdiction are focused on their core statutory directed missions.

There are also items that are in the Committee's jurisdiction that must get done, including the reform of the National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) and the Export-Import (Ex-Im) Bank Reauthorization. The Committee also must ensure it is prepared to work with the relevant Appropriations Subcommittees and Trump Administration to ensure any negotiations over capital replenishments are accompanied by significant and much-needed reforms for multilateral development banks and International Financial Institutions, such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF).

Additionally, the Committee must be prepared for Black Swan Events, such as the long-tailed impact of Quantitative Easing; severe fiscal spending and resulting inflation; the refinancing risk associated with commercial real estate expense in the United States as a result of declining needs for space and increased interest rates; Treasury refunding challenges of a \$2 trillion unsustainable annual budget deficits; and, other international shocks brought about by collapsing growth in Europe and significant debt and structural weakness elsewhere like China. The Committee must also be prepared to consider reform and restructuring proposals related to the mortgage GSEs, Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, should this become a priority of the Trump Administration.

In order to accomplish these objectives and necessary tasks, I am requesting a 10% increase in funding to the Committee budget from the previous Congress. This increase would put the Committee in line with the historic average. In the 118th Congress, we were the eighth-

highest funded Committee. This is a decrease compared to the 117th and 116th Congresses, when the Committee was the fifth-highest funded.

This increase would allow the Majority to fully staff the 57 allotted slots. In the previous Congress, the Majority had 42 people on staff. I am seeking to hire more people so we can fulfill and deliver what was promised to the American people. Currently, there are two subcommittees who are only staffed by two individuals. As we look to properly hire for these positions, it is critical that we are not forced to cut staff elsewhere or limit hiring within some of our other Subcommittees.

Additionally, the Committee has created a new Task Force examining both monetary policy and the Treasury debt market decisions of the last few years. I am proposing to hire a Chief Economist to oversee this effort, as well as in policy analysis to assist in this work. This Task Force will be critical in examining the mistakes of the past so the American people are not stuck with stubbornly high inflation as a result of misguided monetary policy decisions.

Finally, I have requested an increased travel budget. As demonstrated by the recent success of the Ways and Means Committee, field hearings will be critical to getting our positive message out to the American people. I am encouraging all our Subcommittees to take advantage of these opportunities to bring the work of Washington outside of the Beltway.

The financial services industry helps drive economic growth, supports small businesses, and is at the forefront of innovation in our country. It is imperative that this Committee can thoroughly examine the policies affecting this critical sector of the economy. Thank you for your consideration of this request, and I look forward to working with you all this Congress.

Chairman STEIL. Thank you very much, Chairman Hill.

We are tight on schedule as we are moving things around, so if Ranking Member Waters joins us, we will allow her to have 5 minutes when she arrives. But, in the interest of time, I will yield to myself 5 minutes for the purpose of asking questions.

A question I have asked every chair and Ranking Member today is that, will you commit to having your systems administrator meet with the House's CIO team in the first quarter to discuss cybersecurity issues?

Mr. HILL. Absolutely. This is a problem facing everybody in the House and everybody in the private and the public sector.

Chairman STEIL. Thank you very much.

Next question, you were talking about staffing up, about building areas of expertise. This is absolutely essential when we think about digital assets; we think about Chairman Powell coming in tomorrow. He has a robust staff of Ph.D. economists. We are looking in particular to hire an economist. What are the challenges you would face in staffing up in particular with an economist role?

Mr. HILL. Well, the economist role, I think, particularly in light of the Chevron deference and the Loper decision, I know that all the Committees, both authorizing and appropriating, are thinking about how are they staffed in order to push back and ensure that the Committees under—the agencies under our jurisdiction are fully compliant with congressional intent and statute.

One of those is clearly analyzing cost-benefit analysis. In the financial supervisory area, both in banking and in securities and insurance, cost-benefit analysis has frequently been undone or not

done at all when we are trying to consider those ramifications when we have people testifying.

I think the chief economist will bring a great deal of clout to the Committee and its analysis. Right now, we call around and try to put together economic assessments from outside groups, but we do not have somebody on the staff that is an expert in econometric analysis or economic analysis to provide that benefit to our Members.

Then, as you noted, in the Humphrey-Hawkins testimony, which is the semiannual report of the Federal Reserve system to the Committee, we want to get behind those numbers as Chairman Hensarling did several years ago and really analyze what we believe the right course of action should be for monetary policy and how that monetary policy and the unsustainable budget deficits that the Congress is currently incurring can also be dealt with. We think that kind of macroeconomic experience will be helpful there. You are right, I will take one economist for the 750 Ph.D. economists over at the Fed. I think that will really help our Members.

Chairman STEIL. We would begin to get a better ratio. Appreciate it.

I will yield to our mutual colleague on the Financial Services Committee, as well as House Administration, Mr. Loudermilk.

Mr. LOUDERMILK. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Chairman, I am very excited to start my fifth term on the Financial Services Committee, and especially, again, serving in the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee.

Over just the tenure that I have had on Financial Services and especially over the past 4 years, we have seen a significant increase in what I would call mission creep by a lot of the areas of jurisdiction that we have: SEC going outside of its constitutional boundaries. CFPB, that is just the nature of their business of going after areas that they are not legislatively empowered to go after.

There is a lot that I think that Oversight and Investigations could be looking into, as well as abuse of power. I just want to—kind of wanted to hear what your priorities were, and do you feel that you have within this budget the necessary resources to conduct that oversight?

Mr. HILL. Yes, it is a real good point. You know, some Committee chairs will describe to you their style of the Committee would be they have one big objective for the 2-year Congress that they want to drive through their Committee, and it could be big and complex, or it could be very straightforward. My approach is different. I think with the advantage of the Trump administration being in office and sharing our political party and having Tim Scott chair the Banking Committee in the Senate, it gives us a unique opportunity in this Congress, in this 2 years, to make progress across all of our Subcommittees. That really accounts for the core of why I have made the request that I have had.

Chairman McHenry in the last Congress emphasized digital assets. He staffed up for that, he delivered on privacy and digital assets legislatively. But, in each of our Subcommittees, including Oversight, we have given them robust legislative agendas, and I want to make sure they have got the talent on those Subcommittees to do it.

In quick, we talked about digital assets. That is a continued priority. It is a priority for the Trump administration. It is a priority for the majority leader, Mr. Scalise, that we get a dollar-backed stablecoin bill and a regulatory framework for digital assets accomplished in this Congress.

