

PRESS RELEASE

House Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on the Legislative Branch Chair, Debbie Wasserman Schultz

June 9, 2009
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIR WASSERMAN SCHULTZ

Subcommittee Markup: FY 2010
Legislative Branch Appropriations Bill

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 2010 bill:

“The business before the Subcommittee this morning is the mark up of the fiscal year 2010 Legislative Branch Appropriations bill.

“The jurisdiction of this bill is vitally important, as this is where the Appropriations Committee fulfills its responsibilities as the stewards of Congress by overseeing the legislative function of our government. This legislative function is at the heart of our system of Democracy.

“Our Subcommittee takes these obligations very seriously. During the last three months, we have held 7 hearings and heard from more than 25 witnesses. Since the conclusion of these hearings on May 6th, Ranking Member Aderholt and I, along with our staff, have spent long hours reviewing the requests, re-reading the hearing record and analyzing the input of our fellow Members and the general public. The bill before you this morning is the product of this process. It is a **bi-partisan** bill, developed with the full participation of all members of our Committee, both Majority and Minority. We hope that every member will be proud of this product.

“As Members review our recommendations, you will see that this bill attempts to fulfill our responsibilities at two different levels. First, we have tried to provide the right balance of funding in a prudent way for each existing office, agency and program which supports the day to day operations of the Congress. As the Legislative Branch continues to deal with the recovery from the financial crisis facing our country, it is important that adequate resources are available to ensure that we have the ability to properly respond to the American people.

“The recommendations in this bill provide overall funding of \$3.68 billion, excluding Senate items. This is an increase of \$237 million over the level provided for 2009. A majority of these funds go toward our two greatest priorities within this bill – life/safety at the Capitol Complex, and the adequate funding of staff and agency resources.

“While the Committee has been able to provide for all mandatory cost increases and a limited number of program enhancements, we are unable to fund a large number of worthwhile requests due to the fiscal

constraints under which we on the Committee all operate. The amounts provided in the bill are \$282 million below the amount requested.

“Members have in front of them the bill and report, and the summary prepared by the staff, but let me briefly summarize the key funding amounts in the bill:

- **House of Representatives** – The bill includes \$1.38 billion for the operations of the House. This is an increase of \$74 million, or 5.7 percent, over the 2009 enacted level but is \$122 million below the amount requested. \$660 million of this amount is for the Members’ Representational Allowances (MRA) account which is increased by \$51 million recognizing the increased workload on Congress and our staff, especially during the second session of a Congress. This includes increased demand for services from our constituents, partially as a result of the use of email and other forms of electronic communication. The bill also includes \$26 million for Leadership offices, \$148.9 million for the Committees of the House and \$200 million for the Officers of the House. Of interest to Members, the allocation for the Clerk of the House includes \$4.6 million to replace the electronic voting system in the House Chamber.
- **U.S. Capitol Police** – The bill includes \$325.1 million for the Capitol Police. This is an increase of 6.3 percent over the enacted level and is sufficient to maintain the end of year officer strength expected to be in place on September 30th. The recommendation does not, however, provide for the increase in officers requested in the budget. The Subcommittee believes that these positions cannot be justified until the Department gets a better handle on its workforce management systems, especially overtime costs.
- **Library of Congress** – The bill includes \$647.4 million for the Library of Congress, an increase of \$40.3 million, 6.6 percent, over the fiscal year 2009 enacted level. The amount provided includes \$22 million for the Library to fund high priority initiatives including \$15 million for technology upgrades. The bill includes the **full amount** requested for the Copyright Office and for the Books for the Blind program.
- **Government Printing Office** – The bill includes \$146.2 million for the Government Printing Office, an increase of \$5.6 million, 4.0 percent, over the fiscal year 2009 enacted level. The amount provided includes \$7 million to continue the development of the Federal Digital System, the Government Printing Office’s digital content system for managing the publications of all three branches of the Federal Government.
- **Government Accountability Office** – The bill includes \$558.8 million for the GAO, an increase of \$27.8 million, 5.2 percent over the enacted level.

“Beyond the core funding for day to day operations of the Congress, we have largely focused on two long-term priorities.

“First, with the help of Chairman Obey, we are taking a more aggressive approach to the enormous deferred maintenance needs of the aging complex of buildings which make up the Capitol. The bill includes funding for 23 of the 30 “high priority” life safety projects requested by the Architect of the Capitol.

“Beyond these immediate needs, however, this bill includes \$60 million to establish a new **Historical Buildings Revitalization Trust Fund**. This new fund was created as a mechanism to more evenly spread

the cost of the very expensive construction projects which will have to be undertaken over the next decade to repair and revitalize the historic icon buildings of the Capitol complex. This funding is intended to be used only for very expensive buildings of “icon” status.

“This includes, for example, the upcoming \$100 million project to restore the Capitol Dome and the \$500 to \$700 million cost of the critical long term revitalization of the Cannon House Building. The creation of this fund, which is intended to last for 10 fiscal years, is the prudent way to structure the financing of these large, but entirely necessary costs.

“In addition, we have tried to deal with the challenge of retaining the best and the brightest employees to support the work of Congress and the American people. As Members well know, we are generally successful in recruiting very talented people to come work on Capitol Hill. We have been less successful, however, in retaining these individuals once they are trained in the legislative process. While some of the reasons for staff turnover are beyond our control, part of the problem is related to pay and benefit differences that may be more attractive as these young people look at careers.

“As a former legislative aide in the Florida State Legislature, I can understand the tough career decisions facing Congressional staff. This subcommittee is committed to dealing with this retention problem by ensuring fully competitive pay and benefit options. This is a multi-year effort and the 2010 bill makes three changes in support of this goal.

“First, we are increasing funding for the MRA account so that salaries can grow. We have also provided funding for two new employee benefits subject to final authorization by the Committee on House Administration. This includes \$3.5 million for a tuition reimbursement program for all House employees. This would provide \$10,000 to \$15,000 for each Member’s office to help staff develop skills and credentials. And additionally, we have provided \$1 million for child care benefits for lower-paid employees in our offices and committees. We hope these improvements, along with the rewards of public service, will help to retain these very valuable staff.

“I want to personally thank Mr. Aderholt for his work in developing this bill. I also want to thank our staff - Michael Stephens, David Marroni, Matt Glassman, Liz Dawson, Megan Medley, and Ian Rayder, each of whom have put in long hours in support of this bill.

“Finally, I want to thank all of the Members of the subcommittee for their attendance at the hearings and for their recommendations throughout the year. I look forward to continuing to work with all of you as this process moves forward.”

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