

Statement of Chris Van Hollen  
Ranking Democrat, House Budget Committee  
November 30, 2011  
10:30 a.m.  
1310 Longworth House Office Building

**Review of the Use of Committee Funds of the 112th Congress**

Thank you, Chairman Lungren, for providing this opportunity to testify about the Budget Committee's use of funds in the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress.

I am pleased to join Chairman Ryan today in discussing the Budget Committee's funding. Our Committee has a long and successful history of bipartisan cooperation and collegiality in requesting and disbursing the Committee budget.

In keeping with past policies, in the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress the majority has made one-third of the funding and resources available to the minority for personnel. The majority budget continues to cover costs of equipment for both staffs, providing the same quality and services for both majority and minority.

Across the country, federal, state and local budgets are being cut in light of deficits, and the Budget Committee is doing the same. In fact, we have long been appropriately frugal with federal funds. Our Committee's budget is the same this year as it was in 2004. For eight years in a row, we did not ask for a funding increase. During that period, other House committee budgets increased by an average of 21 percent, with one committee budget increasing by 84 percent. The Budget Committee is the only House committee whose funding is the same in 2011 as it was in 2004. In comparison, the committee with the smallest growth grew by 8 percent in that time.

After years of maintaining a productive staff with the same funding level, as you know this year we took a 5 percent cut in the total budget, as all House committees did. That austere total budget combined with going into the minority required the Democratic staff to make painful personnel decisions. We had to lay off several staffers – some of whom had served the Committee for more than a decade – and to impose a 5 percent pay cut for the remaining staff. And this cut in staff pay affected only the Democratic staff, as the majority side of the Budget Committee has never used all of its allocation, regardless of the party in power. That means that the majority could absorb a 5 percent cut in total payroll without having to cut any staff salaries.

We are fortunate to have an excellent and productive staff that we want to keep. However, it's important that they receive fair compensation commensurate with their credentials and hard

work. Our staff has been working overtime since January, first on the budget resolution, then on the deficit talks chaired by Vice President Biden this summer, and then on the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction this fall. The minority Committee staff is definitely doing more with less.

We know that next year promises to be an equally important and busy year for the budget and thus for our committee's workload. A third round of funding cuts in one year – from the majority to the minority, with an additional 5 percent cut this year and then a further cut of 6.4 percent for 2012 – will have a very detrimental impact on the minority staff. This could mean a pay cut of more than 10 percent for each staffer in just one year. Again, this cut will not affect staff salaries on the majority side, which can absorb that funding cut without lowering staff salaries. Cutting the minority payroll by 6.4 percent will affect not only our staff's morale, but also our ability to retain and attract professionals who can continue to undertake such high quality work. We are competing with organizations in the private sector for those with the specific skills and knowledge of federal budgeting, and if we continue to cut pay, we will inevitably lose some of our best staff.

I join my colleagues in acknowledging that the federal government is on a fiscally unsustainable path. We all have been working hard to change that, and that involves painful sacrifices as we set priorities. As we move forward in deciding where and how to trim Congress's budget, I urge you to keep in mind the very negative effects that an across-the-board budget cut will have on the minority side of this Committee, which already has a very disciplined budget that remains at the level it was in 2004.