

Kingston	Mica	Scalise
Kline (MN)	Miller (FL)	Schmidt
Lamborn	Miller, Gary	Schock
Latham	Myrick	Sensenbrenner
Latta	Neugebauer	Sessions
Lewis (CA)	Nunes	Shadegg
Linder	Olson	Shimkus
Lucas	Paul	Shuster
Luetkemeyer	Pence	Smith (NE)
Lummis	Pitts	Smith (TX)
Lungren, Daniel	Poe (TX)	Souder
E.	Posey	Stearns
Mack	Price (GA)	Terry
Manzullo	Putnam	Thornberry
Marchant	Radanovich	Tiaht
Marshall	Roe (TN)	Walden
McCarthy (CA)	Rogers (KY)	Wamp
McCauley	Rogers (MI)	Westmoreland
McClintock	Rohrabacher	Whitfield
McHenry	Rooney	Wilson (SC)
McKeon	Roskam	Wittman
McMorris	Royce	
Rodgers	Ryan (WI)	

NOT VOTING—6

Boucher	Sherman	Solis (CA)
Meeks (NY)	Snyder	Sullivan

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (during the vote). There are 2 minutes remaining on this vote.

□ 1445

So the bill was passed.

The result of the vote was announced as above recorded.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

Stated for:

Mr. MEEKS of New York. Madam Speaker, on Rollcall No. 16, I was avoidably delayed and just missed the vote. Had I been present, I would have voted "aye."

□ 1445

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. HOLDEN). Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair will postpone further proceedings today on a motion to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or on which the vote is objected to under clause 6 of rule XX.

Any record vote on the postponed question will be taken later.

REQUIRING COMMITTEES TO INVESTIGATE REPORTS OF WASTE, FRAUD, ABUSE, OR MISMANAGEMENT

Mr. CARDOZA. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 40) amending the Rules of the House of Representatives to require each standing committee to hold periodic hearings on the topic of waste, fraud, abuse, or mismanagement in Government programs which that committee may authorize, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 40

Resolved, That clause 2 of rule XI of the Rules of the House of Representatives is amended by adding at the end the following new paragraphs:

“(n)(1) Each standing committee, or a subcommittee thereof, shall hold at least one hearing during each 120-day period following the establishment of the committee on the topic of waste, fraud, abuse, or mismanagement in Government programs which that committee may authorize.

“(2) A hearing described in subparagraph (1) shall include a focus on the most egregious instances of waste, fraud, abuse, or mismanagement as documented by any report the committee has received from a Federal Office of the Inspector General or the Comptroller General of the United States.

“(o) Each committee, or a subcommittee thereof, shall hold at least one hearing in any session in which the committee has received disclaimers of agency financial statements from auditors of any Federal agency that the committee may authorize to hear testimony on such disclaimers from representatives of any such agency.

“(p) Each standing committee, or a subcommittee thereof, shall hold at least one hearing on issues raised by reports issued by the Comptroller General of the United States indicating that Federal programs or operations that the committee may authorize are at high risk for waste, fraud, and mismanagement, known as the ‘high-risk list’ or the ‘high-risk series’.”

SEC. 2. Clause 1(d)(3) of rule XI of the Rules of the House of Representatives is amended by adding at the end the following new sentence: “That section shall also delineate any hearings held pursuant to clauses 2(n), (o), or (p) of this rule.”

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. CARDOZA) and the gentleman from California (Mr. DREIER) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California (Mr. CARDOZA).

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. CARDOZA. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material on House Resolution 40.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

Mr. CARDOZA. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, make no mistake about it, these are tough times for our country. The United States is facing an economic disaster unlike anything we have seen since the Great Depression.

In the coming weeks, there will surely be differences of opinion as to how to best address the ailments of our Nation. But one thing is certain: Now, more than ever, it is time to ensure that government spends the taxpayers’ money wisely.

For the first 6 years of the Bush administration, there was virtually no oversight by the Republican-led Congress. This led to rampant fraud and abuse, and billions of dollars of taxpayer dollars that were squandered by the administration, particularly regarding Iraq reconstruction and the response to Katrina.

Beginning in January of 2007, the Democratic Congress turned a new page and took numerous steps to begin changing the way we do business by re-

storing accountability and oversight. House Resolution 40, introduced by my very good friend and fellow Blue Dog colleague, the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. TANNER), and myself, simply adds another layer to the rigorous oversight measures that we have already established.

This resolution amends the House rules to require each standing committee to hold at least three hearings per year on waste, fraud and abuse under each respective committee’s jurisdiction. It requires a hearing in the event that an agency’s auditor issues a disclaimer that the agency’s financial statements are not in order. It also requires a hearing if an agency under that respective committee’s jurisdiction has a program deemed by the GAO to be at high risk for waste, fraud and abuse.

