

**WRITTEN TESTIMONY
THE HONORABLE GREG WALDEN
CHAIRMAN
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE**

BEFORE

**THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ADMINISTRATION
February 15, 2017**

**Budget Request for the Committee on Energy and Commerce
For the 115th Congress**

**Written Testimony of the Honorable Greg Walden
Chairman
House Committee on Energy and Commerce

115th Congress Budget Request**

Chairman Harper, Ranking Minority Member Brady, and Members of the Committee, I am grateful for the opportunity to testify before you today in support of the Committee on Energy and Commerce's budget request for the 115th Congress. My Committee has previously provided you with a formal request, so my testimony will be brief.

Let me begin by expressing our deep appreciation for the resources you provided to upgrade our primary Committee room in the last Congress. 2123 Rayburn is back in action and the high tech upgrades are being put to good use. Thank you.

Every committee has felt the pinch of budget cuts these last ten years. Our total allocation is down over \$4 million from 2009 to 2016, and that is in static funds, not taking into account higher costs across the board due to a decade of inflation. With an eye towards fiscal responsibility, but fully acknowledging the significant work ahead of us in the 115th Congress, Ranking Member Pallone and I developed a budget that we believe is a realistic assessment of our coming needs. We request a 5% increase over what we were allocated last Congress to add a limited number of staff positions. All of these additional funds would go toward staffing needs.

To be most effective, we need to continue to attract and retain experienced staff. First year associates at K Street law firms

receive salaries of at least \$160,000 per year. Most, if not all, of the business before the Committee on Energy and Commerce requires the expertise of individuals with experience in their fields – telecommunications and technology policy, energy and environmental law, health care, and rigorous oversight and investigations ability. If lawyers just out of law school are being paid \$160,000 per year, you can imagine what experienced professional staff and counsels could earn.

That is the competition we face. While our goal should not be to match K Street salaries, we must acknowledge the realities of the market and adjust our compensation structure accordingly to attract those interested in public service.

Beyond staffing needs, we also need help to effectively address some of the most complex and far-reaching issues before Congress in the coming months. A few thoughts on our agenda:

While Energy and Commerce is always busy (last Congress, we held 185 hearings and 47 markups), we expect this Congress to be even more demanding. Regardless of who is in charge, our committee's responsibility on health care issues requires an increased investment of member and staff time and resources. The E & C Committee has an aggressive oversight and legislative schedule that includes acting soon to reauthorize the expiring FDA user fee programs, reauthorize the Children's Health Insurance Program and reauthorize the country's community health centers, and oversee implementation of 21st Century Cures – there is no doubt that health care issues will keep us busy.

Other issues on our agenda in which we intend to invest significant time and resources include the following:

- Energy and environmental infrastructure: We intend to answer the President's call to address the infrastructure crisis

by moving bipartisan legislation through our committee. We will look at all areas of energy infrastructure – including, nuclear, pipelines, and modernizing the electric grid. Our goal is to put the consumer first, create jobs and invest in America’s infrastructure and innovation.

- Cybersecurity, privacy, encryption, and data breach are all high profile areas of the Committee’s technology jurisdiction. Working with stakeholders, the Committee intends to examine and address the threats and opportunities present in each of these areas.
- Communications law: For the first time in decades, the Committee intends to move telecommunications reauthorization bills. The modern world needs modern regulatory structures and we intend to reauthorize the communications agencies in our jurisdiction so they can efficiently and expertly operate in the 21st Century.

As my predecessors from past Congresses have testified before you, there will be areas where Frank and I agree and areas where we will disagree. But to properly serve the American people, we agree that we need additional, but modest, increases in our resources.

Again, I thank the Committee for the opportunity to testify today, and of course will be happy to answer any questions.