

**Opening Statement**  
**U.S. Representative James P. McGovern**  
**Hearings of the**  
**Subcommittee on Technology and the House:**  
**To examine Rule X, the Organization of Committees, including its current legislative**  
**impact, arrangement, and effectiveness, and suggestions for changes**  
**June 16, 2004**

---

**Mr. Chairman,**

**I want to thank you for holding this hearing today and I want to thank the Chairmen and Ranking Members of the various Committees for taking the time out of their busy schedules to testify before us today and tomorrow.**

**The Committee structure is a critical part of the House of Representatives. As we all know, the Committees were established and designed to discuss issues, consider legislation, provide oversight over the executive branch and review federal laws. These responsibilities are described in detail in Rule X of the Rules of the House of Representatives. Rule X also specifies the structure of the committees, establishes select and joint committees, and sets the rules regarding staff and expenses. It's an important rule that is literally the blueprint for the way the Committees of the House work – or, rather, should work.**

**There are many issues that can and should be addressed during this hearing. I believe it's important to know what the Chairmen and Ranking Members think about the possible establishment of a standing Homeland Security Committee**

**But the most important issue that must be addressed in these hearings is whether the Committees are fulfilling their responsibilities as set by the Rules of the House.**

**It's appropriate that we hold these hearings this week on the oversight of Rule X; because it's clear to me that Rule X isn't working and that the committee process is badly broken.**

**For example, the Rules Committee considered four bills this week regarding energy policy. Three of the four bills were never marked up by their Committees of jurisdiction. Those three bills bypassed the committee process and went straight to the Rules Committee, which in far too many instances has become of the committee of original jurisdiction on nearly every issue the full House considers.**

**And the fourth bill, by the way, was a reconsideration of a conference report that has already been agreed to by the House.**

**Sometime this week, this committee will consider the FSC/ETI bill, legislation that purports to bring the United States into compliance with the World Trade Organization, allowing the WTO to lift tariffs on many U.S. goods. But, among other things, this bill will contain a bailout for tobacco growers. This buyout is language that should be considered by the Agriculture Committee, but, as of this morning, the Agriculture Committee has yet**

to consider this language. Most likely, the FSC/ETI bill will be considered by the Rules Committee without the Agriculture Committee marking-up their provisions of the bill.

Why do we have committees of jurisdiction, if they are going to be ignored or bypassed on issues within their jurisdiction?

Frankly, Mr. Chairman, this is no way to run the people's House.

Further, during these hearings, I intend to ask each Chairman and Ranking Member about their oversight activities during the 108<sup>th</sup> Congress. Oversight, established in Rule X, Clause 2, is an important responsibility of the House. Unfortunately, except for the Appropriations Committee, the standing Committees of the House are not living up to their oversight responsibilities as written in the House Rules.

One of the Ranking Members who will testify today came out of the Watergate era, and served in this House during times when Congress actually lived up to its oversight responsibilities. Mr. Waxman, the Ranking Member of the Committee on Government Reform, and Mr. Miller, the Ranking Member of the Education and Workforce Testimony, who will submit written testimony, are experts in the area of oversight, and I hope both of them will provide this committee with their views of the tremendous importance of oversight and how much or how little oversight is being conducted by the standing Committees today.

Mr. Chairman, again, let me thank you for holding this hearing. I believe we have an excellent opportunity to point out many of the ways the Committee process is being subverted, and I look forward to hearing from the Chairmen and Ranking Members on this topic.