Mr. Speaker, at the request of my friends on the other side of the aisle, there are two other stipulations. First, that the resolution shall be considered in light of existing House rules governing the conduct of committee hearings, including hearings held in executive session and the treatment of executive session materials; and, second, to require that committee activities reports identify the hearings held under the resolution.

Friends, plain and simple, it is now time to audit America’s books. This resolution will add another level of accountability by shining light on the most egregious cases of government waste.

I would add, Mr. Speaker, that I am very encouraged by President-elect Obama’s statements regarding his intent to pore through the budget line-by-line to eliminate wasteful spending. However, while I take the President-elect at his word, this resolution demonstrates that this Democratic Congress will not turn a blind eye to government waste simply because there is now a Democratic administration. Free passes are over, and we must build upon increased oversight and accountability efforts.

We have an opportunity to reinvent government and adhere to the fiscal accountability measures that Blue Dogs have long advocated. This will require tough decisions. But given these challenging economic times, cutting out waste, fraud and abuse must be among our top priorities in this Congress. All this requires is some bureaucratic soul-searching.

I ask my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to join the Blue Dogs in this quest.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume, and I very gladly rise in strong support of this resolution, and, more importantly, in the bipartisan spirit in which it has been shaped.

The basic idea behind this resolution, as my friend has said, is to ensure that committees are fulfilling their oversight duties and fully addressing the

need to eliminate waste, fraud and abuse from our Federal budget. While we always have a duty to spend taxpayer dollars wisely, as we all know, this obligation has never, ever been more critical than it is today because of our economic environment. We cannot afford to waste a penny of the taxpayers' hard-earned dollars.

But the best of intentions must be implemented wisely or the effort will be wasted. Republicans had a number of suggestions for strengthening this resolution and to make it more effective. While we would have preferred to have this resolution go through regular order, we were very pleased, nonetheless, to find the process to be both consultative and collaborative. Ultimately, our modifications were incorporated into the final product.

Our primary concern was one of transparency. Requiring committees to hold hearings on egregious reports of waste, fraud and abuse is important. But without transparency, there can be no accountability. We simply asked that hearings on the reports of inspectors general or the Comptroller General be included in each committee's survey of activity. These surveys are a matter of public record.

By including this information, the taxpayers will be able to directly follow the oversight activities of committees. They will have the opportunity to judge for themselves the level of scrutiny that is given to serious allegations of wasted taxpayer dollars. Our request for greater transparency is reflected in the resolution that is before us today.

We also asked for further clarification on the protections put in place to safeguard classified material. Again, the majority was receptive to our request and provided the necessary clarifications.

We have one final area of concern which I would pose as a question to the majority manager: As we work to eliminate waste, fraud and abuse, it is essential that we do not neglect to turn the microscope inward and examine our own operations right here in this institution. The legislative branch must also be fully accountable to the taxpayer.

I would hope that legislative branch inspectors general, such as those in the Offices of the Architect of the Capitol, the Library of Congress and the Smithsonian, be subjected to the same scrutiny as other inspectors general are imposing on their parts of government.

I would ask the gentleman for a clarification in this matter. Do these legislative inspectors general fall under the definition of the Federal Office of the Inspector General pursuant to the proposed subparagraph (n)(2)?

I yield to the gentleman for his response.

Mr. CARDOZA. I thank my colleague and friend for yielding and for his thoughtful suggestions.

In fact, yes, the Committee on House Administration is covered under this resolution, and the other measures, as

you have indicated, have already been incorporated as well.

Mr. DREIER. Good.

Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend for his response, and I would also like to thank the majority staff, particularly majority council Sampak Garg, for their consultative approach to this resolution. I believe that this measure puts forth a workable and effective means of improving committee oversight and I believe that the quality of the end product is a direct result of the bipartisan collaboration that took place throughout the process.

It is my sincere hope, Mr. Speaker, that future efforts of the Rules Committee can be similarly driven by consultation and collaboration.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CARDOZA. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to my good friend, the gentleman from Tennessee (Mr. TANNER), the author of the measure.

Mr. TANNER. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman, and Mr. DREIER, I appreciate your comments. What we are attempting to do is to reestablish congressional oversight.

Congress authorizes and appropriates money, but we don't actually spend it. So when we are asking the administration, whoever it may be, Democrat, Republican, whoever, to come up here and explain some of the things that we have seen in the paper by this instrument we are talking about here, I think all of us benefit.

What basically H.R. 40 does is it puts in place a systematic mechanism for regular oversight, not only just waste, fraud and abuse, but, as Mr. CARDOZA said in his opening remarks, whenever there is an auditor's disclaimer, that will trigger a hearing to hopefully ask them why they had to file a disclaimer; what is the information they didn't receive, why didn't they receive it, who is withholding it, so we can actually fix something around here for a change.

□ 1500

And then, of course, the third thing, those two look backwards sort of at what already may have happened. The third provision looks ahead.

