

Thank you Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member for allowing me to include this written statement for today's important markup of my bill, H.R. 1669, the Judgment Fund Transparency Act.

H.R. 1669 is a good government transparency bill that will go a long way to providing our constituents and taxpayers a better idea of how their tax dollars are spent.

The Federal government isn't perfect, and is prone to errors that cause harm to individuals and organizations. When these errors are particularly egregious, the government is sued and damages are awarded to those who were harmed. Early on, Congress resolved each of these claims through appropriations, as the power of the purse is vested in this institution. In fact, not even a hundred years ago much of this body's work was resolving who got paid and when. That changed in 1956 when Congress established the Judgment Fund and gave authority to the Treasury Department to resolve these claims as a "permanent, indefinite appropriation."

In keeping with the law's requirement to report on the fund from "time to time," the Treasury Department files a yearly report on the Judgment Fund with Congress and also maintains a webpage that can be searched. However, the cryptic and otherwise limited information related to each payout has made the database almost entirely useless. There is no information on what the government did wrong nor is there information on the claimant. Journalists and transparency groups revealed a few months ago that between 2009-2015, the Federal Government paid over \$25 million out of the Judgment Fund to "unnamed" or "redacted" recipients.

By now we're all familiar with the Administration's decision to take \$1.3 billion out of the fund, convert it to cash, and deliver it to Iran. Yet this isn't the only recent egregious use of the fund. 3 years ago, the *New York Times* reported on what was likely an illegal billion dollar payout to thousands of minority farmers who never even sued the government. This is simply unacceptable.

This bill aims to clean up the ambiguity that exists within the current law and provide much needed transparency. Specifically, this legislation will require Treasury to make public any payment from the judgment fund and include: The name of the agency named in the judgment; the name of the plaintiff or claimant; the amount paid in principal liability and any ancillary liability such as attorney fees, and interest; and a brief description of the facts which led to the claim.

The Judgment Fund Transparency Act may not prevent bad decisions, but it will shine a light on those decisions to the American people. I urge the committee to pass this bill and send it to the floor.