

**Opening Statement of Chairman Tom Davis
Business Meeting
Committee on Government Reform
March 27, 2003, 10:00am
Room 2154 Rayburn House Office Building**

Good morning. A quorum being present, the Committee on Government Reform will come to order.

The Committee is assembled today to consider the Committee oversight plans for the 108th Congress.

I ask unanimous consent that all Members' written statements be included in the record. And without objection, so ordered.

The Rules of the House require the standing Committees of Congress to adopt oversight plans and submit those plans to this Committee and the Committee on Administration. The Committee on Government Reform has the added responsibility to report the plans to the House, with recommendations to ensure their effective coordination.

I now call up the Committee oversight plans with accompanying recommendations. I ask unanimous consent that the report be considered as read, and that the report be open for amendment at any point. Without objection, so ordered.

The committees have presented substantial oversight agendas for the 108th Congress that cover a variety of federal programs and activities. We have reviewed the plans and have highlighted certain oversight projects in our recommendations. We have divided these examples under the headings of homeland security and national defense, savings and efficiencies, government performance, law enforcement, and citizen services and benefits.

Congressional oversight is about accountability and the rule of law. These principles apply to the substantive public policy objectives underlying federal law and to the statutory management tools that, over the past decade, have been enacted to improve the operations of the federal government. These management tools involve such areas as government performance, financial management, acquisitions, and information technology. Persistent oversight of agency implementation of these laws will go a long way towards improving the performance of our government.

In a time of war, budget deficits, and a struggling economy, Congressional scrutiny of the activities and programs of the federal government has never been more important. Unfortunately, we still have a long way to go. The government continues to be riddled with examples of waste, fraud, and mismanagement. Wasteful spending and poor management reduce the quality of service to taxpayers and erode public confidence in the federal government.

Waste, fraud and mismanagement also distorts Congressional decisionmaking. Important government programs, delivering vital services to the public, could be reduced or even eliminated if waste, fraud, and mismanagement substantially increase program costs.

Committee oversight should also focus on reducing improper or erroneous government spending. Each year the government wastes tens of billions of dollars because of lax management and oversight. The Committee Report includes a table prepared by the Office of Management and Budget that identifies \$33 billion dollars in improper payments in twenty government programs.

The General Accounting Office has also reported that between 1994 and 2001, defense contractors voluntarily returned \$7 billion in overpayments. Overpayments are clearly unacceptable. In addition to wasting taxpayer dollars, these inefficiencies drain much needed resources away from programs that benefit the American people.

These problems do not need to persist. In many cases, they can be solved without new laws or major infusions of money. Strong leadership at the highest levels of government is required. We also need a sustained commitment by Congress to focus on the problems and to hold people accountable until the mission is accomplished.

The committee oversight plans are very ambitious. We have a long way to go to improve the quality of our government, but I believe that these oversight plans move us in the right direction.

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