CONGRESSMAN SHERWOOD BOEHLERT (R-NY)
OPENING STATEMENT FOR SECOND OUTSOURCING MARK-UP
April 5, 2006

I want to welcome everyone here for our second mark-up on the Democrat Resolution of Inquiry concerning the Department of Commerce outsourcing report. Last week, while we were discussing how hard it is to count the number of jobs leaving and entering the country, we ended up demonstrating how hard it is to count the number of Members leaving and entering the room. And the result was a tie vote that left the Resolution in limbo – voted down, but not reported out.

So today, the matter before us is simply a motion to report out the Resolution. This time, for procedural reasons, the motion is to report out the Resolution without recommendation (rather than adversely). If the motion succeeds, the effect will be the same as last week's motion would have had – the House will take no further action on this Resolution.

I think we had a very full and open debate last week, so I will just summarize our arguments today in a few sentences: There is nothing at stake in the matter of this report. No one has argued that it contains any unique insight or revelation. It has been superseded by a much more thorough effort by the National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA), requested by the same folks who asked for the Commerce report. And no one directly involved with the management of the Commerce report still works for the Department. So I continue to believe this whole debate is much ado about nothing.

There is one point I would like to clarify from last week. Some people misinterpreted my comments to mean that NAPA had received documents from the Department of Commerce. This is obviously not the case; giving NAPA the documents would make them public, which would have made the Resolution moot.

What I was saying, and what I continue to say – perhaps more artfully now – is that all the essential information related to the report was conveyed to NAPA. NAPA interviewed the analysts several times, and NAPA was given the list of all the sources they had used. As far as we know, there is no idea or information that was in the report – that's what I meant by "data" last week – that was not conveyed to NAPA. So, to repeat myself, the fact that the report itself has not been released is of no consequence.

Now I know none of this will convince my colleagues on the other side of the aisle. They want the report, period, and no amount of argument is going to make that desire go away.

And since last week, they have made a new offer to get the report, one designed to deal with my concerns that this report request is just the beginning of an interminable "fishing expedition" that will lead to needless legal battles that could weaken the hand of future Congresses.

The offer is basically that if I agree to request the report, then they will agree not to request any further materials related to the report this Congress. I think that's a good faith offer, and I find it enticing because my hope is that actually reading the report will put this whole matter to bed.

Again, no one has suggested that there's anything explosive or even particularly revealing in it. My hope would be that the release of the report would lead to less politicking not more. And then we could go back to having a genuine debate about what to do about outsourcing, a phenomenon we all want to address.

There are important details of that offer that need to be worked out before we can reach any agreement, and there was no time to do that before today. To take just one example, we have to be sure that we have a clear, unambiguous description of what's being requested, and we don't have that yet. The staffs are trying to work out these matters and will report back to us. I hope we can reach an accommodation. Nothing would make me happier than for the Committee to be able to spend its time in its usual more productive, more bipartisan ways.

So let's dispense quickly with this motion today.

Mr. Gordon.