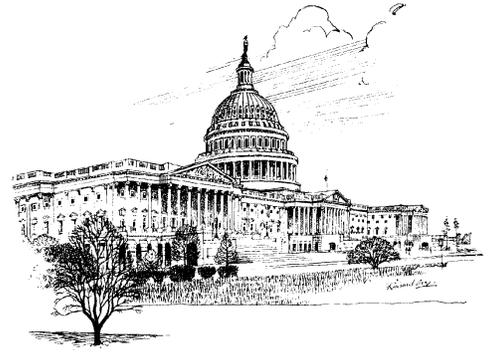


# PRESS RELEASE

## HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE ON LEGISLATIVE BRANCH CHAIRWOMAN, DEBBIE WASSERMAN SCHULTZ



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For Immediate Release

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### OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIR WASSERMAN SCHULTZ

Subcommittee Markup: FY 2009 Legislative Branch Appropriations Bill

*“This bill provides the necessary investments for the Legislative Branch agencies, while demonstrating a responsible stewardship of taxpayer dollars.”*

*-Chair Debbie Wasserman Schultz*

Washington, D.C. — Today, Debbie Wasserman Schultz (FL-20), Chair of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on the Legislative Branch, made the following statement at the subcommittee markup of the Fiscal Year 2009 bill:

“Good afternoon. We are here today to mark up the Legislative Branch appropriations bill for Fiscal Year 2009. The bill provides \$3.4 billion for the Legislative Branch (excluding Senate items), a necessary increase as Congress continues to expand its oversight capabilities, and invests in important health and safety measures. This bill accomplishes these objectives while maintaining the responsible stewardship of this institution’s resources –the taxpayer’s dollars.

“Historically, this bill has faced funding challenges over the years. Many agencies face difficulties posed by aging infrastructure, compliance issues and inflation.

“Because of the enduring gap between Legislative Branch needs and resources, we now face a \$1.4 billion backlog of critical infrastructure projects around the Capitol complex, including many health and safety items, as well as a growing strain on our agencies’ ability to provide the support we need to sustain our reinvigorated oversight efforts.

“We on this subcommittee share a unique privilege and responsibility—to fund and sustain one of the three branches of our government. It is up to us to ensure the Legislative Branch receives the resources it needs to perform its vital legislative and oversight functions and maintain its historic infrastructure. With that in mind, this bill demonstrates responsible stewardship of this institution’s resources by tackling the existing resource gap now before the situation grows worse.

“This bill supports Congress’s increased oversight efforts by building up support agencies after years of flat budgets, including:

- \$8.5 million to rebuild GAO’s staff—now at its lowest level in the agency’s history—so it can better aid Congress in our oversight and accountability efforts;
- \$1 million to build up CBO’s ability to analyze health care issues and provide more timely cost estimates.

“It makes critical and timely investments in our infrastructure to keep the Capitol complex safe and secure, including:

- \$56 million to continue the abatement of safety hazards in the Capitol complex utility tunnels;
- \$21 million to fix other health and safety deficiencies identified by the Office of Compliance;
- \$11 million to invest in infrastructure projects the Architect of the Capitol has identified as requiring immediate action.

“Finally, this bill demonstrates responsible stewardship of the Legislative Branch by marking an important milestone. Both the GAO and the AOC have indicated that this should be the final appropriation for building the Capitol Visitor Center. I certainly hope that this is the case. After years of delays and cost increases, this Congress—through rigorous and bipartisan oversight—has gotten this project back on track. No one is happy about how much the original cost of this project ballooned. However, we can take pride in closing out construction \$2 million below the Architect’s cost estimate—a significant accomplishment and something hard to imagine just a year and a half ago. I want to thank Mr. Latham, his predecessor Mr. Wamp, and all the Members of the subcommittee for their efforts, as well as those of Mr. Ayers and his staff. While it’s been a rough road getting here, the CVC will be a wonderful addition to this institution—I’m glad we’ve brought it in for a successful landing.

“I also want to highlight that this year we are increasing funding to convert talking books for the blind to digital format so the project can be completed on a 3-year rather than a 6-year timeline. To do this, we are providing funds above and beyond what the Library of Congress asked for in its appropriation. It is vitally important that our blind community receive uninterrupted access to something the rest of us take for granted—books and other reading materials that allow us to work and learn, give us pleasure, and help us experience the broader world.

“This bill provides the necessary investments for the Legislative Branch agencies, while demonstrating a responsible stewardship of taxpayer dollars. We can all be proud to support it.”

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