

Subcommittee Ranking Member Rep. Mike Honda

May 31st, 2012

“Good Morning. I want to begin by thanking Chairman Crenshaw and his staff for their willingness to work on a bipartisan basis in development of this bill.

“We engaged in some lively debates during the hearings, and in some instances we have had to agree to disagree.

“One such issue that I continue to be concerned with is the General Counsel’s defense of the discriminatory Defense of Marriage Act, DOMA. With the limited funding available for the House, I think there are far more worthy uses of the precious taxpayer resources than funding contracts for outside counsel to defend the highly controversial – and two U.S. District Courts have ruled unconstitutional – DOMA.

“Despite our disagreements, we have shown that the Appropriations Committee stands as an example for the rest of Congress of how to govern through compromise and willingness to listen to the other side.

“This bill, covering the legislative branch, is the smallest of all the appropriations bills. But it funds an entire equal branch of government. We should all feel some personal sense of responsibility when we consider the operations of Congress during consideration of this bill.

“The Chairman’s mark before us funds the legislative branch at \$3.3 billion, a cut of 1% from fiscal year 2012. This does not include Senate items.

“Even with a lower allocation, the Chairman was able to level fund and even increase several

areas of importance to Members.

- The House overall is held flat at \$1.225 billion, including Member's office budgets, which are held flat at \$573.9 million;

- The Capitol Police receive a nearly 6% increase to reach \$360 million. The additional \$20 million will be used to maintain 1775 sworn officers and make training a priority of the force;

- The Congressional Budget Office is funded at \$44.3 million, \$493,000 above the fiscal year 2012 level;

- And the Government Accountability Office is funded at \$519.8 million, \$8.5 million, or nearly 2%, above the fiscal year 2012 level.

"Chairman Crenshaw and his staff should be applauded for putting the brakes on the trend of decreasing funding for these agencies, especially for two of the hardest hit organizations in the last two fiscal years - the House of Representatives and the Government Accountability Office.

"As a reminder to Members, the House has been reduced by more than 10% since 2011, including a 13 percent cut to Member's Office Budgets.

"GAO, the investigative arm of Congress, has been reduced by 8% in the last two fiscal years. Unfortunately the protection shown for some agencies could not extend to all thanks to the allocation our subcommittee was given. The Architect of the Capitol is cut by 11% or \$52.5 million from the fiscal year 2012 level. Under this allocation, items like the continued restoration of the Capitol Dome cannot be funded.

"I represent Silicon Valley, the center of technological innovation in this country. Since I joined this subcommittee, I have tried to push the House and other agencies to explore technological solutions to issues such as transparency, evacuation management, and data storage.

“As you probably know, Federal agencies, including our own in the legislative branch, can be slow to change and adapt new technologies. This is mentioned in the report, which includes language on the issue of bulk data downloads of legislative information, something I requested and secured language about in this bill in fiscal year 2009.

“This effort is now also being championed by leadership on both sides of the aisle, as it is a way to increase transparency by allowing the public to easily download and analyze government data.

“There are some concerns about cost and the ability to authenticate the data that the language in the report tries to address.

“I think, however, that these are relatively simple matters to overcome, as data is already being compiled in a format that can easily be distributed and technology support staff has indicated that only a simple procedure is needed to make the bulk data available.

“Furthermore, the GPO already employs an authentication standard for its own accessible bulk data through its FDSys website that we could also utilize.

“I look forward to working with the Chairman and leadership of the House as this bill moves through the legislative process to advance these efforts to increase public access to legislative data. I believe the time to implement this is now. In conclusion, I want to congratulate the Chairman for writing a good bill with a not so good allocation. The Congressional support agencies funded in this bill are needed, and all of us would suffer without the work of the Congressional Budget Office, the Government Accountability Office, the Government Printing Office and the Congressional Research Service.

“I want to reiterate my appreciation to the Chairman for working with us on many areas where there was agreement.”