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Congress of the United States

U.S. House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS

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The Honorable Tom Davis
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The Honorable Robert W. Ney
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Dear Chairman Davis and Chairman Ney:

In accordance with the requirements of Clause 2 of Rule X of the rules of the House of Representatives, the following is a list of oversight hearings and other oversight-related activities, which the Committee on Ways and Means and its Subcommittees plan to conduct during the 109th Congress.

Full Committee

1. Tax Reform. The full Committee intends to hold hearings to examine proposals to reform Federal taxation.
2. Fiscal Year 2006 and 2007 Budget Initiatives Regarding Taxes. The full Committee intends to hold hearings to receive information regarding tax legislation proposed in the President's 2006 and 2007 budgets.
3. Strengthening Social Security. The full Committee intends to hold hearings to examine various issues affecting the well-being of individual recipients, the financial challenges facing Social Security, and options to address those challenges.

Subcommittee on Oversight

1. Internal Revenue Service Budget and Filing Season. The Subcommittee intends to hold hearings in both 2005 and 2006 to review the Administration's budget request for the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) and the annual tax filing season. In particular, the Subcommittee will review how the IRS is balancing enforcement efforts with taxpayer service and modernizing its computer systems.

2. Improving IRS Administration of Tax Laws. The Subcommittee will review proposals to improve the quality, efficiency, and fairness of IRS tax administration, including recently enacted legislation to improve IRS debt collection procedures. The Subcommittee will monitor new regulations or policies proposed or implemented by the IRS and to hold hearings or investigations as appropriate.
3. Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation. The Subcommittee will examine developments facing defined benefit pension plans, and the current and future liability facing the Pension Benefit Guaranty Corporation (PBGC) that covers the pensions of approximately 44 million workers.
4. Review of Tax Exempt Organizations. The Subcommittee will continue to review tax exempt organizations and intends to hold hearings in coordination with the full Committee and other Subcommittees on the appropriate role of tax exempt organizations. The Subcommittee will review current law, the adequacy of IRS oversight and reporting requirements, and consider recommendations for reform. The Subcommittee will also explore the role of Internal Revenue Code (IRC) Section 527 organizations have played in political campaigns.
5. Underground Economy. The Subcommittee will review information concerning the underground economy, its size, growth trends, and implications for tax policy.
6. Income Tax Compliance. The Subcommittee will continue to monitor IRS efforts to assure compliance with individual and corporate tax laws, including its efforts to improve compliance in the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) program and in other areas of tax law compliance. The IRS conducted a pilot initiative in 2004 to test new enforcement techniques, and the Subcommittee plans to review the results of these efforts and any new IRS initiatives. In addition, the Subcommittee will monitor pertinent reports by IRS, Treasury, JCT, and the GAO on the tax gap or other compliance matters as such reports become available.
7. Taxpayer Rights. The Subcommittee will continue to monitor the implementation of taxpayer rights provisions in the IRS Reform and Restructuring Act (RRA 98) (P.L. 105-206) and subsequent taxpayer rights legislation and will evaluate new proposals to enhance taxpayer rights.
8. Taxpayer Privacy. The Subcommittee will examine compliance with taxpayer privacy issues under IRC Section 6103.
9. Oversight of Drug Interdiction Efforts. The Oversight Subcommittee will review the extent of federal drug interdiction activities under the current tax and trade laws administered by the IRS and in coordination with the U.S. Customs Service.
10. Field Investigations and Hearings. The Subcommittee will conduct such field investigations and hearings as Committee staffing and budget resources permit, and as

are necessary for purposes of evaluating the effectiveness of and compliance with the programs and laws under the jurisdiction of the Committee on Ways and Means.

