

**Testimony before the Committee on House Administration**  
**Committee on Ethics**  
**Remarks by Ranking Member Linda T. Sánchez**  
**February 11, 2015**

Good afternoon Chairman Miller, Ranking Member Brady, and members of the Committee. Thank you for the chance to talk about the work of the Ethics Committee and its budget needs.

At the outset, I would like to say how much I am looking forward to working with Chairman Dent. This will be our third Congress serving on the Ethics Committee together. Also, most of our colleagues on the Committee are returning Members. All of us have worked very well together, and it's worth noting that all of our votes in the last Congress were unanimous.

Our Committee also enjoys a good relationship with your committee. We work with House Administration probably more closely than any other committee, and we appreciate the opportunity to work with you on things like New Member Orientation and other issues of common concern that affect the House.

We understand that your committee has an unenviable task. Dividing a pool of limited resources among all of the committees, each of which has important work to do, is not easy. Others have compared this to fairly divvying up a pie.

In our case, there is a better metaphor. The resources allocated to the Committee are less like dessert and more like vitamins ó a necessary supplement to make not only our Committee, but the whole House, stronger.

This is true because of the unique role the Committee plays in interpreting and enforcing the House's ethics rules, as the Chairman discussed.

We recognize that in recent years, all committees have had to make do with fewer resources than they might like. But in the case of the Ethics Committee, its responsibilities have actually increased.

The House has repeatedly chosen to give the Ethics Committee additional responsibilities. For example, in the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress, the Committee was charged with reviewing and approving all requests to accept privately sponsored travel; providing ethics training to Members and enforcing a mandatory requirement for the roughly 10,000 employees of the House; and reviewing recommendations of a newly created entity, the Office of Congressional Ethics.

Similarly, in the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress, the Committee was charged with administering the new financial disclosure requirements of the STOCK Act.

In this Congress, the House made it mandatory for new Members of the House to complete ethics training soon after entering the House.

In recognition of these growing responsibilities, several years ago the Ethics Committee received an increase in its staff cap, to 29 slots. However, because of the budget climate since that time, the Committee has never been fully staffed at its current cap.

Despite the fact that we not been able to reach our full staff cap, the Committee's staff has done an extraordinary amount of work to serve the House. In December, the Committee issued a 250-page summary of its activities for the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress. That report is available to the House and the public on our web site, [ethics.house.gov](http://ethics.house.gov). A few figures from that report illustrate the scope of the Committee's work for the House. In the last Congress, the Committee:

- Issued more than 320 formal advisory opinions regarding ethics rules;
- Fielded nearly 40,000 informal telephone calls, emails, and in-person requests for guidance on ethics issues;
- Released 18 advisory memoranda (or pink sheets) on various ethics topics to the House;
- Provided training to approximately 10,000 House Members, officers, and employees each year;
- Received more than 5,000 Financial Disclosure Statements and amendments filed by House Members, officers, senior staff, and House candidates; and
- Received nearly 3,000 Periodic Transaction Reports filed by House Members, officers, and senior staff, detailing thousands of financial transactions.

The Committee has been able meet its responsibilities to the House and produce this extraordinary amount of work because of our greatest resource: our talented, nonpartisan staff.

Again in the last Congress the Committee's staff handled our increased workload with excellence and professionalism, even though we were short of our maximum staff slot allowance. This is possible because we have built a dedicated, experienced team.

The Ethics Committee has one of the smallest budgets of any House committee. About 95 percent of our budget is spent on staff salaries. Staff recruitment and retention remains a challenge in the current budget climate ó particularly for a committee like Ethics, which needs attorneys with very specialized knowledge and experience.

All of the staff on the Ethics Committee are important and valued members of our team. We are grateful for their service to the Committee and to the House.

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear here today. We look forward to your questions.

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