

Statement of Chris Van Hollen
Ranking Democrat, House Budget Committee
March 6, 2013
11:00 a.m.
1310 Longworth House Office Building

Review of the Use of Committee Funds of the 113th Congress

Thank you, Chairman Miller and Ranking Member Brady, for providing this opportunity to testify about the Budget Committee's use of funds in the 113th Congress.

I am pleased to be testifying alongside Chairman Ryan, demonstrating once again that the Budget Committee has a long-standing and proud tradition of bipartisan cooperation and collegiality in requesting and disbursing the Committee's budget.

In keeping with past policies, in the 113th Congress the majority will make 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.

The current cut in federal spending under sequestration requires the federal government to continue functioning with less funding. And in fact, the minority Committee staff has already been doing more with less. As my colleague pointed out, in addition to marking up a budget resolution each year, we marked up and brought to the floor several bills making budget process changes, and last year held a reconciliation bill markup and then considered the bill on the floor twice. Our staff also participated in the deficit talks chaired by Vice President Biden and the subsequent debt ceiling issues and the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction in 2011, and in the fiscal cliff negotiations at the end of 2012.

In the last year, our minority staff had some staff retirements and other departures, and we lowered our expenditures significantly by leaving the vacancies for several months. But last year's low annual payroll does not reflect what it will take for us to operate this year now that we have filled the necessary vacancies. We are very fortunate to have an excellent and productive staff that we want to keep. It's important that they receive fair compensation commensurate with their credentials and hard 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.

The Budget Committee has a long history of being frugal with our federal funds. We will continue that trend going forward as we grapple with the challenge of putting the federal budget on a fiscally sustainable path.