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Statement of Rep. Elijah E. Cummings

Ranking Minority Member, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
Before the Committee on House Administration

March 1, 2011

Chairman Lungren and Ranking Member Brady, this is the first time I have appeared before you as Ranking Member of the Oversight Committee, and I thank you for the opportunity to testify on our proposed budget for the 112th Congress.

I want to thank Chairman Issa for including the minority as a partner in developing both our Committee's budget and our oversight plan. The Committee has adopted an aggressive agenda to root out waste, fraud, and abuse to make our government work more effectively and efficiently on behalf of the American taxpayers.

As I have expressed to Chairman Issa, I am very pleased we were able to work in a bipartisan manner to include in our oversight plan an investigation into allegations of abuse by mortgage service companies during the current national foreclosure crisis.

In addition, the Government Accountability Office has provided us with a good road map for our work. At a hearing before our Committee earlier this month, GAO issued its biennial High-Risk Report, which highlights more than 30 areas where we can find real efficiencies and considerable savings. For example, GAO highlighted the need to make significant improvements in federal contracting, which accounts for hundreds of billions of dollars each year.

In light of this ambitious agenda, full funding of the Chairman's budget request is imperative. As he noted, our overall budget request represents a 5% decrease from the 111th Congress. Although I support this request, I do so reluctantly. The efforts of our Committee take significant resources, but there is no doubt that they provide a cost effective return on the investment.

Of course, I am pleased that Chairman Issa is continuing our Committee's tradition of requesting a 33% allocation of the budget for the minority.

However, I caution against making further cuts. Nearly every member of my staff has already taken a salary cut to work on this Committee. Like your staff, they are among the most

hard-working, knowledgeable, and dedicated public servants in the country. They routinely put in tremendous hours, not for the pay, but for the privilege of working in this institution, to fulfill the patriotic mission of public service, and to make a positive difference in the lives of more than 300 million Americans.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify, and I am happy to answer any questions you have.