Subcommittee on Trade

1. Bush Administration Trade Policy. The Subcommittee intends to hold a hearing to give the Administration an opportunity to describe its trade policy for 2005 and respond to Member questions. The Subcommittee intends to work with the Administration under the terms of the Trade Act of 2002 (P.L. 107-210), given the expiration of Trade Promotion Authority (TPA) in 2005 unless the Administration requests renewal until 2007.
2. World Trade Organization. The Subcommittee intends to hold hearings on United States preparations for the December 2005 WTO Ministerial in Hong Kong and progress in the ongoing negotiations on the Doha Development Agenda, particularly with respect to agriculture, services, industrial tariffs, and development issues. The Subcommittee intends to continue its oversight over U.S. participation in the WTO in keeping with section 125 of the Uruguay Round Agreements Act (P.L. 103-465).
3. Bilateral Free Trade Agreements with Central America and Bahrain. The Subcommittee will continue its oversight of the negotiations for bilateral free trade agreements with Central America (Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, and the Dominican Republic) and Bahrain. Now that these negotiations have concluded, the Subcommittee will continue to consult with the Administration and at the appropriate time will hold hearings on the agreements and consider implementing legislation under TPA processes.
4. Bilateral and Regional Free Trade Agreements Under Negotiation. The Subcommittee will continue its oversight and assess the status of negotiations for bilateral free trade agreements with countries for which the Administration has notified Congress of its intent to negotiate: Panama; the Andean countries (Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia); the Southern African Common Market (Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa and Swaziland); Thailand; the United Arab Emirates; Oman; and the Free Trade Area of the Americas. When these negotiations are concluded, the Subcommittee expects to hold hearings on the agreements and will consider implementing legislation under TPA processes. In addition, the Subcommittee will explore whether other countries may be appropriate candidates for free trade agreements and will examine the effect on U.S. interests of free trade agreements or lesser bilateral agreements concluded by U.S. trading partners.
5. Bilateral Free Trade Agreements Entered into Force. The Subcommittee will continue its oversight to assess the status of agreements that have already been concluded and for which Congress has passed implementing legislation under TPA (Chile, Singapore, Australia, and Morocco).

6. Miscellaneous Duty Suspensions and Technical Corrections to U.S. Trade Laws. The Subcommittee intends to consider legislation to temporarily suspend duties on noncontroversial products.
7. U.S. Trade Remedy Laws. The Subcommittee will continue to review the application of U.S. antidumping, countervailing duty, general safeguard, product-specific safeguard, and textile safeguard laws, including the impact of these remedies on the injured domestic industries as well as the effect of trade remedies on downstream users of products subject to these actions. The Subcommittee will continue to monitor the status of WTO negotiations, consultations, panel proceedings, and decisions concerning U.S. trade remedy laws and their application and will work with the Administration to assure compliance with U.S. WTO obligations.
8. Authorizations for the Department of Homeland Security, the Office of the United States Trade Representative and the U.S. International Trade Commission. The Subcommittee intends to hold hearings on authorizations for the trade agencies for FY 2006 and 2007 and work towards passage of authorization legislation. The Subcommittee will review funding for the customs revenue functions of the Department including, but not limited to, Customs Automated Commercial Environment (CACE), textile transshipment efforts, and the International Trade Data System (ITDS). In particular, the Subcommittee will examine the scope of the authorization for Customs given its incorporation into the U.S. Department of Homeland Security and will continue to conduct oversight of that reorganization and its impact on the collection of revenue and trade facilitation.
9. User Fees. The Subcommittee will continue its oversight of Customs user fees, including the amount of the fees and their relationship to the actual cost for providing services. The Subcommittee will examine issues surrounding the Consolidated Omnibus Reconciliation Act of 1985 account, especially whether the account contains sufficient resources to fund inspectional services and whether revised fee collections are appropriate. Significant issues to consider will be the entire nature of fees for customs operations within a much larger non-trade organization of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security. The Subcommittee will consider whether Customs is implementing requirements of the Trade Act of 2002 and the American Jobs Creation Act of 2004 (P.L. 108-357) related to user fees.
10. Trade Adjustment Assistance. The Subcommittee will continue its oversight of the general TAA programs for workers and firms in light of the substantial revisions made by the Trade Act of 2002 (P.L. 107-210).
11. Trade Relations with China. The Subcommittee will continue to monitor China's compliance with its WTO obligations and its role in the global marketplace. The Subcommittee will also continue to examine China's macroeconomic policies and will consult with the Administration to address issues that arrive.

12. Normal Trade Relations with Jackson-Vanik Countries. The Subcommittee will continue its oversight over the application of Jackson-Vanik provisions for countries subject to this statute. The Subcommittee will also continue its oversight over Presidential grants of Jackson-Vanik waivers and determinations in compliance with Jackson-Vanik requirements. In addition, the Subcommittee will continue to consult with the Administration concerning the progress of these countries in negotiating their accession to the WTO.

13. Trade Preference Legislation. The Subcommittee will continue its oversight over the Trade and Development Act of 2000 (P.L. 106-606) (Africa/Caribbean Basin Initiative), the enhancement to these programs contained in the Trade Act of 2002, the Andean Trade Preferences Act, and the AGOA Acceleration Act to ensure that the legislation is being implemented in a manner consistent with Congressional intent. The Subcommittee will continue its efforts, begun in the 108th Congress, to extend preferential benefits to Haiti. In addition, the Subcommittee will also examine whether preference programs should be extended to other countries.

