

Statement of
HON. GEORGE MILLER
Senior Democrat
Committee on Education and the Workforce
Before the Committee on House Administration
Hearing on "Committee Budget for 2013"

March 5, 2013

Chairman Miller, Ranking Member Brady, and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you to review the resources available to the Committee on Education and the Workforce for the 113th Congress.

I wish to thank Chairman Kline for his cooperation on the budget and other administrative matters during the last Congress. And I appreciate his keeping with Committee custom to allocate to us one-third of the total Committee budget and provide us with autonomy over the use of those resources.

Over the last two sessions, we have adjusted to significant cuts in our budget. For example, like the Majority, the Committee Minority has not filled all of its authorized staffing slots. Instead, existing positions have taken on more responsibilities.

We have spent frugally, striving to find savings for the taxpayer. From the minority's side of the budget, we have managed to return approximately \$90,000 in each of the past two years.

I agree with Chairman Kline. Any further budget cuts will be very difficult to manage with our existing staff and committee responsibilities.

Last Congress, we had a very robust hearing schedule. This Congress is no different. In fact, we have begun holding multiple subcommittee hearings simultaneously, in separate hearing rooms.

Especially with the congressional calendar as it is, more subjects can be covered in this manner.

However, our smaller minority staff can be stretched to its limit, in terms of providing logistics, counsel, and other assistance to our members during two separate hearings at the same time. In other words, we cannot afford to lose any staff.

This Congress, there are a number of significant reauthorizations on our plate. The Elementary and Secondary Education Act, the Workforce Investment Act, the Higher Education Act, student loan interest rate provisions, pension law provisions -- the list of expirations and reauthorizations confronting the Committee does not end there.

On all of these matters, to adequately address them, we need to work together in a bipartisan fashion. That's what the American people expect from their Congress.

Being partisan is relatively cheap and easy. The hard work of bipartisanship, on the other hand, takes more time and more resources.

To achieve bipartisan outcomes, members and staff alike, especially committee staff, must spend considerable time researching, writing, briefing, negotiating, drafting, and redrafting, and being thoughtful and creative to pull all the parties together.

We need to attract, train, and retain talented staff to help do this work and do it effectively on a wide array of issues. Further budget cuts will limit our ability to work together efficiently and effectively on all the matters pending before the Committee.

In addition to legislative efforts, our oversight efforts will be more difficult with fewer resources.

Some of our most critical oversight stems from unexpected events – for which we have to incur unexpected costs.

Underground mine disasters, factory explosions, child abuse scandals, and other developments can require oversight and investigative resources over and above normal planning. Travel costs can rise. Contracts with consultants or other outside experts may be necessary.

But further cuts to our budget will not leave much room to maneuver and handle these kinds of investigations effectively.

I respectfully request that you minimize any further cuts to our budget. As for the two scenarios you have asked us to opine upon – an 11 percent cut to last year's budget authority or a 5 percent increase to last year's expenditures – if forced to choose – I join Chairman Kline in strongly preferring the 11 percent scenario.

Tying new budget authority to last year's expenditures unfairly punishes operations that, like ours, strive for efficiency and taxpayer savings.

We've got much to accomplish this Congress and I look forward to working with Chairman Kline wherever possible to ensure the economy and efficiency of our Committee's operations.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify, and I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

###