

Chairman Towns Announces Committee's Deficit Reduction Efforts

WASHINGTON – Chairman Edolphus "Ed" Towns (D-NY) released the following details on the Oversight and Government Reform Committee's efforts to comply with H. Res. 1493, the House-passed Budget Enforcement Resolution. According to H. Res. 1493, Chairman Towns must identify Committee actions that help achieve deficit reduction by reducing waste, fraud, and abuse in government programs, promoting efficiency and government reform, and controlling spending in the government programs.

□ **Statement of Chairman Edolphus Towns, Chairman** □

Committee on Oversight and Government Reform

Regarding the Committee's Deficit Reduction Activities

September 15, 2010

Dear Madame Speaker:

Pursuant to subsection (c)(2) of H. Res. 1493, the House-passed Budget Enforcement Resolution, I am submitting the following information for printing in the Congressional Record. The Budget Enforcement Resolution requires that I identify the Committee actions that help achieve deficit reduction by reducing waste, fraud, and abuse in government programs, promoting efficiency and government reform, and controlling spending in the government programs. This requirement reflects the House's commitment to deficit reduction and bringing about a more efficient and accountable government for the American people. As Chairman of the Oversight Committee, I am pleased to comply with this requirement.

Your letter of September 2, 2010, identifies some of the important legislative steps the Committee has taken to promote deficit reduction, fiscal responsibility, and government reform in the 111th Congress. The Oversight Committee and the House of Representatives passed the Government Efficiency, Effectiveness and Performance Improvement Act, H.R. 2142. As your letter acknowledges, the enhanced oversight provided by this legislation will significantly cut government waste. In addition, the Committee approved the Improper Payments Elimination and Reduction Act, H.R. 3393, which was also signed into law (as S. 1508) on July 22, 2010. The Office of Management and Budget recently reported that the federal government made an astonishing \$98 billion in duplicate, erroneous, or undocumented payments in 2009. The Committee's and the House's efforts, in passing H.R. 3393, will provide the government with the tools it needs to recover these overpayments for the American taxpayers and stop them from occurring in the first instance.

In addition to these important reforms, the Oversight Committee is pursuing a broad-based approach to deficit reduction and budget savings. The Committee's actions include direct oversight of agencies to improve and address inefficient practices that would result in over \$19.4 billion in budget savings. The Committee also has advanced legislative

reforms to strengthen the internal watchdogs at government agencies, improve the investigative and auditing arm of Congress, empower federal workers to fight fraud and waste without fear of retaliation, improve government efficiency by facilitating the sale of surplus federal real property, and save hundreds of millions of tax dollars by expediting the transition of government-wide telecommunication services. These efforts are described below.

Holding Agencies Accountable for the Implementation of Over \$19.4 billion in Cost Savings Reforms

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At the request of the Oversight Committee, Inspectors General from across the government identified improvements and efficiencies in government operations that would result in over \$19.4 billion in savings to the federal budget if fully implemented. As the country begins to recover from the economic crisis, the American public should have confidence that agencies will be held accountable for taking any actions necessary to recover such significant savings of their hard-earned tax dollars. The Oversight Committee will monitor implementation of each of these IG recommendations. The Committee will require agency heads to report back on the steps they are taking to recoup these savings for the U.S. taxpayers, to provide a timeline for the realization of these savings, and detail any administrative or legislative action needed to bring about these savings and efficiencies.

Strengthening the IG Community

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The Oversight Committee is also taking legislative action to promote better and more efficient government. This September, the Committee plans to bring legislation (H.R. 5815) to the floor of the House of Representatives that will better equip Inspectors General to fulfill their statutory mission of rooting out waste and fraud in the federal government. The legislation complements and strengthens the Committee's ongoing oversight efforts in this area. The legislation will *require*

corrective action by government agencies to address IG cost saving recommendations. A statutory mandate will remove the bureaucratic inertia and barriers that too often slow or thwart agency efforts to tackle inefficiencies that account for billions of dollars in unnecessary spending every year. The legislation will also provide IGs with the tools they need to conduct complete and thorough investigations of waste, fraud, and abuse in government contracting. Collectively, the reforms in H.R. 5815 will strengthen the authority of IGs so they can better fulfill their important mission of fighting waste and protecting the interests of the taxpayers.

Improving the GAO

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During this Congress, the House of Representatives passed legislation (H.R. 2646) sponsored by the Oversight Committee that will strengthen the authority and effectiveness of the General Accountability Office (GAO). The GAO helps inform the Congress, Executive agencies, and the public about areas and programs within the federal government that are performing well, and those that need to be improved or are vulnerable to waste, fraud, and abuse. GAO audits provide reliable assessments as to whether the taxpayers are receiving full value from important government programs. H.R. 2646, which is awaiting action in the Senate, will increase the effectiveness of GAO by ensuring that GAO is not unnecessarily restricted in its efforts to secure necessary information in the course of performing its auditing and investigative functions for the Congress.

Empowering Federal Employees to Combat Waste, Fraud, and Abuse

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The Oversight Committee is committed to advancing H.R. 1507, the Whistleblower Protection Enhancement Act of 2009, and is currently negotiating with the Senate on this essential reform. Similar legislation was passed as part of the Recovery Act in the beginning of the Congress, but was unfortunately stripped out in conference with the Senate. The government should make every effort to ensure that tax dollars are not misspent or vulnerable to waste, fraud, or abuse. Federal employees at financial and other agencies throughout the government are often the first to witness abuses or illegality that presents a risk to the taxpayer. They are in a position to call attention to waste in government operations because they see what is happening inside our government on a day-to-day basis. Providing strong protections for those who disclose misconduct helps to promote a more accountable and transparent federal bureaucracy. Importantly, the legislation also extends strong whistleblower protections to employees of government contractors.

Facilitating Savings through Sales of Real Property

Last September, the Oversight Committee favorably reported H.R. 2495, the Federal Real Property Disposal Act. This legislation would encourage the sale of surplus federal real property by allowing the General Services Administration to use its funds to prepare unneeded properties to be reported excess. It would also allow agencies to retain the proceeds from the sale of surplus real property. These measures would implement recommendations by GAO, which has stated in its High-Risk Series that the funding needed to prepare property for disposal and some agencies' inability to retain sale proceeds have been longstanding barriers to the sale of surplus property. The language of H.R. 2495 is being added to S. 1510, the United States Secret Service Uniformed Division Modernization Act, and the Oversight Committee is currently negotiating with the Senate on final language for the bill.

Edolphus Towns

Chairman