

# COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM

TOM DAVIS, CHAIRMAN



## NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release  
October 16, 2006

Contact: David Marin/Brian McNicoll  
(202) 225-5074

### Government Reform Committee: Oversight That Benefited All Americans

*Committee's Work Saves Taxpayers \$6.5 billion*

**WASHINGTON, D.C.** – During the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress, the Government Reform Committee and its seven subcommittees held 256 hearings on everything from steroids in baseball to contracting in Iraq. It ordered 359 reports, testimonies and briefings in support of oversight investigations and program reviews, and, according to the Government Accountability Office, **the committee's efforts saved taxpayers \$6.5 billion.**

“In virtually every case, we worked to make government more responsive, more efficient and more transparent,” said Rep. Tom Davis, R-Va., chairman of the full committee. “The accomplishments of the hard-working members and staffers on this committee put the lie to the charge that the House has failed to conduct meaningful oversight of the Bush administration. True, it's not the politically charged, inquisitorial “Gotcha!” oversight some might prefer. But oversight is about making government better, not collecting scalps. It's about the constitutional responsibility of the legislative branch to keep watch over how the public's money is spent. We have been watchful.”

For all the actions taken and savings realized, this may go down in the history of the Committee as the Session of the Steroids Hearings. On March 17, 2005, the Committee assembled four panels that included experts on steroid use, baseball executives, such as commissioner Bud Selig and Major League Baseball Players Association executive director Donald Fehr, and some of the game's most familiar names—among them Mark McGwire, Sammy Sosa, Rafael Palmeiro and Curt Schilling.

It also included the parents of student athletes who had committed suicide, and former player Jose Canseco, whose book accusing several players, including some on the panel, of steroid use prompted the hearings.

The hearings, before a packed house and televised live on ESPN, put players under oath on the subject of steroid use for the first time. Some refused or avoided answering questions. Palmeiro memorably pointed his finger at Committee members when declaring that he'd

“never used steroids. Period.” Weeks later, he would fail a steroid test, effectively ending his baseball career.

The Committee held three more hearings on steroid use in sports—one dealing with the NFL, which also was carried on ESPN, one on the NBA and one on steroid use among women—although none of those made as big a splash as the baseball hearing.

The only piece of related legislation the Committee ever considered—The Clean Sports Act of 2005—was introduced within weeks of the hearings. But the hearings themselves alleviated the need. In early 2006, baseball implemented much tougher sanctions for steroid use—players now face a 50-game suspension for a first offense with steroids and can be banned from baseball after three offenses. Also, MLB banned amphetamines for the first time, the NFL and NBA strengthened their steroid policies, and the National Hockey League implemented one for the first time.

The Committee took on another sports controversy in the spring and summer of 2006, when it waded into the battle between Comcast and the Mid-Atlantic Sports Network that was preventing 1.3 million cable homes from watching Washington Nationals baseball games.

The Committee held a hearing on April 7 to examine the dispute. Comcast still refused to carry the games. Chairman Davis wrote to the Federal Communications Commission in May to request timely consideration of a complaint filed by MASN against Comcast. Comcast still refused to carry the games. In July, the FCC ruled that Comcast and MASN must submit to arbitration. Less than a month later, Comcast relented. For most of September, Nats fans got to watch their team.

The Committee’s Oversight and Investigations operation spent the rest of the session on more traditional pursuits, producing significant benefits for American taxpayers.

It investigated the Department of the Interior after reports emerged that offshore oil leases negotiated in 1998 and 1999 failed to require oil companies to make appropriate royalty payments, costing the government more than \$10 billion in lost revenues over the life of the leases. The contracts are now being renegotiated.

It looked into the error-prone pay and benefits systems of the Army National Guard and Reserves, where collections actions were being pursued against some soldiers who were overpaid by accident while millions of dollars in pay and benefits were going to those who did not merit them, including deserters. The Army has instituted a variety of corrective actions.

It responded to news that the Defense Security Service had run out of money to process applications for security clearances from federal contractors by investigating the management of DSS. The investigation determined that poor management, a lack of financial controls and an unexpected spike in applications had precipitated the budget shortfall. New leadership at DSS and the Office of Personnel Management are implementing reforms, and, as of July, DSS has resumed processing applications.

The Committee also moved on a variety of fronts to curb spending and increase accountability. Chairman Davis co-sponsored and shepherded to passage legislation to establish a searchable public data base for all federal grants and contracts.

On the procurement front, Chairman Davis pushed through legislation to restructure the General Services Administration to streamline government procurement and drafted provisions in the annual Defense authorization bill to consolidate the civilian boards of contract appeals within the Department of Defense into a single board. In addition, the Committee conducted three oversight hearings on Networx—a government-wide contract through which government agencies will acquire telecommunications and networking services and other technical solutions.

The Committee also championed legislation, regulations and pilot programs to give flexibility to employees and managers at NASA, the SEC, the FBI, the Department of Homeland Security, the Border Patrol, the State Department, intelligence agencies and the federal acquisition workforce, among others.

The Committee approved, 34-1, legislation to strengthen whistleblower protection laws. Chairman Davis has worked with Rep. Frank Wolf, a fellow Northern Virginia lawmaker, and others to promote telecommuting within the government to ease the traffic that clogs roads around Washington and elsewhere. And starting this January, federal employees will be able to use pre-tax dollars for dental and vision care for the first time ever. And all of this was done in consultation with employee representation organizations.

Since 2004, the Committee has kept close watch on contracting activities in Iraq. It has held four hearings and numerous briefings and reviewed thousands of documents primarily on contracts for logistical support for our fighting forces. But a hearing on Sept. 28 turned up serious problems regarding contracts for the reconstruction of Iraq.

The subcommittees also engaged in valuable oversight throughout the 109<sup>th</sup> Congress. The Subcommittee on Government Management, Finance and Accountability looked into the accounting functions of the Department of Homeland Security and NASA. It looked at transparency and accounting controls throughout government and took a long look at how Hurricane Katrina relief spending was disbursed.

The Subcommittee on Federalism and the Census looked into preparations for the 2010 census and how localities can achieve more accurate results from intercensal counts. It assessed the Brownfields program for cleaning environmentally damaged areas and the Community Development Block Grant program. It looked at public housing, historic preservation, and taxes and local governments.

The Subcommittee on Regulatory Affairs investigated FEMA's flood maps, volatile organic compounds in agriculture and regulations on manufacturing. It also studied efforts to make government use plain language in explaining its policies, the Data Quality Act, illegal immigration, federal rulemaking and paperwork-reduction efforts in the IRS and throughout government.

The Subcommittee on Federal Workforce and Agency Organization looked into a variety of issues related to how federal workers are compensated. Its investigations covered everything from the availability of electronic health records to pay for law enforcement, judges and senior executives to using recent retirees to ease workforce shortages. It looked at student

loans and transportation benefits, hiring processes and government transparency and ethics and what to do with poorly performing workers.

The Subcommittee on Criminal Justice, Drug Policy and Human Resources helped develop legislation to re-authorize the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), the nation's methamphetamine epidemic, problems with RU-486 – the “abortion pill” – and transparency.

“I believe transparency is the key to earning the public’s trust in government, and I believe oversight is the key to helping government perform at its best,” Davis said. “Government is not perfect, and neither is oversight. But we can say with confidence that is less wasteful, more responsive and more open thanks to the efforts of the committee and its subcommittees.”

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