

Chairman Jo Bonner
Committee on Ethics

Testimony before the
Committee on House Administration
March 2, 2011

Good morning, Chairman Lungren and Ranking Member Brady. Also, please let me say good morning to the Ethics Committee's former Chairwoman, Ms. Lofgren, and a current Member of the Committee, Mr. Harper. Thank y'all for your service to this institution.

I am privileged to serve, with Ranking Member Linda Sánchez, and 8 of our distinguished colleagues on the uniquely evenly-divided Committee on Ethics. The Committee is tasked in carrying out its duties in an impartial manner in order to provide a fair procedural framework for the Committee's activities and to serve well the people of the United States, the House of Representatives, and the Members, officers and employees of this institution. We believe that the budget proposal before you will allow us to accomplish this mission.

As each of you know, the purpose and work of this Committee is very important to the integrity of this institution: the Committee's core responsibilities include providing training, advice, and education to House Members, officers and employees; reviewing and approving requests to accept privately-sponsored travel related to official duties; reviewing and certifying all financial disclosure reports that Members, candidates and senior staff are required to file; and investigating and adjudicating allegations of impropriety and violations of House Ethics Rules.

To give you an idea of the volume of Committee work that is accomplished each Congress, let me share with you a few remarkable numbers from the 111th Congress. During the 111th Congress, the Committee on Ethics:

- Issued more than 780 formal written advisory opinions;
- Fielded *thousands* of informal telephone calls, emails and in-person requests for guidance on ethics issues;

- Provided training to more than *10,000* House Members, officers, and employees *each year*;
- Reviewed nearly *6,900* financial disclosure statements; and
- Reviewed more than *3,090* privately-sponsored travel requests.

The Committee also:

- Commenced or continued investigative fact-gathering regarding *111* separate investigative matters;
- Received *13* referrals from the Office of Congressional Ethics – commonly known as the OCE;
- Resolved *75* investigative matters without taking formal action;
- Empanelled *4* investigative subcommittees;
- Carried over and expanded *1* investigative subcommittee, completed the investigation, adjudication and sanction phases of that *very public* matter;
- Filed *12* reports with the House totaling more than *15 thousand* pages;
- Authorized the issuance of *240* subpoenas, interviewed *140* witnesses, reviewed more than *55,300* pages of documents, held more than *70* investigative meetings; and
- As of December 31, 2010, there were at least *16* investigative matters still pending before the Committee.

As you are aware, the budget proposal before you reflects a 5 percent or 308,858.45 dollars cut to the Committee's 111th Congress budget. The Committee received 6,177,169 dollars in the 111th Congress. The Committee will gratefully receive 5,868,310.55 dollars in the 112th Congress. Possibly unlike other Committee budgets, the large bulk of the Committee's expense is personnel compensation.

Currently the Committee is authorized to employ 29 staff members. During the 111th Congress, the Committee employed – on average – 23 staff members. Unfortunately, the Committee lost several staff members in 2010 and currently employs only 20 individuals, 12 of whom are attorneys. It is my – and I believe the Ranking Member's - top priority to fill out our experienced and trustworthy nonpartisan professional staff, within the next few months. These 6 attorney positions include Staff Director, Director of Advice and Education, Chief Counsel,

Advice and Education Counsel, and Investigative Counsel. While we are faced with the decision to possibly fill only 26 of the 29 authorized positions, we believe that decision will not compromise the Committee's ability to serve this institution effectively.

Before I conclude – if I may – I would like to recognize the Committee's Administrative Staff Director, Joanne White, who just yesterday began her 21st year with the Committee. In addition to producing the Committee's annual budget, I would like to thank Joanne for her many years of service to this institution.

Thank you for having me today. I am happy to answer any questions you may have after Ranking Member Sánchez has shared her thoughts.