14. Textiles and Apparel. The Subcommittee will continue its oversight as to: the value of trade preference programs and their effect on U.S. industries; impact of the elimination of textile quotas in January 2005 on U.S. industries, countries receiving trade preferences, and other countries; effectiveness of efforts to halt illegal transshipment; and the use of textile safeguards (particularly with respect to transparency and application of statutory standards).

15. Sanctions Reform. In response to the dramatic growth in the imposition of unilateral economic sanctions and their impact on U.S. trade and competitiveness in international markets, the Subcommittee will continue its oversight on the use and effectiveness of U.S. unilateral trade sanctions, in particular whether any proposed sanction will achieve its intended objectives and whether the achievement of those objectives outweigh any likely costs to United States foreign policy, national security, economic, and humanitarian interests.

16. Burma. In keeping with the provisions of the Burmese Freedom and Democracy Act of 2003 (P.L. 108-61), the Subcommittee will examine on a yearly basis whether import sanctions against Burma (Myanmar) should be continued.

17. Rules of Origin and Country of Origin Marking. The Subcommittee will continue to review and consult with the Administration and the trade community on the status of rules of origin negotiations underway in the World Customs Organization; update rules of origin and country of origin marking to implement those negotiations so they reflect current business production, sales, and distribution practices; review whether U.S. law and U.S. Customs enforcement efforts are effective in preventing unlawful transshipment; and review the implementation labeling requirements by United States and its trading partners with respect to meat, fresh produce, and genetically modified products.

18. Trade Relations with Japan. The Subcommittee will continue its oversight of U.S.-Japan trade relations, focusing on the necessity for Japan to implement broad structural reforms, including deregulation of its economy, reform of its banking system, improved transparency, and the opening of its distribution system to eliminate exclusionary business practices.

19. Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum. The Subcommittee will continue to review the status of U.S. trade policy objectives in Asia, particularly in the Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation Forum negotiations.

Subcommittee on Health

1. Medicare Program Oversight. The Subcommittee intends to hold a hearing to evaluate the management of the Medicare program by the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS). The Subcommittee will explore changes that could be made to improve CMS's efficiency and its interactions with beneficiaries and the providers who serve them. The Subcommittee will examine CMS's progress on implementing the changes required by the Medicare Modernization Act (MMA) (P.L. 108-173).

2. Medicare Payments for Physician Services. The Subcommittee intends to hold hearings to examine Medicare reimbursement for physician services, including problems associated with the Sustainable Growth Rate formula and will explore alternative payment structures. In addition, the Subcommittee will examine creating incentives to promote physician performance and efficiency and will look at issues surrounding physician resource use. Geographic variations in payments to physicians will also be scrutinized. Finally, the Subcommittee will continue its oversight of payment adequacy for oncology related services, drugs, and biologics, including the changes made by the MMA.

3. Medicare Payment for Hospital Services. The Subcommittee intends to examine pricing transparency for hospital services. In addition, the Subcommittee will conduct oversight of the current reimbursement structure under Medicare, including potential hearings on operation of the wage index and differences between specialty and community based institutions. The Subcommittee intends to hold a hearing on paying for performance and physician resource use in the hospital setting. The Subcommittee intends to hold a hearing on financial reporting for hospitals, including instruments to better reflect costs and to promote the timeliness of data reporting.

4. Medicare Payments for Post-Acute Care. The Subcommittee intends to hold a hearing on payments to post-acute care providers in the Medicare program to determine whether the payment structures create incentives to inappropriately shift site of care to more lucrative settings. In addition, the Subcommittee will study proposals that provide financial security to individuals for long term care costs outside of the traditional Medicare structure.

