

Statement of
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Senior Democrat
Committee on Education and the Workforce
Before the Committee on House Administration
Hearing on "Review of the Use of Funds for the 112th Congress"
November 30, 2011

Chairman Lungren, Ranking Member Brady, Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to review the use of committee funds in the 112th Congress.

I would also like to thank Chairman Kline for his cooperation on the budget and other administrative matters during this first session.

As you know, the minority was allotted the customary one-third share of the total Committee budget. The Majority provided the Minority with autonomy over its share.

At the beginning of the year, the Minority's budget authority was \$2,782,085.

While the year is not complete yet, we are currently anticipating having a year-end balance of at least \$100,000.

As I said at our last appearance in March, Committees need sufficient funding to not only conduct their normal legislative and oversight business. But, they should also have sufficient funds to deal with sudden critical needs.

For example, our Committee has had to deal with sudden and tragic events like mine disasters. In the case of the 2007 Utah disaster, we had staff on the ground there for several days, gathering information on the rescue and recovery efforts.

Our investigation also required the services of an engineering firm to provide the Committee with expert analysis.

Another example is the BP oil spill. We had staff on the ground to gather information on cleanup worker health and safety.

All of these expenses, unexpected though they were, made for more effective oversight by the Committee.

In this first session of the 112th Congress, other kinds of contingencies have arisen.

We have had four staffers in critical positions on necessary family and medical leave simultaneously. This required the hiring of an additional staffer to fill in for two of these positions.

Chairman Kline was also kind to authorize our use of a detailee from the Department of Education, which has helped with the sudden workload.

For next year, we have begun making preparations for a cut of at least 6.4 percent to the Committee budget.

We do not seek to cut any staffer's salary. Those salaries are hard-earned with long hours. To retain and attract top quality staff, we need to avoid cutting too deeply into our overall staffing budget.

Instead, we plan on focusing most of our cuts in other areas, such as equipment.

This has meant that we are now in the process of upgrading key pieces of equipment this year, including replacing five-year-old servers that have begun slowing down computers.

We're making these investments now, to avoid having to dedicate a significant sum of money to these issues in next year's tighter budget.

Obviously, the 6.4 percent cut could make it difficult for the Committee to effectively and efficiently deal with contingencies that may arise, like those investigative needs that can strike at any time.

And I expect next year to be a busy one.

I can assure you that, whatever funds are made available by our budget, they will be put to appropriate and efficient use.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify, and I am happy to answer any questions.

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