We also want to make community banking great again, and we do that by tailoring regulations. I would remind the Committee, we have not had a bipartisan banking bill in this Congress signed into law since 2018 when Mike Crapo, then Chairman of the Senate, had S. 2155, which got strong bipartisan support in both the House and Senate. We believe tailoring that regulatory approach in community banking is critical. Those are just two of our big priorities, and we have those across all of our Subcommittees.

Mr. LOUDERMILK. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I yield back.

Chairman STEIL. The gentleman yields back. I yield back.

I recognize the Ranking Member for 5 minutes.

Mr. MORELLE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for being here. Congratulations on becoming the chair of the Committee. I want to first start, as I have asked each of the chairs, the normal two-thirds/one-third split between majority and minority, I just want to make sure that you are going to afford the minority independence when it comes to the expenditure of their third of the budget in terms of both personnel and whatever other resources they intend to spend.

Mr. HILL. Thank you, Mr. Morelle, for your question. I am delighted to be joined by my Ranking Member, the ever-distinguished former chair of this Committee, Maxine Waters of California. She is a tremendous defender of her third of the budget, and I do not think you will have any question that we will work together to make sure that she has the resources that are needed for her to carry out her mission as Ranking Member.

We also want to collaborate on this idea of our Members having an opportunity to, as I said in my testimony, do field hearings, be out with our citizens around the country. I really—I want to reiterate, I think that is an important part of the work we do here in Washington. It needs to be out with our citizens. I do not think the—while the Ways and Means Committee has done a good job of that, I want to make sure Financial Services Members are having that opportunity as well.

Mr. MORELLE. Yes. I will say, back in my service in the State legislature in New York, I chaired for a number of years the Committee on Insurance, which is not banking but certainly is part of the financial makeup in New York. Just as it related to oversight in your comments, you know, I remember, and I was the chair during 2007, 2008, during that crisis, and AIG, which was obviously a significant insurance company in New York, the challenge it seemed to me when I was—in my responsibilities was striking the balance between consumer protection that was appropriate and also freedom for people who had capital to be able to use that capital to help people who needed financing and also to build great companies and to try to continue to maintain that balance.

I wanted to ask whether or not you feel you have adequate resources here to do the job to protect both interests, the consumers'

interests as well as—I mean, there is a lot of talk about deregulation and the regulatory framework, and I appreciate that, but some of it is legitimately necessary to protect the interests of individuals, particularly in a world where financial products—and you certainly know more about this than I do, both of you—have gotten much more sophisticated, have gotten much more nuanced, and there are many more financial products now than there would have been two decades ago.

Just be mindful, and I want to ask whether or not you feel you have adequate resources in this request to do that oversight and to make sure you protect both the financial interests of companies, but equally important, some would say more important, the consumer interests of people who use these products. I would love to ask both of you to comment.

Mr. HILL. Sure. I will be brief so my Ranking Member can provide a comment as well. The short answer is yes. Look, there is nowhere in our economic society that is more statutorily driven on investor protection, consumer protection, and yet, at the same time, to try to provide orderly, an efficient, safe, and sound banking insurance and capital markets, and that tension exists both statutorily and in oversight and in the supervisory process. I believe in our Committee that we have excellent staff that understand that responsibility in each of the Subcommittees. I will say that all the Members recognize that balance between adequate and robust consumer protection and, at the same time, you know, letting the marketplace operate as well, and it is constructive tension.

Let me turn to my colleague for an answer to your question.

Mr. MORELLE. Thank you.

STATEMENT OF THE HON. MAXINE WATERS, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Ms. WATERS. Well, thank you very much.

Mr. Chairman and Members, I am pleased to be here with Chairman French Hill to make our requests for—to basically cover the work that we do. He has more than adequately explained to you the seriousness and the breadth of our Committee. From time to time, when I have talked to people about the Financial Services Committee and had them to understand that we have oversight responsibility for everything from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund to HUD and housing, and there is a big difference in all of that.

He is absolutely correct, we have to be concerned about our citizens and their ability to know that we are dealing with all of the cops on the block in financial services and looking out for consumer interests, as well as understanding the markets and what must be done to give support or find gaps because of the economy that is impacted by the markets.

I am very pleased to be here. I do not know exactly how much our Chairman has asked for for our budget. I do know what my staff told me. I said to my staff, I think that 10 percent or whatever he has asked may be adequate, but is it appropriate for me to say, “But we need a little more”? We have talked about it. Our staffs have been together on it, and we would appreciate your support for our request.

[The prepared statement of Representative Waters follows:]

**PREPARED STATEMENT OF REPRESENTATIVE MAXINE
WATERS**

Testimony of the Honorable Maxine Waters
Ranking Member
Committee on Financial Services
Before the House Committee on Administration
February 11, 2025 1:00 PM

Good afternoon, Chairman Steil and Ranking Member Morelle. I'm pleased to be testifying alongside Chairman Hill this afternoon to discuss the funding needs of the Committee on Financial Services.

Our Committee splits its funding without restriction with one-third for the minority and two-thirds for the majority. This split has been very helpful in budgeting and meeting our needs and I see no reason for it to change. Our staff is also split one-third for the minority and two-thirds for the majority with full hiring authority for each side. I support the Chairman's request to increase the Committee's staff cap, which has been at 56 for quite some time.

The Committee on Financial Services has jurisdiction over our nation's financial institutions, capital markets, housing programs, monetary policy, cryptocurrency, and certain aspects of our nation's national security. Due to the importance of these systems for our economy, the Committee routinely undertakes strong oversight of our nation's financial and housing systems—under both Republican and Democratic administrations. We are also on the front lines of any economic crises. During the 2008 subprime meltdown, our Committee was at the forefront of passing legislation to save our financial system from imploding and later passed legislation to prevent any future financial market meltdowns. In the previous Congress, it was our Committee that worked to support the Biden Administration's stabilization of our banking system when Silicon Valley Bank and several other large regional banks failed. The united front that we showed was critical to calming markets and showing the world that the American financial system remains the safest and most stable market in the world.

