

**Rules Committee Hearing  
Government Accountability Office Report of the Smithsonian  
Opening Statement  
Senator Bob Bennett  
Ranking Republican Member  
December 12, 2007**

I have a few comments I would like to make on the comprehensive analysis problem that we face. On page 13 of the GAO report there is a graph showing the growth of square footage under the Smithsonian stewardship. It remained fairly stable from 1910 to 1960. Then a great building boom occurred. I remember that building boom. I remember looking out of the windows from the Department of Transportation and watching the Hirshhorn Museum go up and being very excited with this addition, and then equally excited about the Air and Space Museum.

In the subsequent 50 years, building has been on a 90-degree upward angle. That is great in terms of the expansion of the Smithsonian responsibilities, but it also means an enormous amount of money for maintenance. The Architect of the Capitol has told us that we ought to budget between one and two percent of the fair market value of this campus as an annual maintenance budget. I hope we do not take into account all of the inflation in fair market value that would occur around the Capitol, which is probably priceless.

Looking at this upward increase of responsibilities and putting something akin to the Architect of the Capitol's label on it that says a certain percentage of the total amount must be budgeted every year for maintenance, the total budget goes up. This is something we need to address. If we decide we cannot maintain that kind of an increase in maintenance money, then we probably better decide to put a lid on the amount of square footage we are going to add to the Smithsonian. Otherwise, everything gets damaged. We have enthusiasm for new buildings, but we must recognize that they bring with them an annual cost that never goes away.

So I congratulate you on calling the hearing, Madam Chairman and look forward to hearing from our witnesses.