Every year, as you know, the GAO identifies, or every Congress, high risk programs. That basically is government talk for programs that don't work as they were intended when they were passed by Congress. And so, when that happens, there is a hearing to identify those high risk programs into the future so that we can either fix them or abolish them.

Without getting into it, there were some 13,000 IG recommendations, Inspector General recommendations that went unattended in recent years. That is not only our fault, but it is, in my view, a dereliction of the duty of the Congress as a separate and independent branch from this or any other administration. And so what we are attempting to do, again, is to put in place a systematic, structural oversight mech-

anism where the House will look at not only what we are going to do, but what we've already done.

And so, again, I appreciate your comments.

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, at this time I am very happy to yield 3 minutes to our hardworking new ranking member of the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, my friend from San Diego (Mr. ISSA).

Mr. ISSA. Mr. Speaker, almost every day the Government Accountability Office and Inspector Generals issue a report identifying waste, fraud, abuse and mismanagement. The Federal Government is large, and we can use all the help we can get. Unfortunately, these important reports often go unread. They fall, without testimony, on deaf ears, and Congress does little or nothing about it.

I welcome the fact, Mr. Speaker, today that we are setting a baseline, a starting point for oversight by the authorization committees. I'm pleased to serve on the committee that has broad jurisdiction, and by agreement with the Rules Committee, and with the leadership of Chairman TOWNS, we have secured the fact that nothing in this rules change would limit the unlimited jurisdiction of the Committee on Oversight and Reform to, in fact, look at these same reports and to hold hearings on any one or any 13,000 of these various remaining claims as the Bush administration leaves.

Mr. Speaker, I want to speak particularly to Mr. TANNER's statement which, I think, was appropriate, and should be dealt with. During the Bush administration, 98,000 such findings came out of the GAO and the IGs. 13,000 were not dealt with during that administration, roughly a 14 percent leftover.

I look forward to the fact that the Government Oversight and Reform Committee will have the help of all the authorization committees to look into those, and I look forward to working on a bipartisan basis, both within the committee of primary oversight and with each the committees of jurisdiction, because I think it's important that as we allow a new administration to set goals, we deal with all of the leftovers, the 13,000 that perhaps would have been taken care of in the ordinary course, but now need to be quickly looked at so the new administration can get on to its agendas. And of course, as time goes on, I suspect that we will be looking at failures that occur on the new President's watch.

I look forward to working with the gentleman from California on a bipartisan basis, to deal with the remaining roughly 14 percent of those that occurred on President Bush's watch.

I look forward to this legislation. I once again commend Chairman TOWNS for his work to make sure that the committee of primary oversight is not limited by this resolution. We've been assured that it isn't.

Mr. CARDOZA. Mr. Speaker, may I inquire how much time is remaining on both sides?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from California (Mr. CARDOZA) has 13 minutes remaining. The gentleman from California (Mr. DREIER) has 14 minutes remaining.

Mr. CARDOZA. Mr. Speaker, I would like to now yield such time as he may consume to Mr. TANNER to insert an item into the RECORD.

Mr. TANNER. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

PROJECT ON GOVERNMENT OVERSIGHT,
Washington, DC, January 13, 2009.
Representative JOHN TANNER,
1226 Longworth House Office Building,
Washington, DC.

DEAR REPRESENTATIVE TANNER: Thank you for the opportunity to present the views of the Project On Government Oversight (POGO) regarding H.Res. 40, which requires each standing committee of the House of Representatives to hold periodic hearings on the topics of waste, fraud, abuse, and mismanagement. We believe that having such a systematic approach to oversight enshrined in the Rules of the House would greatly enhance Congressional oversight of executive agencies' programs and functions.

As you may know, POGO is a non-partisan nonprofit that for more than 27 years has investigated and exposed corruption and other misconduct in an effort to make federal agencies more effective, accountable, open, and honest.

For the past 18 months we have been engaged in an in-depth study of the Inspector General system, examining both the law and how the system works. We issued one report last February on issues affecting IGs' independence (www.pogo.org/pogo-files/reports/government-oversight/inspectors-general-many-lack-essential-tools-for-independence/go-ig-20080226.html), and are pleased to note that several of our suggestions were incorporated into last year's Inspector General Reform Act (H.R. 928, P.L. 110-409). We are planning to issue a second report in the coming months regarding IGs' performance and accountability.

One of our conclusions is that Congress needs to pay much more attention to the work of both IGs and the GAO. Too often reports on important issues are left languishing, unread, on the desks and shelves of Congressional staffers. It has been 30 years since Congress created the IG system, and we believe it was a brilliant and unique concept—to place internal watchdogs in most federal agencies where they would both prevent and root out waste, fraud, and abuse, and encourage federal programs to be more effective and efficient.

