

Chairman Rodney Frelinghuysen
House Committee on Appropriations
115th Congress Organizational Meeting
January 24, 2017

The Committee will come to order.

Good morning. Welcome to the first meeting of the Committee on Appropriations for the 115th Congress.

We meet today to consider and adopt our Committee rules and subcommittee jurisdictions. You may notice that the agenda of this organizational meeting differs from previous years – we are no longer required to adopt a Committee oversight plan.

Due to a House rules change, submission of formal Committee oversight plans is now exclusively the responsibility of the authorizing committees. Authorization committees in turn are now required to submit copies of their reports to the Appropriations Committee so we can keep track of their progress. Regardless of this change, I want to assure everyone that this committee will continue to perform the same rigorous oversight over programs as we have always done.

I also want to extend a special thanks to Steve Womack for his work on the Speaker's organizational task force, which ultimately led to this change. Steve was the Committee's representative on the task force over the last six months, and was charged with protecting our priorities. We're indebted to his service.

Before we turn to the business at hand, I would like to say what an honor it is to serve as the Chairman of this Committee – to work alongside each and every Member in this room, and for all of us to work on behalf of all Members of the House. I look forward to a productive year for this Committee and this Congress.

I also want to thank Chairman Rogers for his service to this Committee and to this nation over the past six years. I hope I may build on the successes of his chairmanship: continuing to reduce federal spending responsibly; streamlining government operations; maintaining strong oversight over how taxpayer dollars are spent; and, yes, protecting federal programs that Americans rely on.

Thank you all for your commitment to making these goals a reality – both in the past and as we move forward. You will each play a vital role in these efforts. As appropriators, we have a very important power – the power of the purse – and it's important we treat this responsibility with respect.

I ask that we work together, in a bipartisan way, with programs under our jurisdiction. Members should physically get off the Hill and visit the departments and programs that we have jurisdiction over, to let them know that we are interested and involved in how the programs are being carried out. How we spend our time reflects our priorities.

I asked all of our Subcommittee Chairs to hold Member public hearing days on each their subcommittees, to encourage all Members to be involved and to work with us. We want all of

our colleagues to know we are open and interested in their input, their perspective, and their support of our 12 bills on the floor.

As you might guess, it's going to be a busy spring. We have a lot on our schedule: We must complete the 11 remaining fiscal year 2017 bills by the end of April – if not sooner – and we also must complete our regular, fiscal year 2018 work – holding necessary oversight hearings, then drafting and bringing these bills to the floor.

Although this may seem daunting, I believe that we are all up to the task. It's going to take a lot of aggressive scheduling and time management – but I'm optimistic that we can come together as a committee to find common ground on these goals.

My partner in these efforts is Nita Lowey, who returns to her role as Full Committee Ranking Member. We both share a commitment to completing our Appropriations work on time and under regular order, and pride in our Appropriations Committee. Nita, your collegiality and dedication have served this committee well over the last four years, and I look forward to continuing that good relationship this Congress.

Before I turn to Mrs. Lowey for her opening remarks, I would like to extend a warm welcome to the three new Republican members of the Committee – and I know Mrs. Lowey will introduce the new members on her side shortly: Rep. Dan Newhouse of Washington's 4th District; Rep. John Moolenaar of Michigan's 4th District; and Rep. Scott Taylor of Virginia's 2nd District.

We're all looking forward to working with you this year.

You may also recognize some new faces up here at the dais, including Nancy Fox, who has assumed the role of Committee Staff Director from Will Smith. Nancy joins the Committee from my personal office, and I have every faith that she will do an excellent job in this critical role. As with Will, you should feel free to reach out to her with any concerns you may have. I also want to thank Will for his years of service on this committee. Chairman Rogers and Will have been enormously helpful during this transition.

Finally, I would like to recognize and thank the three members from the majority side who will serve as our representatives on the Budget Committee: Tom Cole, Mario Diaz-Balart, and Steve Womack – all continuing in this role from last Congress. I know they will represent our committee well as they take on this task again.

Before I recognize Mrs. Lowey, a quick bit of house-keeping: This year, Scott Taylor and Pete Aguilar will serve as co-chairs of the Committee Flower Fund.

For those of you unfamiliar with this practice, the committee uses this fund to send flowers or food baskets to the family of a Member who has experienced an illness, lost a family member, or is celebrating the birth of a child. As we open the 115th Congress, it is time to replenish our coffers (which are empty), so I request that each Member make a contribution of \$20 to the fund today or in the near future.

Again, I look forward to a successful year. Thank you for being here today.

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