

Chairman Dingell at the Energy and Commerce Committee Hearing entitled, "Department of Commerce Budget for Fiscal Year 2009"

Statement of Congressman John D. Dingell, Chairman
Committee on Energy and Commerce

ENERGY AND COMMERCE COMMITTEE HEARING ENTITLED, "DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2009"

Today the Committee will receive testimony from the Secretary of Commerce regarding the Administration's request for Fiscal Year (FY) 2009. I thank my friend, Secretary Gutierrez, for appearing before the Committee. Mr. Secretary, I have a number of tough questions about the Administration's budget request, as I am concerned it will not support the Department's core mission of fostering the foreign and domestic commerce of the United States.

I am troubled, particularly due to the country's de facto state of recession, that the Administration has proposed cutting important development programs administered by Commerce Department bureaus, such as the Economic Development Administration and the Minority Business Development Agency.

Similarly, I am disappointed that the Administration has proposed funding for the National Institute for Standards and Technology by more than \$100 million. This includes the effective termination of the Hollings Manufacturing Extension Partnership program, which was authorized for \$122 million in the 2007 America COMPETES Act. At a time of economic hardship for working men and women I would like to know the Administration's rationale for the proposed evisceration of these valuable programs.

In addition to its chilling effect on the Department's economic development programs, the Administration's request for a \$17 million decrease in funding for the National Telecommunications and Information Administration (NTIA) raises serious questions about its ability to perform key responsibilities. NTIA must clear advanced wireless services spectrum, promote greater transparency in the work of the Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers, and coordinate the Public Safety Interoperable Communications grant program. I am particularly troubled that the Administration has requested no additional funding to support consumer education for the converter box coupon program, especially in light of the looming national transition from analog to digital broadcast signals.

In closing, by way of this hearing and subsequent correspondence, the Committee would like to learn in greater detail about the Commerce Department's efforts to address the following challenges:

- Controlling the cost and improving the accuracy of the 2010 Census;
- Ensuring that the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration effectively manages existing atmospheric satellites, as well as responsibly acquires new ones;
- Making certain that the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office achieves better and more efficient results; and
- Promoting U.S. exports and fair competition in international trade, as well as enhancing export controls for dual-use commodities.

I thank Secretary Gutierrez for his testimony today. I am certain this morning's dialogue will be fruitful.

Prepared by the Committee on Energy and Commerce
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