However, this wonderful system can only work if Congress pays attention to the resulting reports. Inspectors General have no enforcement powers. They cannot force an agency to do anything. If an agency will not fix a broken program, then it is up to Congress to force them to do so.

Frankly, there are two problems with Congress's ignoring IG reports—one is the more common, when the IG has done good work and makes important recommendations that need to be but are not implemented. The other problem is the flip side to this—some IGs produce only mediocre work and do not challenge their agencies aggressively enough. Congress needs to pay attention in both cases.

For all of these reasons, we support the passage of H. Res. 40 to require each House committee to conduct at least one hearing during each 120-day period regarding waste, fraud, abuse, and mismanagement of the agencies under its jurisdiction; at least one additional hearing if there are disclaimers in

any agency's financial report; and at least one additional hearing if a program is listed as "high risk."

Again, we appreciate your asking us for our views and look forward to working with you to make Congressional oversight more aggressive and effective.

Sincerely,

DANIELLE BRIAN,
Executive Director.

Mr. CARDOZA. Mr. Speaker, I would like to now yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Wisconsin, my very good friend, Mr. KIND.

Mr. KIND. Mr. Speaker, I rise as one of the leaders of the new Democratic Coalition in strong support of this resolution. And I commend my two good friends from Tennessee and California for bringing this resolution before us and for the leadership that they have consistently shown on all matters pertaining to fiscal responsibility in this place.

This legislation is the proverbial disinfectant that we are in desperate need of. By systematically requiring the committees of jurisdiction to periodically hold hearings in order to identify and root out waste, fraud and abuse and mismanagement in the Federal agencies and with the Federal programs, it's an important step for us to get our fiscal house in order.

This is a bipartisan problem, and it's going to require a bipartisan solution for it. So I'm encouraged that our friends across the aisle also see the need and the necessity to move forward in this systematic fashion to deal with it. This, coupled with President-elect Obama's decision to create and to appoint a chief performance officer in the White House, I feel, is a good, 1, 2 punch in order to root out some of the redundancy and excess waste and abuse that takes place with Federal programs.

But we should also be clear that this is a first step of many steps that we will have to take to get our fiscal house in order.

Unfortunately, the economy's tanking and in the short-term, we're going to be dealing with a stimulus package which will all be deficit financing; and there's great consensus that we have to do it. But in the long term, the picture looks very bleak.

In fact, the Treasury Department last month issued their annual audit report that shows that over the next 75 years, we have a \$57 trillion unfunded liability facing our Nation; clearly, a glide path to unsustainability. That's more the net worth of all of us in this Country. And at some point we have to put a formal process in place, whether it's the creation of a fiscal commission or some form of bipartisan budget summit to deal with a long term strategy to get this fiscal house back in order. A \$57 trillion unfunded liability sets the next generation up for failure. This, along with more efforts on fiscal responsibility, is something we're going to have to come to grips with very shortly. I encourage my colleagues to support the resolution.

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I might consume to respond to some of the remarks made by my friend from Wisconsin. I have to say that this notion of our working together to put in place what I believe should be a bipartisan, bicameral effort to deal with this overall question of budget process reform is something that I've been privileged to champion for a long period of time. And I think that it is now way, way, way, overdue.

I personally am a strong proponent of our moving towards a biennial budget process. I think that if you look at the potential benefits to having the Federal Government contract on a 2-year basis for something like energy, think of what the savings for the U.S. taxpayer would be.

And if you look at a wide range of other areas, as many States have done, the notion of having a 2-year cycle would enhance our ability to do exactly what this resolution is encouraging, and that is, greater oversight. So I think that that is something that is important, and I hope that we will be able to put that into place.

And with that, Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to yield 2 minutes to our hardworking second-term Member, the gentleman from Urbana, Ohio (Mr. JORDAN).

Mr. JORDAN of Ohio. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of the resolution.

Look, we all know the facts. We've got a \$10 trillion national debt. I believe last November the Treasury Department reported that we ran the largest single monthly deficit in American history. From 1789 to 1987 we accumulated \$2 trillion in national debt. This fiscal year, and last fiscal year we will add \$2 trillion. So what it took us 200 years to do, we've done in 2 years.

This is a good first step, something we need to do. And we need to look at every single line item in the Federal budget, every single agency. And so I want to applaud both parties and the President-elect for bringing this forward.

I gave a speech the other night back home in Ohio and I said to the group, I said, who's going to bail out the bailout? And everyone kind of looked at me because they get it. They understand it's going to be the American taxpayer. Worse yet, it's going to be future American taxpayers, our kids and our grandkids. And so it's important that we do everything we can to look at where there's waste, where there's redundancy, where there's fraud, where there's crazy things in the Federal Government that we need to get a handle on and reduce spending so we can help families in the future and continue this great country that we call America.

Mr. CARDOZA. Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the thoughtful words of both our previous two speakers. I think their suggestions are very well-taken.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from New

York, the chairman of the Government Oversight Committee, Mr. TOWNS.

