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February 3, 2015

**STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN PETE SESSIONS BEFORE THE
COMMITTEE ON HOUSE ADMINISTRATION
REGARDING THE COMMITTEE ON RULES' 114TH CONGRESS BUDGET
REQUEST**

Thank you Madam Chair, Ranking Member Brady, and Members of the Committee on House Administration. I am here today with my Ranking Member, the gentlelady from New York (Mrs. Slaughter) to testify on the Rules Committee's budget request for the One Hundred Fourteenth Congress.

All of us recognize the fiscal challenges that face the Nation. Outside of the Committee on Rules, the House has 20 other committees, all of which work on their individual policy areas and recommend legislation to the House. The Rules Committee stands alone as the committee charged with facilitating the consideration of other committees' work. Without the Rules Committee, it would be virtually impossible for the House to consider anything other than the least controversial bills.

Where other committees have weeks and months to prepare their work product, the Rules Committee's agenda is measured in days, hours, and minutes. Currently we are small, we are flexible, and we deliver on our objectives. We do it with the second-smallest budget of any committee in Congress.

I come before the Committee on House Administration today to tell you first and foremost that regardless of our budget, we will accomplish our mission. We will do it because we have to; this is our responsibility. I also want to emphasize, however, that if we suffer any significant funding cuts and our current funding levels are not maintained, it will have an impact on our work: we will be less flexible, we will be less transparent, and we will be diminished in the ability to meet the needs of the House of Representatives. Additionally, without sufficient funding, costs that could be borne more effectively by the Rules Committee will instead be shifted to the House and other legislative branch agencies at a much higher cost.

I urge the House Administration Committee to consider providing the Rules Committee with sufficient funding to accomplish our mission. I believe that the Rules Committee's track record is one of providing strong value for an extremely modest investment, completing its business in the most cost-effective manner possible.

THE REAL IMPACT OF CUTS TO THE RULES COMMITTEE

Insufficient resources can have very real effects for all committees. For other committees insufficient funding can result in fewer oversight hearings; smaller, less responsive committee staffs; and longer delays in filing reports. Many of those committees can tailor their workload to the available resources. In contrast, the Committee on Rules has no ability to turn down work in response to insufficient resources. When the House is considering legislation, the Rules Committee must be open for business. Preparing legislation for the floor has certain fixed costs; if the Rules Committee does not have the resources to meet the need, those costs don't disappear — they are just shifted to the House. Insufficient funding would mean longer lead times and a greater expense to the House as a whole, when the Rules Committee could produce the same product more quickly and less expensively. As I stated earlier, the Rules Committee will deliver on its responsibilities, but proper funding will give the Committee the financial resources to complete those duties in the most efficient and cost effective manner possible.

The Impact on Automation and Document Production. The Committee has invested heavily in its custom automated workflow system (called CORED) over the last decade, as well as maintained organizational discipline in technology advancement planning and execution. Our budget request includes significant funding for our technology contractors to maintain current in-place systems and while giving us the financial flexibility to make improvements when the needs arise.

In coordination with the Clerk's office and our contractor, we are working to ensure the ability for CORED to produce a valid XML file that can be merged with files provided by the Office of Legislative Counsel to produce a complete report that is ready for GPO to print and the House to post online. In the last Congress we filed 107 committee reports. Achieving "In-Committee production" of these reports would produce significant savings, better work product, fewer errors, as well as produce a standard that other Committees could follow and experience similar benefits.

The Rules Committee often has to produce documents for the House under tight deadlines, sometimes well after business hours. As a result, we are heavy users of our printing and copying equipment, as well as greatly dependent on technology resources that are specific to the Committee. To lessen the possibility of failed technology impacting our mission, we regularly update and replace our computers, copiers, and printers; as well as engage with outside

contractors to ensure that all of our equipment and automated systems are operating at peak efficiency.

Unlike other, larger committees where the effects of a device malfunction or automated system failure are confined to that committee, a breakdown at the Rules Committee is farther reaching. Because our documents need to be filed with the House on the same legislative day that we meet, the House will remain in session waiting on the Rules Committee's work product. If we have an equipment or system failure that delays the filing of our report, the House must remain in session and all of the personnel — including police officers, chamber security personnel, clerks, official reporters, and recording studio personnel — must remain on-duty, earning overtime. Even a short delay can cost the House tens of thousands of dollars in increased operating expenses.

Ultimately, insufficient funding of the Rules Committee's staffing and technology needs produces a greater, more expensive overall risk to the House for possible delays in the schedule and the costs associated with those delays.

The Impact on Transparency. Our current award-winning website averages over 80,000 hits per day, with peak days reaching nearly half a million hits. We distribute live hearings online and maintain an online video library of past hearings for the last four years. We maintain a large informational and noticing database and distribution system that provides a high level of transparency and public accountability. Insufficient funding to these areas will compromise maintenance, proper staffing, upkeep, and development of these public resources.

Because the work done by the Rules Committee is different from that of other committees, the standard committee website designed by the CAO's staff does not have the capabilities to deliver the kind of information that the public has come to expect. The Committee was told early in the website's development process that the CAO would be unable to dedicate the staff resources to customize the template. Accordingly, we *must* rely on outside contractors for the development and maintenance of our site.

If the Rules Committee does not receive adequate funding by the House Administration Committee, we will only be able to fund basic maintenance work on the website and other technology-based transparency initiatives. Without continued funding we will be unable to advance any changes needed to reduce Committee costs or make other improvements for Members or the public in the interest of transparency, such as paperless hearings.

EFFECT OF BUDGET CUTS ON THE MINORITY

During the 112th Congress the Rules Committee gave the Minority full control over its one-third of the budget. This arrangement has worked well over the course of the 112th and 113th Congresses, and it is a tradition that I intend to continue.

The effects of any cut on the Minority, however, will be immediate and substantial. The Majority's budget and staff is small; the Minority's is smaller. Any cut could mean that they would be forced to choose between layoffs, furloughs, and purchasing office supplies for basic office functionality. The Minority's small size also leads them to contract out for IT assistance; they have no dedicated IT personnel. Any substantial funding cut could prohibit them from continuing to contract for technical support and maintenance services, leaving them vulnerable to failures while the Committee is operating.

Every majority needs a fully functioning minority; it's essential for our democracy. A cut of this magnitude would do a disservice to the minority members of the Committee, and the House as a whole.

THE DECISION BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON HOUSE ADMINISTRATION

While the Committee on Rules is a standing committee, its function is different than any other. Without the Committee on Rules operating at peak efficiency, the entire House of Representatives institution suffers.

I am asking you today to consider continuing to fund the Rules Committee at 2014 authorized levels for the 114th Congress. We have the second smallest budget of any committee. While an increase in the funding of the Rules Committee would have little effect on the House Committees overall financial picture, even a "modest" decrease in funding would have disproportionately large implications. Our Committee's responsibility is the timely delivery of business to the floor, maintaining the Speaker's commitment to transparency in the legislative process, and the fair and efficient handling of Member requests. With this in mind, I ask for no increase in funding; the Rules Committee believes that with current spending levels we can execute our organizational goals while maintaining the flexibility to arise to challenges.

Over the last 10 years, my predecessors made investments in the Committee to ensure that it can deliver on our mission. We strive for better governance with a Committee and House that delivers better work product faster and cheaper.

Madam Chair, I appreciate the willingness of the Committee to listen our concerns, and I stand ready to work with you to ensure that the Rules Committee can continue to deliver on our mission.

I stand ready to answer any questions you may have.