STATEMENT BEFORE
THE COMMITTEE ON HOUSE ADMINISTRATION
CHAIRMAN JAMES V. HANSEN, COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES
MARCH 1, 2001

Chairman Ney, Ranking Democrat Hoyer and Members of the Committee, thank you for this opportunity to testify on the budget submission for the Committee on Resources. Although this is not my first time before you requesting funds for Committee operations, it is my first time as Chairman of the Committee on Resources. Our Ranking Democrat, Nick Rahall, is also here and I am pleased to report that he has cosponsored our Committee funding resolution – which may be a recent first for the historically partisan Committee on Resources.

In the preparation of this budget request, we have consulted closely, and we believe it reflects a fair and honest appraisal of our needs for the upcoming Congress.

During the 106th Congress, the Committee on Resources conducted nearly 300 hearings and markups, and 349 of the Committee's bills became public laws. We believe these statistics show us to be one of the most active and the most productive Committees on Capitol Hill. The Committee was able to accomplish many of it legislative and oversight goals. With only modest increase in our budget, we are looking forward to even greater achievements in the 107th Congress.

The Committee on Resources' jurisdiction is broader than almost any other Committee in the Congress -- wildlife refuges, offshore oil and gas drilling, nautical charts, national parks, national forests, Native Americans, fisheries, United States territories, federal dams and their hydropower generation, crop irrigation, the preparation of environmental impact statements, the Council on Environmental Quality, the Holocaust Museum, Indian gaming, ocean mining, and the Endangered Species Act. Our issues reach every corner of the United States and its territories and affect millions of Americans. We want to continue our tradition to obtain as much public participation in the legislative process as possible, and so we have prepared a comprehensive series of oversight and field hearings. These hearings and fact finding travel will enable the Committee to gather input from the public whose lives and livelihoods are most affected by our legislation and who cannot afford representation in Washington D.C. We will have at least ten Members of Congress who are new to the Committee this year (almost one-fifth our membership), and they need an opportunity to see the real-life implications of the legislation our Committee has and will consider. The same goes for the many new staff of the Committee, which has not only a new Chairman but a new Ranking Democrat as well.

A major portion of the budget submission is the upgrading of our Committee hearing rooms sound and media systems. Because of our large Committee membership and the historic nature but small size of our two hearings rooms in the Longworth House Office Building, physical access

to our proceedings is limited. We try to compensate for this by providing remote listening areas and broadcasting our meetings on the Internet. However, the sound quality is so poor, few people can understand what is being said and we do not have video capability, like many other Committees do. We have tripled the communication staff of the Committee to get our message out to Americans and to reach across both miles and political philosophies, but we cannot share the information we produce unless the Committee has the means to disseminate it. In addition, witnesses who have come to Washington have been shocked at the level of audio visual equipment we have available to the Members of the Committee and which has severely limited our ability to take advantage of teleconferencing and other advance technology opportunities. Now that we are in the 21st century, we propose that we attempt to pull our Committee proceedings there, too.

In addition, during the 106th Congress, the Committee has able to continue meeting our goal of replacing all computers which did not meet House Minimum Technical Standards. Once again, the Committee's budget submission includes funding for the systematic upgrading of the Committee's computer systems as well as non-computer related equipment. It is imperative that we be able to keep pace with changes in computer technology to make our work more effective and efficient and to take advantage of the communications opportunities afforded by the latest computer technology.

Finally, as we have noted above, the Committee has hired new staff to replace those who transferred with the former Committee leaders to their new positions and those who left to pursue careers elsewhere. Most of these staff are younger and less experienced than the people they replaced and they will need training and exposure in to gain the knowledge necessary to achieve our legislative and oversight goals. Therefore, our senior staff will play an even more critical role in this effort, and it is imperative that we offer every incentive for them to stay. This budget request reflects salaries which can help retain our experienced staff by providing funds for merit raises and realistic cost of living increases.

The Committee on Resources' budget proposal addresses these needs and many others in detail. We recognize that every dollar we use comes from the taxpayers' pockets, and we believe that this budget accurately represents our minimum requirements. Thank you again for this opportunity to testify and I will be happy to answer any questions you or the other Members of the Committee may have.