Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON HOUSE ADMINISTRATION
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October 12, 2011

The Honorable Jeb Hensarling
The Honorable Patty Murray
Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction
The United States Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Hensarling and Senator Murray:

As Democratic Members of the Committee on House Administration, we are eager to help in your efforts to reach the goals established by the Budget Control Act of 2011. Our Committee's responsibilities lie almost entirely within the Legislative Branch of government. At present, annual outlays for the Legislative Branch total roughly $5-billion, nearly all of it discretionary spending. In his latest annual Budget (Fiscal Year 2012), the President already projects Legislative Branch outlays for the next five years lower than in 2010 thanks in part to careful decisions taken during the last four years. As with all branches of government, however, misguided cuts can increase spending, but careful scrutiny of the programs under our jurisdiction have revealed potential opportunities for additional savings, we offer the following suggestions for your consideration.

First, a significant portion of the sums appropriated annually for the operation of the House of Representatives, the Senate, the Library of Congress, and the U.S. Capitol Police buy electricity to heat and cool facilities and support agency operations across Washington, and in the surrounding area. Under the leadership of Speaker Pelosi, the House found numerous ways to reduce the House's spending on energy for heating, cooling, lighting, computing, and other operations. The House should redouble its efforts in this area, and the other Legislative Branch agencies should join in. Adopting currently available technologies could result in tremendous savings in energy costs. In addition, every Legislative Branch agency must focus not only on how its energy demands are being met, but on how it uses energy.

Second and similarly, an embrace of technology improvements by both chambers of Congress can cut our computing costs dramatically. The centralized server solution, enterprise software license agreements, and bulk-buy agreements the House adopted under Speaker Pelosi will save over $35 million over 10 years. We have also adopted House Rules to make them more compatible with new media and other emerging technologies. Both houses can save money in the future by incorporating new technology to manage their constituent communications, as recently suggested by the Congressional Management Foundation in their 2011 *Communicating with Congress* report.

Third, the Copyright Office, administered by the Library of Congress, is among a handful of Legislative Branch agencies that generate receipts. Creators seeking to protect their works pay fees to support the Office's operations. Congress could consider raising the modest fees now levied to reduce the need for appropriations. If the additional resources were invested in eliminating application backlogs, even modestly higher fees could lead to more copyright applications from creators who found the process easier and the benefits of copyrighting more timely than today.

Fourth, for various reasons, including increased overtime, federal government printing has become increasingly inefficient and hence wasteful through the proliferation of Executive agency printing plants that could – and by law should (44 U.S.C. 501) – be produced by or through the Government Printing Office has led to duplication and inefficiencies, including and beyond capital overinvestment, excessive contracting, and overtime costs. A thorough review of Executive agencies' internal printing and printing-procurement practices, undertaken by the Office of Management and Budget and followed by a determination from OMB to close down unnecessary printing plants and send that work to GPO for execution, would save millions of dollars in equipment and associated costs every year.

Our Committee stands ready to work with you and any others interested in saving money in the Legislative Branch agencies within our jurisdiction. We wish you the best of luck with your monumental task and look forward to reviewing your recommendations.

Sincerely,

Zoe Lofgren
Member
Committee on House
Administration

Robert A. Brady
Ranking Democratic Member
Committee on House
Administration

Charles A. Gonzalez
Member
Committee on House
Administration