5. Retiree Health Coverage and Interaction with Medicare. The MMA required the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) to conduct initial and final reports on the trends in retiree health coverage, new options available to employers to subsidize coverage included in the MMA and what impact, if any, these subsidies had on retiree coverage. The Subcommittee will examine implementation of the MMA subsidies as they relate to retiree health coverage.
6. Medicare Waste, Fraud and Abuse. The Subcommittee will examine enforcement of laws to combat waste, fraud and abuse in the Medicare program and what steps might be taken to improve their application. The Subcommittee will also examine the issue of Medicare program solvency.
7. Medically Uninsured. The Subcommittee intends to hold a hearing on options to reduce the number of individuals and families without health insurance. The hearing will include an examination of tax credits, reinsurance of risk and purchasing pools, among other solutions.
8. New Technologies in the Medicare Program. The Subcommittee intends to hold a hearing on CMS policies that foster or hinder the adoption of new technologies in the Medicare program, including coverage and reimbursement policies and national and local coverage determinations.
9. Other Medicare Payments. The Subcommittee intends to hold a hearing on the appropriateness of payments to other Medicare providers, including home health agencies, skilled nursing facilities, end stage renal disease providers, durable medical equipment suppliers and others. Such an examination will include proposals to make Medicare more efficient and responsive.
10. Health Savings Accounts. The Subcommittee intends to hold hearings and conduct other oversight activities on Health Savings Accounts.
11. Medicare Advantage Program. The Subcommittee intends to hold hearings and conduct other oversight activities on the Medicare Advantage program. The Subcommittee intends to examine payment and structural changes to Medicare Advantage plans enacted as a result of the MMA.
12. Other Issues. Further hearings will be scheduled as time permits to examine certain additional aspects of Medicare program management. Matters to be considered may include health care information technology, health care quality issues, Medigap reform, medical liability reform, especially as it affects the Medicare program and patient safety issues.

Subcommittee on Human Resources

1. Welfare Reform. Reauthorizing the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and related programs to amend and improve the 1996 welfare reform law continues to be a priority for the Subcommittee. Issues of particular interest to the Subcommittee include how TANF block grant funds and other HHS efforts to communicate with the public are used to develop strong families and encourage healthy marriage and how welfare reform policies can be strengthened to better promote increased work, reduced poverty, enhanced program integrity, and improved child well-being.
2. Child Support and Fatherhood. The Subcommittee intends to hold hearings on the nation's Federal-State child support system, review the results of program changes made in 1996 and 1998 law, and consider proposals for further improvements. The Subcommittee also will review proposals to encourage responsible fatherhood and closer involvement between fathers, children and families, both as a result of child support and other program policies.
3. Supplemental Security Income. The Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program provides over \$30 billion in benefit payments to 7 million disabled needy individuals each year. The Subcommittee will review proposals to reduce fraud and abuse in the program, and examine options for improving program outcomes such as enhancing the ability of individuals to return to work.
4. Child Protection. The Subcommittee held a number of child protection oversight hearings during the 108th Congress, examining the purposes and outcomes of current child protection programs. The Subcommittee will review program improvement proposals for child protection programs broadly, as well as involving distinct issues such as the handling of interstate placements. The Subcommittee also will review the operation of the Promoting Safe and Stable Families program in anticipation of the expected reauthorization of this program prior to the end of fiscal year 2006.
5. Unemployment Compensation. The Subcommittee intends to hold hearings on the Nation's unemployment compensation system. Issues of interest include a more detailed understanding of the characteristics of unemployment benefit recipients over time, and improving the program to better promote work, savings, and program integrity. The Subcommittee also will review reemployment services provided to unemployment benefit recipients, and consider whether better return-to-work outcomes can be achieved through reforms.

Subcommittee on Social Security

1. Strengthening Social Security. The Subcommittee intends to hold hearings to examine the degree to which Social Security programs are meeting the needs of today's and tomorrow's beneficiaries, along with the financial challenges facing the program and proposals to strengthen Social Security.

2. Use of the Social Security Number. The Subcommittee will continue their examination of the integrity of Social Security numbers (SSNs) and Social Security cards as identifiers, including their role in identity theft and other fraud.
3. Disability Program Reform and Oversight. The Subcommittee intends to hold hearings on the Social Security Disability Insurance (DI) program, including: the Social Security Administration's (SSA's) implementation of the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act (P.L. 160-170); oversight of SSA's disability program management, including efforts to improve workload processing at both the initial application and appeals levels.
4. Stewardship of the Social Security Programs. The Subcommittee intends to hold oversight hearings to examine the management of the Social Security programs, including international agreements, to assess their potential vulnerability to waste, fraud, and abuse, and to explore necessary legislative remedies.
5. Service Delivery. The Subcommittee intends to hold oversight hearings to examine SSA's service delivery to the public, including efforts to modernize service delivery to meet the changing expectations of today's customers, and SSA's efforts to communicate with the public about the financing challenges facing Social Security and possible changes to the program.

Subcommittee on Select Revenue Measures

As directed by the Chairman of the full Committee, the Subcommittee on Select Revenue Measures will conduct hearings and develop legislation on a variety of tax issues.

This list is not intended to be exclusive. The Committee anticipates that additional oversight activities will be scheduled as issues arise and/or as time permits.

Sincerely,



Bill Thomas
Chairman