Mr. TOWNS. Mr. Speaker, I rise in support of this amendment to the House rules that emphasizes the importance of congressional oversight.

As Chair of the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, I am pleased that this resolution requires all standing committees to include reviews of waste, fraud and abuse in their regular schedule of hearings. We need to attack waste, fraud and abuse every way that we possibly can.

This rule, in no way diminishes the jurisdiction of the Oversight Committee. Instead, it complements the Oversight Committee by ensuring that our committee's focus on government accountability carries through to the authorizing committees for each agency.

The ranking member, Mr. ISSA, and I agree that the Oversight Committee will continue to review all of the GAO and Inspector General reports that our committee receives, and consider whether a hearing in our committee would be appropriate. I look forward to working with him and with all of the Members of the House towards our shared goal of making government work more efficiently for Americans, and also to make it much more transparent and this is what this amendment does, and that's the reason why I'm supporting it.

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CARDOZA. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentlewoman from Illinois, a leader in the effort to bring fiscal responsibility back to this institution, Ms. BEAN.

Ms. BEAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today as a proud cosponsor of this legislation that encourages adoption in the House rules. I'd like to thank Mr. CARDOZA and Mr. TANNER for their leadership since we first introduced it in the 109th Congress.

Mr. Speaker, I came to Washington from the private sector, where accountability and performance measurements are naturally part of best practices. As a Member of Congress I've long advocated for increased transparency and oversight of government spending and performance. As the people's representatives, we have a responsibility to hold Federal Government agencies accountable for the tax dollars that they receive and the services they provide.

And, like my colleague from Wisconsin, I applaud the President-elect's appointment of a chief performance officer. So we have Executive Branch measurement of government results as well.

Although the last Congress improved agency and program oversight, this resolution takes accountability to the next level. House Resolution 40 mandates committee hearings every 4 months when reports suspect agency level waste, fraud or abuse of taxpayer dollars.

Furthermore, whenever an agency or program fails its annual audit, addi-

tional hearings are required to ensure changes are enacted to prevent the continuation of business as usual.

Finally, Congress, working with the GAO, will hold hearings to investigate those programs, departments or entitlements deemed high risk for abuse, such as the 2010 census.

Particularly in a time of economic uncertainty, Americans rightfully expect Congress to create higher standards and practices to eliminate waste, fraud and abuse. Unfortunately, for the last 12 years the GAO has been unable to analyze the financial balance sheet of the U.S. government due to numerous agencies failing their audits. As we work to stabilize our financial markets and stimulate this economy, we must also attend to long-term fiscal restraint and responsibility.

With this resolution and resulting hearings, Congress will have the information necessary to make the tough choices needed to bring our fiscal house in order. These practices will ensure greater return on taxpayer outlays.

Again, I thank Mr. TANNER and Mr. CARDOZA for their leadership, and encourage bipartisan support of this legislation.

□ 1515

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, I am going to continue to reserve the balance of our time.

Mr. CARDOZA. Mr. Speaker, I yield 1 minute to a member of the Blue Dog Coalition, the gentleman from Mississippi (Mr. CHILDERS).

Mr. CHILDERS. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of House Resolution 40, authored by my good friend from Tennessee, Congressman JOHN TANNER.

Waste, fraud, abuse, and mismanagement are four adjectives the American people should not associate with government spending. I applaud Mr. TANNER's efforts over the years to bring accountability back to Federal spending.

As a longtime businessman from north Mississippi, I can certainly tell you that waste, fraud, abuse, and mismanagement are not common practices in the business community throughout the First Congressional District of Mississippi or in the Eighth Congressional District of Tennessee as far as that goes.

The current economic situation now, more than ever, demands that this Congress spend every taxpayer dollar with the utmost responsibility and care. In the event hardworking taxpayer dollars are being squandered, we, Congress, have an inherent task to put an end to poor financial decisions by government officials who do not understand the daily grind that the vast majority of the American people face.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. CARDOZA. I yield the gentleman an additional 30 seconds.

Mr. CHILDERS. House Resolution 40 is an effective step towards ensuring this country gets back to fiscal responsibility, the same responsibility American families face routinely.

Again, I applaud Congressman TANNER's leadership in bringing this good piece of legislation to the floor, and I look forward to its swift and immediate passage.

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, in light of the bipartisan nature of this resolution that we're considering here on the floor, I would like to inquire of my friend if he would want me to yield him any additional time that he might need on his side.

Mr. CARDOZA. I very much appreciate the gentleman's request. I think we have enough time for the concluding speakers.

Mr. DREIER. Just in case you need any additional time, please don't hesitate. I would be happy to yield it to you.

With that, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CARDOZA. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CUELLAR).