All of this work requires staff. I'm honored to have a staff that consists of the smartest, brightest, and most informed public policy professionals in Washington. They are true public

servants and have strong values in advocating and legislating for policies that lift up the most vulnerable. Staff retention is an important goal for me as Ranking Member. It is vital that staff compensation is competitive and that the Committee allows for work-life balance. To be clear, the staff who work on both sides of the aisle could make much more in the private sector. That they choose to work for their country as public servants says much about their character and that commitment to public service should not be taken for granted.

My chairman has laid out an ambitious agenda that will require us to increase our staffing and expenditures to ensure that we are able to properly engage with him on the important issues he means to take on. To that end, I would like to hire additional staff with expertise in banking policy so that we may keep pace with his legislative efforts. I would also like to be able to offer merit increases and cost of living adjustments for current staff to help defray the rising costs associated with inflation. Moreover, given the required upgrade to Windows Eleven, I anticipate needing funds to purchase additional computers, unless this cost is defrayed in some way by the Committee on House Administration. In addition, as the Chairman has indicated that he would like to hold field hearings, we would require additional funds to pay for the travel of staff and Members to these events to ensure that Democratic Members can participate.

Therefore, I support the Chairman's request for a 10 percent budget increase for our Committee. This is a reasonable amount and will allow the entire Committee to function at its full potential. It will also ensure that our Committee funding is more in line with other exclusive committees. Currently, Financial Services is not only the lowest funded exclusive committee, but we also receive less funding than several non-exclusive committees, such as Foreign Affairs, Armed Services, and Judiciary. And while their work is important, our Committee's budget should reflect the important role of our Committee in this institution.

While Chairman Hill and I may disagree on other issues this Congress, on the issue of increased Committee funding, I am pleased to say that we are united. I strongly encourage the Committee to appreciate and give additional weight to our unity on this important issue and to fund the Committee according to our joint request.

Thank you and I look forward to your questions.

Mr. MORELLE. Thank you very much, Ms. Ranking Member.

Before I yield, I just want to—an invitation, as you are doing your field hearings, one of the things that the chair and I are very concerned about is Member threats, so, you know, we have oversight of the Capitol Police, Sergeant at Arms. We would just invite you to share with us information about where you are doing field hearings so we can coordinate to make sure Members and staff are safe wherever you go.

Mr. HILL. Thank you for that admonition. It is one we take seriously. It is also one reason why the budget request is what it is. We recognize that we have got a security component for traveling Members, and we do not take that at all for granted. We know that, in order to provide transparency, we have got the C-SPAN component as well and the right kind of location, and so we will meet that commitment. We are very sensitive to making sure our Members and our staff are in a safe condition as they travel.

Mr. MORELLE. Thank you. I yield back.

Chairman STEIL. If the Ranking Member will give me an extension just to re-ask the first question.

We appreciate you joining us, Ranking Member Waters. I have asked all chairs and Ranking Members just a yes-or-no question as it relates to cybersecurity, that you will commit to having your systems administrator meet with the House's Chief Information Officer and their team in the first quarter to discuss cybersecurity issues.

Ms. WATERS. Yes.

Chairman STEIL. Thank you very much.

We appreciate both of you being here today. Obviously, a number of us are Members of the Financial Services Committee, and so we appreciate your time and effort.

Committee will pause while the next witness panel assembles. Thank you very much.

Mr. HILL. Thank you, Chairman. I appreciate your support. Thank you.

Ms. WATERS. Thank you very much.

Chairman STEIL. Chairman Williams, Ranking Member Velázquez, thank you for joining us today. We have been doing a series of these hearings. Obviously, today you are our next witness panel for the Committee on Small Business. I appreciate you being here. We will give you each 5 minutes for an opening statement. The Ranking Member and I will each take 5 minutes for questions, and then we will be yielding during that time for our Members.

We will start with you, Chair Roger Williams.

**STATEMENT OF THE HON. ROGER WILLIAMS, A
REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF TEXAS**

Mr. WILLIAMS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Ranking Member. I appreciate it. I want to thank all of you for having us.

I am here today to tell you: I do not need more money if you want our Committee to be small and inefficient. Let me tell you: We are anything but that, and if I can keep some of the other Committees from stealing my employees, it would be a lot easier.

But, over the past 2 years, the Ranking Member and I have taken the Committee on Small Business to, I believe, the next

level. Last Congress, the Committee marked up 41 bills, 23 of which passed the House, the most Committee activity in over 20 years. We issued the first subpoenas in more than a decade when the SBA failed to respond to our investigative efforts. We also issued four substantial Committee reports from our major investigations, including the SBA's election hearing efforts in Michigan and their improper interference into key battleground State for Vice President Harris and Democrats; Government entities using third parties to harm the revenue of small businesses because of their speech, preventing them from competing fairly online; the SBA's lackluster efforts to recoup the reported \$200 billion in fraud in pandemic lending programs, including the SBA's decision to collect on certain pandemic loans worth \$70 billion; and the overly burdensome regulations from the Biden-Harris administration that hurt America's job creators.

Now, on top of that, we held 59 hearings which amplified small business voices while simultaneously holding the Biden-Harris administration accountable to Main Street. Our Committee has one of the greatest returns on investment for the House, I believe. ROI is important. In order to continue to grow these efforts in the 119th Congress, we are asking for a \$1.3 million increase over 2 years.

Now, the logical question is, why do you need this money? Well, we want to take this Committee to the next level. I just walked through this last year's highlights, but we want to show how we plan to go even harder this Congress.

First, the Committee will focus on reauthorizing the SBA, something that has not been done in 25 years. Reauthorization is necessary because, as we all know, there has been unmitigated waste, fraud, and abuse at the SBA over the last few years, and we conducted important oversight last Congress to find this money and attempted to force the SBA to claw it back. Now we need to reform the SBA not to only get back those taxpayer dollars but also ensure this sort of abuse does not happen again.

This incredible effort will require additional staff with wide-ranging knowledge and expertise, which leads me to my second point: The cost of doing business has totally increased. In order to hire and maintain the most qualified staff, we need to increase staff compensation to compete with the private sector and the larger Committees.

Now, while the Committee has sufficient staff slots available, 29 slots for the majority and 14 slots for the minority, the budget has never been high enough to hire the people to fill all of these slots. In fact, we averaged about 18 full-time staff during this past Congress. In order to hire the right people, the Committee has been forced to hire fewer staff to ensure we can offer a competitive salary, so we are going backward. Now, this problem is confounded by the fact that the pay ceiling for staff increased, allowing other Committees with greater funds to increase their pay of their staff. We will be unable to do this unless we get some additional funds.

