Committee Views and Estimates for Fiscal Year 2012
Committee on Education and the Workforce
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As it considers the budget for Fiscal Year (FY) 2012, the Committee on Education and the Workforce is mindful of the significant challenges facing America's students and workers.

Despite ever-increasing federal funding, far too many schools fail to prepare students for success in the 21st century. Unsustainable federal spending and record debt levels have created an atmosphere of uncertainty that has depressed investment and job creation, and as a result, nearly 14 million Americans are out of work. The American people are rightly alarmed by Washington's out-of-control spending spree, and they understand a world-class education system and economic prosperity cannot simply be bought or regulated into existence.

The Committee will advance fiscally responsible reforms that provide every child across the nation access to the highest quality education and free every worker to pursue the American Dream. In this time of worldwide economic instability and soaring federal deficits, fiscal responsibility is of the utmost importance We must urgently call for the reduction of wasteful government spending and bureaucratic federal mandates.

The President's budget proposal for FY 2012 raises serious questions about our shared commitment to fiscal responsibly. The Committee is particularly concerned that the President's budget denies the reality of the financial crisis we face; instead of making commonsense spending cuts, the President's proposal will continue to lead our country into even deeper debt. The Committee believes we need a new direction. We have heard the economists' repeated warnings that we cannot encourage job growth until we end this trend of unsustainable federal spending. The Committee is focused on policies that will promote the fiscal discipline our economy desperately needs, foster innovation and job creation, and spur American competitiveness.

The Committee on Education and the Workforce oversees programs that impact Americans of every age and economic level. Education and workforce policies are vital to the success of our country and the future prosperity of our citizens. Advancing meaningful reforms in both arenas will be key to reenergizing our economy and preparing America's workers for 21st century challenges. We must work to improve the nation's education system by restoring local decision making, empowering parents, letting teachers teach, and protecting taxpayers. The American workforce can become more productive and innovative by promoting education and job training for high-demand fields, eliminating red tape bureaucracy, and removing barriers between business and education. These priorities form the foundation of the Committee's agenda in the 112th Congress.

EDUCATION PRIORITIES

All students should receive a high-quality education that will prepare them to succeed in college and in the workforce. Now more than ever, our nation's students must graduate high school and college with the skills necessary to compete in the rapidly changing global economy.

However, the Committee recognizes the tough budgetary realities that exist. The budget of the U.S. Department of Education and the role of the federal government in education have grown significantly over the last 45 years with negligible improvement in academic achievement. Our commitment to education should never be measured in the amount of money that the federal government spends; it should be measured by the quality of our programs and policies.

The Obama Administration seems to recognize the importance of strengthening the nation's elementary and secondary schools. Unfortunately, by asking for a more than 10 percent increase in the Department of Education's budget for FY 2012, they fail to acknowledge current budgetary challenges.

The Administration calls for fiscal discipline, highlighting its efforts to eliminate 13 wasteful programs and consolidate others into more efficient funding streams. However, underneath this rhetoric lies billions of dollars in hidden costs and increases to federal programs with little substantive effort to get our fiscal house in order. While the consolidation or elimination of any program is a step in the right direction, more must be done. The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) recently released a report identifying 82 separate programs designed to improve teacher quality across 10 federal agencies. This demonstrates that the Administration could have done more in eliminiations and consolidations. Frankly, this budget proposal is a missed opportunity.

The Committee respectfully offers the following recommendations for consideration by the Committee on the Budget as it prepares its FY 2012 budget resolution:

Strengthening K-12 Education through Accountability and Parental Empowerment

In his State of the Union address in January, the President called on Congress to reform our nation's elementary and secondary laws. He called for them to be more flexible and more focused on what is best for students. The Committee agrees. State and local leaders are already promoting innovative solutions to improve student achievement and accountability. The Committee believes the federal government should reduce its interference in the day-to-day operations of our schools and free these education reformers to succeed. As the Committee works to determine the appropriate federal role in education, it will remove burdensome reporting requirements, eliminate inefficient federal education programs, and give states and school districts more flexibility in how they utilize funds to best educate their students.

Reforming Elementary and Secondary Education

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) – last reauthorized as the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) – supports the efforts of states and school districts to narrow the academic achievement gap between disadvantaged students and their peers. The law ended the practice of masking the performance of low-income children compared to their more advantaged peers and provided parents, teachers, principals, and superintendents important data on the academic achievement of students and schools. For those students trapped in low-performing schools, the law offered unprecedented opportunities for parental empowerment, allowing parents, especially those with children in schools not making annual progress toward academic achievement, the opportunity to move their students to higher performing elementary and secondary schools.

NCLB is not perfect, and it has created significant challenges. The law's one-size-fits-all approach of holding all schools accountable for student performance has created an overly complicated accountability system. Many states and school districts struggle to comply with the law's requirements. The central goal of making all students proficient in reading and math by the end of the 2013-2014 school year is unattainable, raising questions as to whether all schools will be labeled "in need of improvement" and subject to escalating federal interventions in three short years. As state and local education leaders push for dramatic reforms to improve schools, expand charter schools, and improve teacher tenure practices across the country, NCLB seems outdated and unable to adjust to the real world challenges of improving student success. The Committee believes that state and local school districts must be given additional flexibility to design systems for accountability, assessment, and school improvement that best meet the unique needs and priorities of their students.

