

Ranking Member Eliot L. Engel
House Committee on Foreign Affairs
Statement before the Committee on House Administration
February 15, 2017

Chairman Harper, Ranking Member Brady, Members of the Committee, thank you for inviting me to testify today.

I've always believed that foreign policy should be as bipartisan as possible, and over the past four years, Chairman Ed Royce and I have established a very productive working relationship. We've worked together with Members on both sides of the aisle at a consistently fast tempo to address an unprecedented number of foreign policy challenges and crises around the world.

In the 114th Congress, the Committee passed 24 bills that were signed into law on issues ranging from food security to human trafficking to promoting good relations with the nations of the Caribbean. We passed a State Department Authorities bill, which included critical provisions on embassy security. And we held hearings on a wide range of critical issues, including the fight

against ISIS, Russian aggression in Ukraine, Iran's nuclear weapons program, North Korea's development of WMD, and many others.

Even in this time of great political polarization, I think we, and our staffs, can continue to get a lot done for the good of the country and the world.

But, given the massive challenges we face around the globe, our ability to keep pace with international threats and opportunities has been hampered by significant cuts to the Committee budget. In 2013, our budget was reduced by almost 12% -- the highest percentage cut sustained by any Committee. And in the two years before that, we were cut by 5% and 6%. In 2014, we were pleased to get a 1% increase, but that still leaves us well below where I think we need to be.

These cumulative cuts have made it more difficult to hire and retain experienced Committee staff to help us navigate the many complex national security challenges that confront our nation.

It has also complicated the efforts of the Committee to conduct effective oversight of the State Department, USAID and other agencies under our jurisdiction and to craft legislation authorizing these institutions.

I strongly support the Chairman's request for a 7% increase in the Committee budget. In this time of great change, both at home and abroad, this would begin the process of rebuilding the capacity of the Committee to more effectively meet our responsibilities.

Thank you again for inviting me to testify, and I look forward to answering any questions you may have.