As a small business owner myself, I understand that more people with money does not always equal more success. However, I also know that getting the right people with the right experience and expertise on staff will ensure that this Committee can further President Trump's pro-business and deregulatory agenda.

Third, we know how important it is for this Committee to get on the ground in Main Street America. Many of our Members have expressed interest in holding field hearings in their districts to do just that. As the Committee fighting for Main Street, oftentimes the best way to reach these constituencies is by going directly to them. You take the product to the people. Very few of our Members are within driving distance of Washington. These hearings would be an additional cost but also successful. Our Nation's entrepreneurs and innovators deserve a strong advocate fighting on their behalf in Washington, and increasing the Committee's budget will help to continue to amplify the voice of small business across this Nation.

Fourth, this Committee is uniquely positioned to help push President Trump's deregulatory agenda. The Regulatory Flexibility Act requires all agencies to consider the economic impact of their rules on small businesses nationwide. Last year, our investigation found that many agencies skirt the requirement, with some ignoring it entirely. Our investigations helped lay the foundation for removing overly burdensome regulations on small businesses, which we can actually begin to do under President Trump.

Finally, we all know how important it is for small businesses to have access to funds to rebuild after a natural disaster strikes. As we saw after the North Carolina hurricane, the disaster loan program at the SBA ran out of money, ran out of funds, and failed to get necessary aid to small businesses in a timely manner. The California wildfires are the most destructive in their State's history. We know it will be years before these small businesses can recover fully.

Unlike what happened during the COVID pandemic, which broke the SBA, we want to make sure the SBA is properly equipped to step in when disaster strikes. This Congress, we want to be on the ground conducting oversight, Main Street, in California, North Carolina, et cetera. This oversight will help inform the disaster lending portion of the SBA reauthorization. We will need to hire subject-matter experts to ensure we conduct the most robust oversight of this program and produce legislative solutions. We need experienced people.

I want to thank all of you for allowing me to be here, and I look forward to working with the Ranking Member as we move forward.

Chairman STEIL. Chair Williams, thank you for being here. I think that is the first time you and I have spoken for 5 minutes, and you did not try to sell me a car. That is good.

Mr. WILLIAMS. Well, I heard you banging the gavel.

Chairman STEIL. You have still got time on the clock.

Ranking Member Velázquez, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF THE HON. NYDIA M. VELÁZQUEZ, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF NEW YORK

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member and all the Members of the Committee, for having us.

Let me echo what I have said time and again in this forum and in others: Small businesses are the backbone of the American economy. That was proven during the Great Recession and again dur-

ing the global pandemic. These businesses ranging from mom-and-pop shops to startups employ nearly half of the private sector workforce and are responsible for a significant portion of economic activity. Beyond their economic impact, small businesses build community ties contributing to the vitality of neighborhoods across the country.

The Committee on Small Business has the honor of ensuring the stability of the Nation's small business community and the many jobs they support in our local communities. Even during times of crisis, our Committee has responded quickly to create several historic emergency programs, the largest in history, to be a lifeline for businesses of various sizes and even nonprofits. Our staff, one of the smallest in the House, worked tirelessly during and after the pandemic to do right by small employers.

Our work has continued since then to oversee each of those programs in conjunction with authorized SBA programs to protect taxpayers' dollars. The Chairman and myself are committed to overseeing, strengthening, and modernizing these programs and the many others at SBA.

The Committee not only has jurisdiction over the SBA, we are often relied upon by our Nation's small businesses to advocate for their best interest in other areas. From healthcare and taxes to energy and capital access, contracting and trade, these are just a few of the issues the Chairman Williams and I, along with our Members, must delve into, and I am committed to working with the Chairman on these issues and more.

This work does require an investment by Congress. The Committee needs to be funded at such a level where it allows us to do our work with sufficient resources and without having to sacrifice our staff. Historically, this Committee has been underfunded. Nevertheless, the Committee continues to keep operational expenses at a minimum, all the while being understaffed. The slots are there, but the funds simply are not.

I am proud of the work we have been able to do these last few Congresses, and it is even more of an achievement to have done so much with so little. We have operated efficiently and effectively, but I do ask for a minimal increase to ensure we can properly oversee this program, which will require years of work. It goes without saying that Chairman Williams and I, along with our Committee Members, plan to continue working together in a bipartisan manner to fulfill our jurisdictional responsibility.

We know the task at hand that you have in reviewing the numbers, but we ask that you do so with the utmost consideration. Please do not wait until another crisis hits the country to discover that there is a Small Business Committee in this Congress. A very modest increase that the Chairman is requesting will go a long way in helping the Committee hire staff, upgrade our oversight technologies, and restart our field hearings and on-the-ground disaster assessment to meet the needs of our collective small employers in every district.

Thank you, and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

[The prepared statement of Representative Velázquez follows:]

**PREPARED STATEMENT OF REPRESENTATIVE NYDIA M.
VELÁZQUEZ**

ROGER WILLIAMS, TEXAS
CHAIRMAN

NYDIA M. VELAZQUEZ, NEW YORK
RANKING MEMBER

**Congress of the United States
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Small Business
2301 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-0515**

Statement of Ranking Member Nydia M. Velázquez
Committee on House Administration Full Committee Hearing:
"Committee Funding for the 119th Congress"
February 7, 2025

Thank you, Chairman Steil, Ranking Member Morelle, and members of the committee. I appreciate the opportunity to discuss the budget submission for the Small Business Committee in the 119th Congress.

Small businesses are often referred to as the backbone of America's economy, and for good reason. They create jobs, stimulate innovation, and provide essential services to local communities. These businesses, ranging from mom-and-pop shops to startups, employ nearly half of the private sector workforce and are responsible for a significant portion of economic activity. Their flexibility allows them to adapt quickly to changes, providing unique solutions that larger corporations might overlook. Beyond their economic impact, small businesses build community ties, contributing to the vitality of neighborhoods across the country.

The Committee on Small Business plays a crucial role in shaping the policies that affect the survival and growth of small businesses in America. The committee oversees and evaluates the programs, regulations, and policies that impact Main Street, and ensures that small businesses have the tools they need to thrive in a competitive economy. Our staff, one of the smallest in the House, has worked tirelessly to do right by small employers.