Mr. CUELLAR. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to join my fellow Blue Dog Democrats in strong support of House Resolution 40. I want to thank Mr. TANNER, Mr. CARDOZA and Chairman TOWNS for the leadership that they have provided on this subject matter.

When you look at taxpayers, taxpayers want a government that is efficient, effective and accountable. This is what this legislation does. It does provide an efficient, effective and accountable government.

It is always difficult for Congress to agree on exactly where America's tax dollars should go, but we all agree on where they should not go. In these difficult economic times, America can scarcely afford to throw tax dollars into the waste bin of fraud, abuse and mismanagement.

Unfortunately, in the battle against waste, Congress does not have enough information, and we do not have any formal mechanism to investigate allegations of wasteful spending. This legislation sets up a mechanism. This is why today's legislation is a major step towards strengthening government accountability.

Mr. Speaker, I strongly support H.R. 40. I thank Mr. TANNER, Mr. CARDOZA and Mr. TOWNS for their leadership.

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, I will continue to reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. CARDOZA. Mr. Speaker, I am also prepared to close, so I will allow the gentleman to close.

Mr. DREIER. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time to simply say that I hope very much that this spirit of bipartisanship that has been exhibited here today in our quest to ensure that we responsibly ferret out waste, fraud and abuse and empower those inspector generals across the spectrum, including right here in this institution, will be an example and a model for the days, weeks, months, and years ahead.

We have all been inspired by the words of President-elect Obama in

which he has said that he wants to work in a bipartisan way. As I've said here on several occasions in the past week, I was pleased to receive a call from him, as I know many of my colleagues on this side of the aisle have received telephone calls from him, saying that he wants to work with us and that he wants our input.

I will say, up until this moment, Mr. Speaker, I have been somewhat troubled over the issues that we have addressed that have completely shut out any opportunity for the minority to participate. The evidence of that took place on the last vote that we just went through on the very important State children's health insurance plan.

At this moment, we have the Rules Committee hearing the amendment process for the troubled asset rescue package. TARP 2, it's called. Unfortunately, there has been no opportunity for minority input on this issue. If you look at the votes that we held last week, we had two closed rules that came right out of the chute, and they prevented the minority from having any opportunity to participate. Then if we go to a week ago yesterday, unfortunately, the opening day rules package, from my perspective, did shred this Obama vision that has been put forward of trying to work in a bipartisan way.

At this moment, we are dealing with an issue, that being our quest to ferret out waste, fraud and abuse and to talk about how we can responsibly deal with ensuring that we do not waste taxpayer dollars.

I commend my colleagues on the other side of the aisle who have joined in that effort. This measure is being considered under suspension of the rules. We know that everyone is going to be voting in favor of it.

While the Framers of our Constitution wanted there to be a clash of ideas, at the end of the day, it is imperative that we come to a resolution in a bipartisan way, I believe, if we're going to responsibly govern. Let's hope that this resolution designed to deal with responsibly ensuring that we do not waste taxpayer dollars is, in fact, a model for the future.

With that, Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. CARDOZA. Mr. Speaker, I would also like to conclude my remarks by simply saying this:

As we know all too well, despite the Blue Dog Coalition's best efforts and the efforts of many other efforts on both sides of the aisle in this Chamber, cutting spending is never easy, but ladies and gentlemen, enough is enough. It is high time that we audit America's books. It is a moral imperative that we stop spending taxpayer dollars with reckless abandon and start making tough decisions, because the choices we make today will impact what we will be able to do to provide for our children and for our grandchildren tomorrow.

I ask my colleagues on both sides of the aisle to support this commonsense legislation.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to support Res. 40, "Amending the Rules of the House of Representatives to require each standing committee to hold periodic hearings on the topic of waste, fraud, abuse or mismanagement in Government programs." This resolution was introduced in the 111th Congress by Congressman JOHN TANNER of Tennessee. This resolution provides for greater oversight concerning taxpayers' money. It allows for the Congressional standing committees to evaluate Government program spending. I urge my colleagues to support this resolution. Support of this resolution would signal a definite and progressive change in the new Congress and would be an important building block for President-elect Barack Obama's administration.

This legislation is important because under the Bush administration there has been much waste, fraud, abuse and certainly mismanagement, such as Iraqi contract abuses with Halliburton, the mismanagement of Katrina, and the overuse of "cost-plus" contracting.

It is of the utmost importance to keep our Government running as efficiently and cost effectively as possible. This resolution would require each standing committee, or subcommittee thereof, to hold at least one hearing during each 120-day period following the establishment of the committee on the topic of waste, fraud, abuse, or mismanagement in Government programs. Inclusion of a systematic approach to oversight in the rules of the House, through this resolution, is a key step forward in ensuring that tax dollars are spent wisely.

The 111th Congress will continue to focus on restoring accountability and strengthening oversight and has the duty to stop Government waste and to become resourceful. During this present time of economic and environmental distress, it is imperative that we evaluate our current practices and improve upon them.

