

**TESTIMONY OF THE HONORABLE JOE BARTON
CHAIRMAN, COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND
COMMERCE
BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON RULES
JUNE 17, 2004**

Chairman Linder, Ranking Member McGovern, and
Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the
opportunity to testify before you today.

As you know, I have only been Chairman of the
Energy and Commerce Committee for a few months. I'm
proud to report that the Committee hasn't lost a beat in the
transition from Billy Tauzin's leadership to mine – we have
been very, very busy. Since I have become Chairman, we
have:

- Passed out of Committee and off the House floor
sweeping new reforms to our broadcast indecency
laws.

- Passed a number of important health care bills out of Committee and on the floor, including ones on stroke prevention, one on medical devices, and one banning steroid precursors.
- Held full Committee oversight hearings with all of the Cabinet Secretaries in our jurisdiction.
- Continued very aggressive oversight hearings on waste, fraud, and abuse, particularly at the National Institutes of Health and under the Medicaid program.
- Continued our critical emphasis on homeland security matters in our jurisdiction, including passage of the First Responders bill that will soon be before the Rules Committee.
- And of course in just the last few days we have dealt with a wide range of energy policy matters on the

House floor, showing that there is still great demand among House Members to enact comprehensive legislation this year.

I fully expect that we will continue this pace in the months to come. Although some of what we will be doing is a prelude to next year – in the area of telecommunications, for example, preparing for a broad rewrite of the 1996 Telecommunications Act – we also have a solid chance at getting some important items to the President's desk. Energy is my biggest hope, of course, but in the health area there is Project Bioshield, a mammography bill that I've been working on with Mr. Dingell; in telcom, we have indecency, a spectrum bill, and a junk fax bill; in the commerce area, we are marking up a spyware bill in subcommittee today. There is much more.

And we are also determined to continue our rigorous oversight of agencies and industries in our jurisdiction.

That sums up our recent and future activities.

I'd like to turn now to a few House Rule-related items.

First, I encourage you to maintain the system under which we can do bills under suspension of the Rules on Wednesdays. Far more often than not, our Committee produces bipartisan legislation that really does not need the scrutiny of the Rules Committee. Allowing suspensions on the first three days of the week provides us with ample opportunity to get legislation to the floor in a timely manner.

I would also like to address Rule X-specific items. It's no secret that the Committee on Energy and Commerce has lost a great deal of jurisdiction over the last ten years, most recently in 2001, when we lost securities and insurance matters. That trend should not continue. The 57 Members of my Committee are experts in the areas of our jurisdiction. And our cops are on the beat. I defy anyone to find an area within our jurisdiction that we have neglected.

I therefore adamantly oppose any further assaults on the jurisdiction of my Committee. In January 2001, we had a solid group of our 31 Republicans who were ready to vote against the Rules package because of jurisdictional changes. I suspect we would have a unanimous group in 2005 if additional changes are proposed.

Let me also take a moment to talk about the Select Committee on Homeland Security. As I testified before the Select Committee's Subcommittee on Rules in March, I simply do not see a need for the Select Committee, much less a Standing Committee, on Homeland Security. I've attached to my testimony a detailed account of all the work my Committee has done – both pre-9/11 and after – in this area. We have not shirked from our responsibility. In fact, through efforts like the PATRIOT Act and the Bioterrorism Preparedness legislation, we have led the way in protecting the homeland.

Let me just say that I – and I think most Members of my Committee – would view any effort to institutionalize the Select Committee as a way of diminishing our

jurisdiction. And we would therefore not view those efforts kindly.

I am willing, as I indicated to the Select Committee, to form my Committee's own Subcommittee on Homeland Security. In order to do that, I may need your help in changing House Rules to allow me to exceed the current limit on six subcommittees in every Committee.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for the time. I would of course be happy to answer any questions.