The committee not only has jurisdiction over the Small Business Administration, but we are often relied upon by our nation's small businesses to look out for their best interests. From health care to taxes, energy to capital access, contracting to technology, agriculture to trade, these are just a few of the issues that Chairman Williams and I, along with our members, must delve into. I am committed to working with the chairman on these issues and more.

But this work does require an investment by Congress. The committee needs to be funded at such a level where it allows us to do our work with sufficient resources and without having to sacrifice our staff. Historically, this committee has been underfunded, with the effects of sequestration compounding the situation in years past. Nevertheless, the committee has met the moment in times of crisis – most recently during the global pandemic – and continues to keep operational expenses at a minimum, all the while being understaffed. The slots are there, but the funds simply are not. I'm proud of the work we've been able to do these last few Congresses, and it is even more of an achievement to have done so much with so little.

We have operated efficiently and effectively but I do ask for an increase to ensure we can properly oversee these programs, which will require years of work. As small businesses face evolving challenges, ranging from new regulations to shifts in the economy, the committee needs more resources to oversee and ensure that small employers and entrepreneurial programs operate efficiently. A budget increase would allow the committee to conduct additional investigations and on the ground events to assess the needs of small businesses where they operate, ensuring policies support small businesses. It also provides the ability for the committee to assess the impacts and needs after disasters, which have been increasing in volume and devastation.

Furthermore, in order to advocate for small businesses effectively, the committee needs access to up-to-date data and research. This includes gathering information about the economic challenges small businesses face, such as access to capital and healthcare costs. An increase in committee funding would allow access to studies, surveys, and data sets to better understand and address small business issues.

It goes without saying that Chairman Williams and I, along with our committee members, plan to continue working together in a bipartisan manner to fulfill our jurisdictional responsibility. We know the task at hand that you have in reviewing the numbers, but we ask that you do so with utmost consideration for the work we have done and all that can be done with an increase.

A very modest increase that the Chairman is requesting will go a long way in helping the committee hire and retain staff, upgrade our oversight technologies, and restart our field hearings and disaster assessments to meet our members and their constituents to truly serve their needs.

Thank you and I'm happy to answer any questions you may have.

Chairman STEIL. Thank you very much. We thank both of you. I recognize myself for 5 minutes. I will begin with questions. We will keep these reasonably short because we are going to also try to get HPSCI in before votes.

If I can just ask one question I have asked every chair and Ranking Member—it is a simple yes/no question—is that, will you commit to having your systems administrator meet with the House's CIO team in the first quarter to discuss cybersecurity?

Mr. WILLIAMS. Absolutely.

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Yes.

Chairman STEIL. Thank you very much.

I will just ask you one question here, Chairman Williams. We will do it briefly. The SBA Committee I do not think had any field hearings last Congress. You are now looking at doing a series of them. What is driving the shift in your perspective of the Committee resources?

Mr. WILLIAMS. Well, we have not been out in the field. It is like anything else. We have got to—

Chairman STEIL. Do you want to check your mike real quick, Mr. Chairman? Everybody on the live feed can get the sales pitch for the cars as well.

Mr. WILLIAMS. Well, they have never been cheaper than they are today, I will tell you that.

But, look, it is like anything else. We have got a product to sell. We have a product to sell, and we are not able to go out and sell it to Main Street America. When you get out in Main Street America and they hear about the Small Business Committee, that is what they want to hear from. We just want to take our product to the people and let—and find out exactly how Main Street is feeling, how we can fix it.

Chairman STEIL. Thank you very much. I yield back.

I will recognize the Ranking Member for the purpose of asking questions.

Mr. MORELLE. Thank you.

Thank you both, Chairman Williams and Ranking Member Velázquez. Thanks for all you do and for your leadership.

First and foremost, I know that the Committees have a tradition of a two-thirds/one-third split. I just want to make sure, Mr. Chair, that you intend to give the Ranking Member independence when it comes to her third of the Committee budget?

Mr. WILLIAMS. Absolutely.

Mr. MORELLE. I also, because I am going to follow the chair's lead, and appreciate you being here, and I know we are a little before votes so we want to get moving, but just an invitation, as you begin these field hearings, which I think critically important, the chair and I are very focused on threats to Members and staff. We have seen the rise of them. It is a challenge here in Washington, but it is even more of a challenge when you get to field hearings. We would love to coordinate with you and your staff to make sure that we have adequate resources and we have taken every precaution to make sure that you and your staff members are safe and secure when you do field hearings.

Mr. WILLIAMS. Thank you.

Mr. MORELLE. Yep. Thank you.

Chairman STEIL. Yield back?

The gentleman yields back.

We appreciate both of you being here. Really important work for the Small Business Committee ahead this Congress.

We will pause while the witness panel exits——

Ms. VELÁZQUEZ. Thank you.

Chairman STEIL [continuing]. and the new panel assembles. Thank you for joining us.

Chairman STEIL. Chairman Crawford, Ranking Member Himes, thank you for joining us today. We have had a series of panels. We will give each of you 5 minutes for opening remarks. The minority and majority will each have 5 minutes total for questions we will be yielding amongst ourselves. Our goal is to complete this before votes. Do not feel obligated to use the full 5 minutes, but obviously you may.

We will recognize you first, Chairman Crawford.

STATEMENT OF THE HON. ERIC A. “RICK” CRAWFORD, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF ARKANSAS

Mr. CRAWFORD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, I appreciate that, and, Chairman Morelle. Thank you for giving us the opportunity to testify in support of the budget request for the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence. I am joined by my Ranking Member, Congressman Jim Himes. The proposal we have submitted includes \$19.2 million over the next 2 years, \$9.5 million of which is planned for expenditure in 2025 and the balance in 2026.

The first thing I want to note is that we are the only House Committee to operate entirely within a sensitive compartmented information facility, or SCIF. As a reminder, a SCIF is a vault-like structure built to protect classified information. Entry requires a security clearance, and everything that passes through our doorway must be specifically approved for use in a SCIF. This requires a lot of our equipment to be physically modified.

For example, we cannot have any devices in our Committees with wireless Bluetooth or similar capability. As you know, virtually all technology today has some kind of wireless feature. This presents unique operational challenges and therefore raises costs.

For the current budget request, the first area I want to highlight is the significant amount of funding we are seeking to complete critical security improvements to our SCIF. This work was partially funded in 2024. The specific improvements to our facilities cannot be discussed in open session, but we are happy to provide details and address any questions you may have in an appropriate setting.

