



Chairman Tom Graves

*Subcommittee on the Legislative Branch
House Committee on Appropriations*

**Full Committee Markup – FY 2016 Legislative Branch Appropriations Bill
April 30, 2015
Opening Statement As Prepared**

Thank you, Chairman Rogers, and Members of the Committee.

First, I would like to thank the chairman for trusting me with this bill - my first as a subcommittee chairman.

You know, the process of crafting this bill reminded me of running a triathlon. When you start, you have a burst of energy. But then you hit a wall that you have to push through and overcome...maybe we hit a few of those walls in this process! Then realizing how close you are to finishing and completing such a major accomplishment, you gain that second wind...and that's where I'm at today!

In seriousness, when I joined this Committee a little over 4 years ago, I said that I wanted this committee to be known as a place where taxpayer money was saved, not spent. And in recent years there's been a major change in the perception of this committee, thanks in large part to the leadership of Chairman Rogers. The process is open and transparent, and this committee has made a priority of ensuring every taxpayer dollar is spent wisely. And in keeping with that trend, the bill we are here to discuss today holds the line on spending. It's a bill that honors and respects taxpayers, but one that also preserves the beauty of the Capitol campus, provides essential security for visitors and staff, and ensures that we are able to provide the services that our constituents expect and deserve.

This bill provides a total of \$3.3 billion for the Legislative Branch, excluding Senate items.

The bill continues the freeze on funding for the House of Representatives, including leadership, Committees and member office budgets. It also continues the member pay freeze that was put in place in 2010. In all, this represents a 14 percent reduction in funding for the House of Representatives since Republicans gained control of Congress in January 2011.

More specifically, this bill increases funding for the Capitol Police and allows small increases for several other agencies, while trimming budgets in less critical areas.

This bill recognizes the continuing challenges faced by the Architect of the Capitol— there's a balance that must be struck between preserving these historic buildings and funding other critical projects, including life safety projects. Overall, the Architect's budget is one that was trimmed.

This bill puts a new emphasis on transparency and accountability in the major construction

projects under the Architect. That's why this bill transitions to direct appropriations for the Cannon restoration project rather than continue to use the House Historic Building Revitalization fund. This change will significantly improve the committee's ability to provide oversight for this major project.

Additionally, this bill includes language that places a 25% cap on the amount available for the larger projects within the Legislative Branch. In order to receive the remainder of the appropriation, this new oversight feature requires a plan for any projects over \$5 million to be submitted to the GAO and the Committee for approval. The plan must address any projected changes to the project's schedule and costs, and it must include a description of the safeguards taken to ensure the project remains on time and on budget.

Regarding the Library of Congress, this bill includes funding to meet the Library's current needs, including an increase for the Copyright Office to reduce claims processing and analyze possible process improvements. Additionally, the Committee will be working with the Library in the upcoming months to track its progress in addressing its critical IT infrastructure problems, which were identified in a recent GAO report.

Finally, a tight budget requires making some sacrifices, and so this bill includes \$1 million to begin the orderly shutdown of the Open World Leadership Center. The fact is, the Open World Leadership Center was created as a one-time exchange program, but like many government programs, it has long outlasted its usefulness. While there is certainly a role for the U.S. Government to play in this type of outreach, there are approximately 95 similar programs already administered government-wide.

In closing, I would like to thank Ranking Member Wasserman Schultz, Chairman Rogers, Ms. Lowey, the members of our Subcommittee and Full Committee, and staff for their hard work throughout this process.

This is a product we can be proud of.

#####