

Opening Statement
Rep. Paul Broun (R-GA), Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Investigations and Oversight
House Committee on Science and Technology
Hearing on “*Follow the Money: Accountability and Transparency in Recovery Act
Science Funding?*”

March 19, 2009

Thank you Mr. Chairman. I want to thank you for holding this hearing, and commend you for addressing oversight at our science agencies.

This Committee has an important responsibility to ensure that funding from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act is spent appropriately, and I look forward to working with you, Chairman Gordon, and Ranking Member Hall to make sure we do just that.

Addressing oversight, accountability, and transparency at agencies is an important task, but Congress should also be held to these same principles. *In attempting to live up to these standards, Democratic Leadership has failed the American people.*

The stimulus bill was bloated with earmarks and pushed through Congress without a single oversight hearing.

We will hear from witnesses shortly about the importance of preventing waste, fraud, and abuse ahead of time rather than trying to detect it after-the-fact.

They will speak to the need to get policies and procedures for spending money established early in the process, instead of playing “gotcha” after the money has been spent.

This is important guidance that we will insist the agencies follow, yet the irony of the situation is that Congress never did this work itself.

Without a single hearing by any committee, the Democratic Leadership has tripled our nation’s debt and forced us to borrow from our children, grandchildren, and foreign nations. We spent \$787 billion in this bill. To put this into perspective, last year’s budget for non-security discretionary spending was roughly \$390 billion. That’s almost twice as much as last year’s budget, and doesn’t even take into account the Omnibus or other bailouts that we passed on top of that.

Neither this committee, nor any other, had a role in developing appropriate oversight, accountability, and transparency measures necessary for such an enormous bill. We never held a hearing, or a single mark-up. Therefore, it is somewhat comical to talk about stimulus accountability and transparency when there wasn’t any behind this bill’s formulation.

Don't get me wrong, making sure our science agencies are funded at the appropriate authorization levels is important, but that's not what we are talking about here.

We are talking about not learning from the lessons of post-Katrina disaster relief, Iraq Reconstruction, and the Troubled Asset Relief Program. – all instances where expediency trumped accountability and the taxpayer suffered. I was outraged, just as the American people were, to hear that AIG executives received taxpayer money as bonuses while their company crumbled around them. If the Stimulus bill had seen the light of day, perhaps Democratic leadership would not have been able to add a loophole for AIG executive bonuses.

History has shown that throwing as much money as we can out the window as fast as we can has never ended well. The Congress should have known this and taken a more measured approach to aiding our economy.

Which brings me to an important point. Obama Administration Economic Advisor Larry Summers indicated numerous times that the stimulus bill would be “timely, targeted, and temporary.” I have serious concerns about the impact that a temporary surge of money will have on our scientific enterprise. A temporary influx of funds without a long-term commitment will lead to a boom-and-bust scenario similar to that experienced by NIH after its budget doubled earlier this decade.

As Science Magazine noted in a 2007 article, “Between 1998 and 2003, the budget of the National Institutes of Health rose from \$13 billion to more than \$27 billion in a plan known as “the doubling.” Now that the tsunami of cash has receded, many life scientists – especially those in the early phase of their careers – have found conditions no better, and in some ways worse, than before the process began.”

While the Obama Administration has clearly indicated that this enormous influx of money will be “temporary,” our investment in science should be steady and predictable, not volatile and fleeting.

Thank you Mr. Chairman. I look forward to the witnesses' testimony and working with you going forward. Oversight is truly a nonpartisan endeavor. We may have disagreements on the underlying substance and process associated with the Stimulus bill, but I hope that now that the dust has settled, we can work together in a productive manner to minimize waste, fraud, abuse, and mismanagement at our science agencies.

I yield back.

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