In addition, our budget funds the final stages of enhancements to our internal classified network. Work on this network began in the 118th Congress, and completion is one of my highest priorities. As a reminder, HPSCI operates the House’s largest and most sophisticated independent network. Maintaining this unique classified network is a costly endeavor, particularly as we are committed to meeting or exceeding the standards associated with national security systems.

We have divided the remaining work into two phases: Phase one deploys a new SharePoint farm, and phase two involves enhancements to overall security posture of the network. The anticipated cost of the major work in 2025 and 2026 is \$431,000.

Another significant cost center, an area of funding growth during the 119th Congress, is personnel. As the new Chairman of HPSCI, I am undertaking aggressive effort to achieve full staffing. In our request, we do not seek an increase in our position cap, which you generously increased the last Congress; instead, we seek the required funding to completely fill each of those positions previously authorized.

Like other Committees, pay is our greatest cost driver. HPSCI competes for highly specialized talent and must offer wages competitive with the executive branch. The requested funding will enable us to recruit talent to conduct aggressive oversight related to black programs and activities, which, by their nature, are designed to circumvent scrutiny.

I want to take a moment to underscore that our people are our differential advantage. Experience has proven that recruiting personnel with security clearance alone is not enough to achieve oversight success. It can take several years to fully develop the skills to become an expert at the complex programs and activities we oversee. To give us an advantage, we seek out compatible professionals with experience working within those programs and activities. As you can imagine, the pool of available candidates with such experience is highly limited. However, at the proposed funding level, I am confident that we can acquire this talent. In fact, I am pleased to report that, since our budget's submission to you, we have recruited and are in the process of onboarding several candidates with exactly this kind of specialized experience.

Another factor impacting our budget is the establishment of a sixth Subcommittee. The new Subcommittee is charged with overseeing open-source intelligence, collection, use and dissemination, which has been a growing conversation topic in recent years. It is important that the Committee gain a deep understanding of the intelligence community's use of open-source intelligence, enabling us to legislate on the topic in an informed way.

The final thing I would like to mention is that HPSCI will be improving our support to the House by reforming how we share classified information with standing and select committees. Our intention is to do a better job of supporting our colleagues. This effort is reflected in changes to HPSCI rules and is being undertaken with the support of the Speaker.

Once again, thank you, Chairman Steil, Ranking Member Morelle, and Members of the Committee. I look forward to your questions.

Chairman STEIL. Thank you very much, Chair Crawford.

Ranking Member HIMES, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF THE HON. JAMES A. HIMES, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF CONNECTICUT

Mr. HIMES. Chairman Steil, Ranking Member Morelle, Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to discuss the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence's budget re-

quest for the 119th Congress. I am pleased to support Chairman Crawford in his budget request. Chairman Crawford was consultative and transparent with the minority in the preparation of the Committee's request. The request we have jointly made to the Administration Committee would put HPSCI on a strong footing to accomplish the critical priorities we have set out for the 119th Congress.

HPSCI is a unique Committee in many respects, not least because of the agencies we oversee. They operate nearly entirely in secret. Unlike other Committees, which can benefit from the expertise and research of outside experts, journalists, and others, we can rarely turn to those resources. Meanwhile, the task before the Committee is vast and growing. The Committee oversees 18 IC elements and tens of billions of dollars authorized each year, a task that is done with a staff smaller than many House Committees that oversee smaller agencies that are far less opaque.

To perform the functions at the House that the American people expect of us, the Committee requires a specialized and experienced group of professional staff. As the Committee's budget submission reflects, additional resources for professional staff members ensure the Committee's ability to bring on high-quality staff, including those with technical backgrounds in high demand in the private sector.

As the Chairman described, the Committee's SCIF underwent significant renovation, which created additional desks for staff. I hope the Administration Committee will provide us with the resources to put those desks to good use and ensure robust oversight of the intelligence community.

The Chairman well covered the IT needs that are particular to our Committee. I will not repeat it, but I will just close by saying, once again, I would like to thank Chairman Crawford for his collaborative approach in preparing the Committee's budget submission, and I would urge, respectfully, the House Administration Committee to support this request. Thank you. I yield back.

Chairman STEIL. Thank you very much, Ranking Member Himes, Chairman Crawford.

I recognize myself for 5 minutes for the purpose of asking questions.

One question I have asked every chair and Ranking Member is whether the majority and minority will commit to having your systems administrator meet with the House's CIO team in the first quarter to discuss cybersecurity. That conversation will probably look a little different for you on HPSCI than maybe other House Committees, but will you still make the same commitment for the meeting?

Mr. CRAWFORD. Absolutely.

Mr. HIMES. Yes.

Chairman STEIL. Thank you very much.

I will be succinct. I know votes have been called. We want to be mindful so we make it to votes. We are told that they are going to gavel at 20 minutes in. We will see if that is true, but we will run on that assumption.

Chairman Crawford, I think one point that is really important, you noted that all of your staff must maintain top secret security

clearance with SCI access. Obviously, you are operating completely within the SCIF. When we think about the Speaker's pay order, when we think about retaining staff, how does that present unique challenges, and are you able to acquire the talents and staff you need knowing the limitations of the House pay scale?

Mr. CRAWFORD. Well, it is a challenge. A lot of the reason is just the onboarding process can be lengthy for folks that do not already have a security clearance. Obviously we want to—we are recruiting from a finite pool, and we are bumping up against the executive branch. We are making pretty good progress despite the fact that, you know, there is a lot of talent out there that is being recruited by the executive branch, but we are making progress.

Chairman STEIL. Thank you very much.

I am going to be mindful of the time then. I appreciate you both being here, and I will yield back and recognize the Ranking Member for 5 minutes.

Mr. MORELLE. Thank you both for your leadership, for your contributions. You are lucky; we have been grilling every other Committee chair and Ranking Member. You will avoid that. I did have one question. The traditional two-thirds/one-third split, Mr. Chairman, are you committed to allowing independence of the minority to hire as they see fit out of their budget?

Mr. CRAWFORD. Certainly.

Mr. MORELLE. Very good. The other thing I would just say is, if you do field hearings, and I do not know that in Intelligence really applies, but we are very mindful of threats against Members and staff, and we just want to stay in close contact, both here in D.C. But, certainly, if you do conduct field hearings or if you move around, we would love to be informed of that so we could help coordinate to make sure that all the threats against Members we are aware of and can take precaution. That is an invitation.

