Statement before the Committee on House Administration
Funding for the Committee on Energy and Commerce
112th Congress
Henry Waxman, Ranking Member
November 30, 2011

Chairman Lungren, Ranking Member Brady, and other members of this Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding the use of funds by the Committee on Energy and Commerce in the 112th Congress. I am pleased to join Committee Chairman, Fred Upton, in appearing before you today.

The first year of the 112th Congress has posed substantial budgetary challenges for the minority on the Committee. As I noted in my testimony last spring, the Committee on Energy and Commerce has jurisdiction over subjects with broad impact on public welfare, health, and the economy, including implementation of the comprehensive health reform law, making sure our food and drugs are safe, ensuring the effectiveness of Medicaid and much of Medicare, and developing the nation's energy and environment policy, telecommunications policy, and consumer protection laws.

To meet these responsibilities we need staff with expertise in a range of areas, access to key periodicals to keep staff current on the subject areas under the Committee's jurisdiction, and the ability to travel to conduct factfinding and field hearings. Unfortunately, underfunding in this Congress has posed obstacles to meeting these basic staffing needs.

I continue to be tremendously proud of the quality and quantity of work performed by my staff. However, they are laboring under a shortage of manpower. We have been unable to fill all of our slots and have had to carry a significant number of vacancies due to budgeting constraints. Further, at the same time that staff have been shouldering an extraordinary workload they have seen their pay decrease from last year. In addition, we have had to forgo basic administrative resources such as a backup server that ensures the integrity of Committee files.

In the coming year, the Committee on Energy and Commerce will continue to be at the center of policymaking on issues key to the health and welfare of Americans. The Committee must continue to work to ensure national energy security. We must address the variety of health and environmental challenges posed by global warming and climate change. We must determine how to forge a successful telecommunications policy that encourages innovation and appropriate allocation of spectrum resources.

We need an increase in funding for the Committee on Energy and Commerce for the remainder of the 112th Congress in order to ensure retention of expert staff and essential resources to support their important work for the American public. A cut in funding would have deleterious consequences: it would mean that we could not replace departing staff; we could not participate in Committee field hearings; and we would have to eliminate paid subscriptions to newspapers and on-line news services and databases.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.