

**Statement of Rep. Henry A. Waxman**  
**Committee on Government Reform**  
**Hearing on “Cutting Out the Waste: An Overview of**  
**H.R. 5766, the Government Efficiency Act and**  
**H.R. 3282, the Abolishment of Obsolete Agencies and Federal Sunset Act of 2005”**  
**July 19, 2006**

Mr. Chairman, this hearing is on two legislative proposals that are backdoor assaults on the laws that protect the health, safety, and security of American families.

The first bill, introduced by Rep. Brady, H.R. 3282, would automatically abolish every federal agency within 12 years.

Let me repeat this: It would automatically abolish every single federal agency.

The title of the bill is the “Abolishment of Obsolete Agencies Act.” But it doesn’t identify obsolete agencies for abolishment. It sets an extermination schedule for every federal agency.

Is the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services, which runs the Medicare and Medicaid programs that provide health care to millions of seniors and poor people, obsolete?

Is the Environmental Protection Agency, which protects Americans from air and water pollution, obsolete?

Is the Social Security Administration obsolete?

Or the Occupational Health and Safety Administration ... the Department of Veterans Affairs ... or the Department of Education?

The answer is obvious: these federal agencies aren’t obsolete. They play a vital role in protecting the welfare of all Americans. Yet all of them would be eliminated under the Brady bill.

I know there are Republicans who want to eliminate EPA. Former House Speaker Newt Gingrich said he wanted Medicare to shrivel on the vine. President Bush proposed gutting Social Security and eliminating important veterans benefits. But none of these proposals could ever pass Congress. The public support for the programs is simply too strong.

So the Brady bill is a clever effort to achieve the same results through the backdoor.

Today, we are going to hear a lot of rhetoric about streamlining government and reducing waste. And we’re going to be told that passing this bill is part of a Republican effort to make government more efficient.

No one in Congress has done more than I have to root out waste, fraud, and abuse. Just last month, I released a report identifying 118 federal contracts worth over \$750 billion that are

rife with waste, fraud, abuse, and mismanagement. But not a single Republican has approached me about the study or suggested working together to eliminate this pervasive squandering of taxpayer dollars.

The real agenda here isn't wasteful spending. It's an effort to hold a legislative gun to the head of Democrats who care about environmental protection, Medicare, education, veterans, and Social Security. If the Brady bill passes, Republicans will say to Democrats: either you agree to gut environmental protections, privatize Medicare and Social Security, and slash veterans' benefits ... or we will sit back and allow the agencies that run these programs to expire.

That's a Hobson's choice – and the sure loser is the American people.

The Tiahrt bill (H.R. 5766) is less extreme, but its objectives are the same. Under this bill, there's no sunset. Instead, unelected commissions are created that can recommend abolishing or changing the functions of federal agencies. Then these recommendations must be voted on by Congress under "fast track" procedures.

The Tiahrt bill is a massive transfer of power from the legislative body to the executive branch. And like the Brady bill, it puts key health, safety, and welfare programs in constant jeopardy.

Mr. Chairman, I believe these bills are badly flawed. But I am glad that we are having this opportunity today to explore their consequences. And I am especially grateful that you accommodated my suggestions about witnesses for the second panel.

I look forward to today's testimony.