Mr. CRAWFORD. Absolutely. Thanks for bringing that up.

Mr. MORELLE. Yes. Great. Thank you both.

Chairman STEIL. We thank you both for being here. Your Committee has incredibly important work always but uniquely so, I think, in this Congress, as we continue to see global threats targeting the American people. We appreciate the work that you do, that your Committee and staff members do, and we will be keeping that under consideration when we review your requests for funding. I appreciate you both being here.

The Committee will stand in recess subject to call of the chair. We will plan to reconvene immediately following votes for Ways and Means.

[Recess.]

Chairman STEIL. The Committee on House Administration will come back to order.

We now welcome our next panel of witnesses, Chairman Jason Smith and Ranking Member Neal from the Ways and Means Committee. We have been navigating through different panels throughout the day, as you know. We will give each of you 5 minutes for an opening statement. We will have 5 minutes of questioning in total from the majority and minority. We will be yielding between Members for those Committees.

I will now recognize the Chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, Jason Smith, for 5 minutes.

**STATEMENT OF THE HON. JASON SMITH, A REPRESENTATIVE
IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF MISSOURI**

Mr. SMITH of Missouri. Thank you, Chairman. It is a pleasure to be with you. It is good to see so many familiar faces from the Ways and Means Committee on here and also my good friend from Florida.

Ranking Member Morelle, he is not here, but we are glad—he is on his way.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before the House Administration Committee to testify about our funding request of the Ways and Means Committee for the 119th Congress.

When I previously testified at the start of the last Congress, we had before us a robust agenda at the Ways and Means Committee. Much of that work was to prepare for what we face today, particularly when it comes to America's economy and the needs of our Nation's workers, families, farmers and small businesses.

I do not have to remind everyone here that, if Congress does not act to extend the existing tax policies—that is just the current tax policies—in the coming months, every American will face a tax increase, every single American. Simply put, it will be the largest tax increase in American history. The average taxpayer will see a 22-percent tax hike on average; 26 million small businesses will face a top rate of over 40 percent. You have got 2 million family farmers right now that are wondering if they need to get an estate planner on the phone to deal with the possible return of a much higher death tax.

Making the tax cuts permanent will also unleash hundreds of billions of dollars in small business and manufacturing-driven growth and upwards of a million small business jobs being created every year. Congress needs to act and act quickly to that end.

The Ways and Means Committee will need to ensure we have the resources and flexibility to preserve these key tax provisions and prevent a massive tax increase on every American.

Our Committee also has important priorities to address when it comes to America's trade policies. If the past few weeks are any indication, we can expect the Trump administration and Congress to be spending a tremendous amount of time and attention on ensuring our trade policies put the interests of American workers and businesses first.

Despite achieving bipartisan victory last Congress in the reauthorization and modernization of our child welfare programs, there is still a lot of work that needs to be done to weed out waste, fraud, and abuse in welfare and to safeguard resources for those families truly in need and promote the dignity of work.

We must also make sure that more of our fellow Americans can access quality affordable healthcare, especially those who live in rural areas and lack even basic medical services, and that our seniors have a retirement they can depend on.

President Trump has made it his longstanding commitment to protect Social Security and Medicare. Our Committee will continue our work to secure those benefits and ensure reforms to the sys-

tem, including the recent repeal of WEP and GPO are carried out in a timely and orderly manner.

An integral part of the Committee's work last Congress was the 14 field hearings held outside the Halls of Congress where we heard directly from workers, families, farmers, and small businesses across the country about the challenges that they face and the solutions that we need to deliver.

The input provided by these hearings is informing the work we are currently doing, particularly as it relates to tax reform. Coupled with over 120 tax team events held across 20 States, the Committee and our Members have utilized the resources at our disposal to reimagine how Congress carries out our responsibilities. It has been working.

For these reasons and to ensure the Committee maintains our ongoing aggressive oversight agenda to protect taxpayers and to hold bad actors accountable, the Committee requests a 17.9-percent increase in our budget for 2025, an additional 2.4-increase in 2026.

Additionally, we were requesting an increase in our allocation of staff slots from our current of 94 to 130, which would bring the Committee in line with other Committees of similar size and scope of jurisdiction to ensure parity.

We hold sacred our responsibility to the American taxpayer and our Committee will respect the resources that they give us to carry out our duties.

Thank you for your time, Mr. Chairman.

Chairman STEIL. Thank you very much, Chairman Smith.

Ranking Member Neal, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

STATEMENT OF THE HON. RICHARD E. NEAL, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF MASSACHUSETTS

Mr. NEAL. Thanks, Mr. Chairman. I am pleased to acknowledge there are five Members of the Ways and Means Committee here; we have got a shot.

I am in accord with what Chairman Smith has suggested as it relates to Committee staffing proportions. I also want to point out that he did consult with us, which I think is helpful as well. We appreciate the opportunity to have been given that input. We are certainly working together to do what is best for our storied Committee. We have a long history of splitting the allocation two-thirds/one-third. We would report that that will remain the practice. This has been the one place where both sides can come to an agreement, and it is fundamental to carrying out our work on behalf of the people.

I am pleased that the Chairman did note that he was concerned about healthcare in rural areas, all the more reason for us to defend the purpose of Medicaid, which overwhelmingly is the major source of funding for those rural areas.

The majority is requesting a substantial increase in staff ceilings. We will be supportive of that. We want to use the increase to fill some of the open positions on the minority side. We would also use the opportunity to give staff well-earned increases.

We have been in the last few weeks talks that consider the President's agenda, most of which will go through the Ways and Means

Committee, and we want to certainly be prepared on the minority side for this eventuality.

This budget will ensure that the prestigious Ways and Means Committee has the resources to tackle these important issues facing the American people. We take our stewardship of taxpayer dollars very seriously and the solemn responsibility that accompanies. We appreciate your consideration of our request. We hope that this will be the position that you will rest on as well.

Thanks again for having me. I thank Chairman Smith for working with us in consultation.

[The prepared statement of Representative Neal follows:]

Mrs. LEE.

[Presiding.] Thank you, Ranking Member Neal.

At this time, we will proceed to questions. We will start with 5 minutes in total of questions from the majority, and then we will have 5 minutes of questions from the minority.

With that, I recognize my colleague, Mr. Carey.