As the former governor of Wisconsin Mr. Gaylord Nelson once said, "The ultimate test of man's conscience may be his willingness to sacrifice something today for future generations whose words of thanks will not be heard." Let us take the first step in eliminating waste and do our part for future generations.

Our constituents have faith in us as members of Congress to use their tax dollars prudently and for programs which are practical and relevant. We have a duty to oversee those programs which our committees authorize and make sure that all funds and resources distributed are used in a wise and frugal manner.

Unfortunately, over the last several years, we have seen massive cases of waste, fraud and abuse. A report prepared by the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction reportedly labels the Iraq reconstruction effort "a \$100 billion failure"—marked by poor planning, waste, and deception.

Congress can no longer turn a blind eye while taxpayer money is abused and wasted. We must support H. Res. 40 and continue to implement measures which increase oversight if we are to be accountable to the people. Again, I urge my colleagues to support this much needed and thoughtful legislation. By our support, let us signal to the American peo-

ple that we are a new Congress that has a renewed spirit and interest in increasing accountability. Indeed, we are accountable to our constituents and to the American people.

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, for years I have introduced government waste legislation that would set up a commission to identify waste, fraud and abuse in the Federal Government. It's similar to the Grace Commission of the 1980s. I believe strongly, as does Mr. TANNER, the sponsor of the resolution we're debating today, that we have a responsibility to oversee the spending of taxpayer money. And clearly, the American people feel that we have all abdicated that responsibility, both Republicans and Democrats. It is an indisputable fact that Washington is excellent at spending money on new programs. It almost never ends programs.

Today we are on the eve of passing a second stimulus bill that may cost \$1 trillion. These are dollars we don't have. If it does pass, with this one bill, Congress will double the already \$1 trillion deficit. I can remember when we were concerned about the total national debt being that large—and now the national debt is \$10.6 trillion. This debt level is an economic and national security calamity.

So what are we doing about this? We are debating this bill, which changes the House rules to require the committees to hold hearings on waste, fraud and abuse. That's good, as far as it goes. The Washington Post recently editorialized, "It's easy to find the fat in the federal budget. What's hard is getting rid of it." One of my committees is Foreign Affairs. President-elect Obama has committed to ramping up foreign aid spending. With today's resolution, I'm looking forward to my committee finding the waste in what we already are spending on foreign aid. Then we'll see if Congress does anything about it.

In selling the trillion dollar stimulus to the American people, the President-elect has said, "We will go through our Federal budget—page by page, line by line—eliminating those programs we don't need, and insisting that those we do operate in a sensible cost-effective way." Despite the strong Washington bias towards spending, despite years of failed efforts to end wasteful Government programs, I take our incoming President at his word, and wish him well. But it is important to realize, even if the President and Congress are successful far beyond any level of cutting that has ever been seen, total cutting would pale in comparison to the deficit and debt we are wildly running-up. This bill, which is the right thing to do, is no offset to the trillion dollars this Congress appears set to approve.

Mr. KRATOVIK. Mr. Speaker, I rise in full support of H. Res. 40 because I believe that not only is it a good idea for Congress to investigate waste, fraud and abuse, but I believe it is our Constitutional responsibility to do so.

The American people have lost faith in this institution. They no longer trust Congress to spend their money wisely and have grown increasingly cynical about our ability to provide needed oversight.

They expect us to safeguard their money the same way we would our own children's college funds or our retirement accounts—we must meet this expectation.

The current economic environment demands financial responsibility. We can no longer allow our nation's finite resources to be squandered while families in our districts are struggling to make ends meet.

What this resolution does is ensure that Congress is fulfilling one of our most basic functions. It calls for at least three hearings a year, one every 120 days, on the topic of waste, fraud, abuse and mismanagement.

This is an opportunity to show our constituents that we are serious about changing Washington and putting an end to the reckless and dangerous spending that in part helped create the unfortunate economic environment in which we find ourselves.

Many of us campaigned that we would come here to do our best to change Washington; taking steps to eliminate waste, fraud and abuse is a good start.

This is a good resolution that protects taxpayer dollars. I urge my colleagues to support H. Res. 40.

Mr. DRIEHAUS. Mr. Speaker, the American people sent the 111th Congress to Washington based on the promise that we would make government work again for every single person in this country. We cannot work to fulfill that promise if the government programs that we control are riddled with abuse and mismanagement. The reports of waste, fraud and abuse that have permeated the Federal Government are staggering. If we are going to change the way things are done in Washington, our first step must be to clean our own house. We need to put in place real oversight so that we can root out the problems where they exist. We need increased transparency so that government is held accountable by the people it serves. We need to change the business-as-usual attitude that has led to a culture of corruption and complacency in Washington. House Resolution 40 is an important part of our commitment to do right by the people who sent us here, and I applaud my friends from Tennessee and California for their leadership on this issue.