Mr. CAREY. I want to thank the Chair. I just want to say, for the record, this is a really strange position for me to be in because normally I am sitting a lot lower than both of you, so.

I want to thank you for joining us today, Mr. Chairman. Starting off, I notice that you mention recruiting and retaining staff is a challenge for our Committee due to them needing very particular expertise. As the work of the Ways and Means Committee is crucial to serving our country—you both outlined that—I am curious if you think that the increase in maximum pay rates in the Speaker's pay order has had any impact on the hiring or the retaining of our teams?

Mr. SMITH of Missouri. Mr. Carey, it absolutely has made a significant impact, what the Speaker did with the pay raise, to basically continue to hold onto some of the best staff that you could imagine. A lot of our staff could leave the Hill in a heartbeat and make double or maybe even triple of what we can pay them, but this allows them to at least feel more valued and have a competitive advantage.

Mr. CAREY. All right. I want to thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I also noticed in the budget request that you have asked for 36 more staff slots, which would bring the total number of the staff slots for the Committee to about 130. Can you explain why the Committee requires the additional staff? Also, did you end up using all of your staff slots in the 118th Congress?

Mr. SMITH of Missouri. Sure, great question. During the 118th Congress, we did in fact utilize all of our available staff slots. The Ways and Means Committee currently sits at 94, and we are requesting an increase to 130 slots, which would bring us in line with other Committees, specifically the Energy and Commerce Committee with similar size and scope of jurisdiction. This is important to ensure parity among Committees, but it will also be vital to making sure that the Ways and Means Committee is able to address the various pieces of our robust agenda as quickly and efficiently as possible. As you have seen in the last 3 weeks, trade and tax has been the discussion, and we have a lot of work to do in tax and trade.

Mr. CAREY. Again, thank you, Mr. Chairman. Is there anything else that you think is important for us to keep in mind when considering your budget request for the 119th Congress?

Mr. SMITH of Missouri. Just remember the Committee you serve on. That is a great thing to do, Mr. Carey.

Mr. CAREY. With that, I would just like to say that this is probably the first time—and I have to both of you—the Chairman and the Ranking Member, for those of us who sat on Ways and Means, they were the two Members that actually stayed when I would actually get to ask my questions. I thank you for that.

With that, Madam Chair, I yield back.

Mrs. LEE. The gentleman yields back.

At this time, the chair recognizes our Ranking Member, Ms. Sewell, for 5 minutes.

Ms. SEWELL. First of all, I want to thank the Chairman, Chairman Smith, as well as Ranking Member Neal. It has been my great honor to be part of the Ways and Means Committee for the last 5 Congresses. I want to say thank you for the yeoman's effort that you all do, this yeoman's job.

My question is—I ask the same question so I would like to begin by checking in with the chairs and the Ranking Member on the allocation to the minority. Generally, Committees follow the two-thirds/one-third split with some exceptions. I know you are here in agreement with the proposal, but I would like to just confirm that, if fully granted, the minority will have unrestricted access to the resources that they need.

Mr. SMITH of Missouri. Absolutely, the same that we have done in the past.

Mr. SEWELL. Awesome. How does your requested budget provide you with the ability to enhance and build your oversight capabilities? I wonder why I ask about Oversight.

Mr. SMITH of Missouri. It is terrific to have you as the Ranking Member of Oversight. Our Committee is better off with you in that place. The staff allotments I think is extremely important. We are at 94, and we are just trying to be at the same parity as Energy and Commerce, which—

Mr. SEWELL. Is a lesser Committee, we know. That was for the record, by the way.

Mr. SMITH of Missouri. I had to refrain from saying that.

Mr. SEWELL. You guys have trained me well.

Mr. SMITH of Missouri. I would not disagree with anything you have said so far. It would definitely help. We are going to be extremely busy moving forward with especially tax and trade and healthcare, for that matter. It would be nice for both the minority staff and the majority staff to have an—additional allotments, prospectively, I think it would be very helpful.

Ms. SEWELL. Are you proposing more field hearings? I just wanted to say that I attended several and thought that they were really helpful, and I am assuming it will still be bipartisan.

Mr. SMITH of Missouri. Absolutely. The field hearings, I am extremely proud of. Our very first Committee hearing was in West Virginia, in Petersburg, at a lumber yard that is now closed. We have gotten out to rural Americans, whether Staten Island port or whether it is the Iowa State Fair or the Native American Reserva-

tion in Arizona or the homeless shelter in Chicago. You are hearing from real Americans, and we will absolutely be continuing to do that to help make us better legislators. I think it is extremely important.

Mr. SEWELL. Awesome. Is your Committee receiving the necessary support from the U.S. Capitol and Sergeant at Arms? Is there something that we could be doing better?

Mr. SMITH of Missouri. They have been very good. They have been very helpful and really protect our Members whenever we are traveling.

Mr. SEWELL. Great. I wanted to give the Ranking Member, Richie Neal, an opportunity just to say, within the budget, I assume probably the most valuable is to make sure that we have good staff as well. Are you OK with the increase and the number of staff?

Mr. NEAL. Sure. In fact, I am pleased. The Ways and Means staffers are the best on Capitol Hill. I would say that to E&C, if they were here, without any hesitation. Smart, polite and always I think loyal to the Committee. I think that is terribly important. The Ways and Means Committee is a special designation in Congress; it always has been: tax, trade, tariffs, Social Security, Medicare, tax side of Medicaid, pensions, welfare, management of the public debt. That is extraordinary for a relatively small working Committee. I think it is reflected in staff and also in the quality of the Members that sit on that Committee. I have sharp disagreements with them, but never once would I question their motivations. I think that the Committee has always, since I have been on it, which has been for a long time, I think there has been an amicable, if not always publicly amicable, relationship privately.

Mr. SEWELL. Well, great. It is a pleasure, as I said, to be a part of the Ways and Means Committee, and it is because both you gentlemen take seriously your roles, and we really do appreciate that.

With that, I will yield back to the chair.

Mrs. LEE. The gentlewoman yields back.

At this time, I would like to thank the Chairman and the Ranking Member for your testimony and for appearing before us today.

Without objection, each Member including our witnesses, will have five legislative days to insert additional material into the record or to revise and extend their remarks.

If there is no further business, I thank the Members for their participation. Without objection, the Committee stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 2:25 p.m., the Committee was adjourned.]