Mr. CARDOZA. I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. CARDOZA) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 40, as amended.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the yeas have it.

Mr. CARDOZA. Mr. Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

PROVIDING FOR CONSIDERATION OF H.R. 384, TARP REFORM AND ACCOUNTABILITY ACT OF 2009

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, by direction of the Committee on Rules, I call up House Resolution 53 and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the resolution, as follows:

H. RES. 53

Resolved, That at any time after the adoption of this resolution the Speaker may, pursuant to clause 2(b) of rule XVIII, declare the House resolved into the Committee of the

Whole House on the state of the Union for consideration of the bill (H.R. 384) to reform the Troubled Assets Relief Program of the Secretary of the Treasury and ensure accountability under such Program. The first reading of the bill shall be dispensed with. All points of order against consideration of the bill are waived except those arising under clause 9 of rule XXI. General debate shall be confined to the bill and shall not exceed 2 hours equally divided and controlled by the chair and ranking minority member of the Committee on Financial Services. After general debate, the Committee of the Whole shall rise without motion. No further consideration of the bill shall be in order except pursuant to a subsequent order of the House.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from Massachusetts is recognized for 1 hour.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of debate only, I yield the customary 30 minutes to my friend, the gentleman from California (Mr. DREIER). All time yielded during consideration of the rule is for debate only.

I yield myself such time as I may consume. I also ask unanimous consent that all Members be given 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks on House Resolution 53.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from Massachusetts?

There was no objection.

Mr. MCGOVERN. Mr. Speaker, House Resolution 53 provides for the initial consideration of H.R. 384, the TARP Reform and Accountability Act of 2009.

The rule provides for 2 hours of general debate to be controlled by the Chair and ranking minority member of the Committee on Financial Services. After the general debate, there will be no further consideration of the bill except pursuant to a subsequent rule.

Let me be clear: this rule provides for general debate only. The Rules Committee is meeting right now to consider amendments. Tomorrow, I expect the House will vote on several amendments, Democratic and Republican, to the bill.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H.R. 384, the TARP Reform and Accountability Act. I commend Chairman BARNEY FRANK and the Financial Services Committee for their steadfast commitment to reviving our Nation's economy.

Last September, the Bush administration sounded the alarm that our financial system was dangerously close to collapse. Treasury Secretary Paulson came to Congress with an astronomical funding request that he said would free up the credit markets and would prevent a bad situation from getting worse. The Bush administration asked for a \$700 billion blank check with no strings attached.

Over the following weeks, Speaker PELOSI and Chairman FRANK and the House Democratic leadership, along with Senate leaders and then-Senator Obama, worked with the Bush administration on a compromise that became the Troubled Asset Relief Program, or

TARP. The TARP provided \$700 billion in two stages—\$350 billion up front and another \$350 billion when requested by the administration.

Now, I opposed the administration's original request for a blank check, but I voted for the compromise because I took Secretary Paulson at his word that this money would be spent where it was needed. Specifically, funding would go to homeowners and to banks that were feeling the pressures of a tightening credit market. Unfortunately, the Bush administration gave most of this money to the big banks that continue to sit on too much of the money instead of lending it out to other institutions and individuals.

The stunning fact is that, of the \$250 billion provided in direct assistance to banks, only \$62.5 billion has been spent. That means that the banks are still sitting on \$187.5 billion. In my opinion, that is simply not good enough.

This economic crisis is real. This housing crisis is real, and it's not getting better. One in ten American homeowners with a mortgage was either behind in payments or was in foreclosure at the end of September. Predictions in December were that more than 8 million foreclosures, 16 percent of all U.S. mortgages, would occur over the next 4 years if nothing is done. That is quite a record for the outgoing administration.

Now, Chairman FRANK will be the first to say that we don't know how bad the economy would be if the first \$350 billion of TARP would not have been spent by the Bush administration, but we do know that it could have been spent more wisely.

The American public simply does not trust the current administration to do the right thing, and rightfully so, I should add. Through the bill we will consider later today and tomorrow, this new Congress will attempt to right the many wrongs surrounding the TARP.

We not only need better oversight on the second set of TARP funds; we also need to provide a real blueprint for how these funds are to be spent. The Bush administration clearly failed on this point, but H.R. 384 is a step in the right direction.

The bill before us today not only modifies the TARP and the TARP oversight, but it requires that between \$40 billion and \$100 billion be used for foreclosure mitigation. By March 15, 2009, the Treasury Secretary must establish a TARP Financial Stability Oversight Board approved plan to be implemented no later than April 1, 2009.

Our priority is keeping American families in their homes. While I hope the Senate will pass this bill and that President-elect Obama will sign it after he takes office, it is important that we, in the House at least, signal our intent on how this funding should be spent.

□ 1530

President-elect Obama has said that he will actually listen to and consult