Nine years after passage of NCLB, our country's education system continues to falter. Nationwide, only 69 percent of students earn their high school diplomas and approximately 1.3 million students do not graduate from high school on time each year. Of those who do earn their diplomas, many lack the skills they need to be successful in college or the workforce. It is clear that current federal education policy is not working. The Committee believes it is time to reevaluate the proper role of the federal government in education and get out of the way of meaningful state and local reforms.

The Administration's plan for reauthorizing ESEA would integrate the reforms included in the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act such as the Race to the Top program, into federal education law. Those reforms include: (1) supporting college- and career-ready standards by requiring states to adopt common or national standards and assessments to access funds; (2) improving teacher equity by requiring teachers and principals to be "highly effective;" (3) using data to improve instruction and requiring states to link student performance to teacher evaluations; and (4) improving low-performing schools using one of four turnaround models.

While the Committee appreciates the Department of Education's efforts to promote charter schools and teacher performance pay, it is opposed to the Administration's decision to tie funding to a more intrusive federal role in education For example, the Race to the Top program includes more than 100 new requirements states must meet in order to compete for the program. The Administration also limited state and local flexibility by proposing prescriptive requirements to turn around the lowest-performing schools through mandated "turnaround models" that involve firing the principal of the school (a requirement that proves unworkable in rural areas).

The Committee will work to fix the problems that states and school districts have encountered under NCLB through a fair, flexible, and locally focused approach. In an effort to reduce the federal footprint in elementary and secondary education, the Committee will restore local decision-making to states, school districts, and parents and encourage flexibility for states and school districts' use of federal funds. This will allow states and school districts to focus on local priorities. The Committee believes parents should have the primary role in making decisions for their children's education and will strive to give them the options and the resources they need to make good decisions. The Committee will continue to support the growth and success of high-quality charter schools and the freedom to educate children at home. We are committed to being good stewards of taxpayers' money and will work to eliminate education programs that are duplicative and ineffective.

Continuing the Successful DC Opportunity Scholarship Program

The Committee is determined to encourage educational choices for parents, allowing them to send their children to higher performing public or private schools if their current school fails to provide a high-quality education. Empowering parents with more options is a key component in the fight to provide students with a quality education.

The DC Opportunity Scholarship program, created in 2003, has allowed thousands of students in the District of Columbia to attend the school of their choice. If not for this critical program, more than 85 percent of students who receive scholarships would be forced to attend some of the District of Columbia's lowest performing schools. The average family income for scholarship students is approximately $24,300. Scholarships of up to $7,500 per student per school year are provided to the children of low-income families so they can attend a participating nonpublic elementary or secondary school in the District of Columbia. The program is a lifeline to those families whose children are trapped in low-performing and failing schools.

The Committee is dismayed by the Administration's decision to eliminate the DC Opportunity Scholarship Program. By cutting this program, the Administration has decimated parental options and denied students access to a high-quality education in the nation's capital. The Committee strongly advocates the reversal of this move. As such, we strongly urge the Committee on the Budget to provide full funding for this valuable program.

Making Special Education a Priority

The Committee maintains the federal government must keep its commitment to states, school districts, parents, and students with disabilities when it promised to fully fund special education. In 1975, Congress passed the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) and committed that states would receive 40 percent of the excess cost of special education. To date, Congress has not come close to meeting that funding requirement. The President's FY 2012 budget proposal includes $11.7 billion for the Grants to States (Part B) program, an increase of $200 million over last year's level. This funding level would maintain the federal contribution toward meeting the excess cost of special education at 17 percent of the national average per pupil expenditure.

While it may be a difficult task to fully fund IDEA in light of the nation's current budgetary constraints, the Committee is troubled that the Administration creates new federal education programs instead of meeting the current funding commitment under IDEA, a program beneficial to all school districts. For example, the Administration's budget request for the Department of Education creates five new elementary and secondary programs, totaling approximately $1.9 billion. This new funding could have been used to increase Part B funding, reducing the federal mandate on states and school districts all across the country.

Reducing Burdensome Regulations Overwhelming States and School Districts

The Committee recognizes the federal government is active in most facets of public education. Despite providing a relatively small percentage of all elementary and secondary education funding, the federal role has grown significantly with the passage of laws like NCLB, IDEA, and the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act. The federal government often ties federal funding to acceptance of its rules and regulations. States and local schools that accept federal funds are required to meet certain requirements, many of which are burdensome, costly, and duplicative. The requirements perceived to be the most important, and usually the most onerous, are typically incorporated into larger education programs.

As the federal role – and federal spending – in education has increased, so has the number of rules and regulations. This has forced many school districts and schools to hire new staff to handle the increased paperwork burdens required to stay in compliance with these mandates. Currently, states and school districts work 7.8 million hours each year collecting and disseminating information required under Title I of NCLB. The expense of complying with the data collection costs our states and school districts more than $235 million a year. The burden on schools is tremendous and should serve as a wake-up call to Congress and the Administration as we work to reduce unnecessary regulations that inhibit innovation at the state and local level. The Committee supports federal efforts to protect taxpayer dollars. However, federal mandates should never act as a roadblock to promoting success in our nation's classrooms.

Expanding College Access, Ensuring the Integrity of Federal Financial Aid

The United States has one of the most diverse higher education systems in the world. With more than 6,100 institutions of higher education eligible to participate in the federal student aid program across the country, students have the unique ability to find a school – online or on-ground, rural or urban, public or private, two-year or four-year - that best suits their individual needs. The Committee strongly supports federal policies that guarantee student choice and allow the country's diverse higher education system to flourish.

Ending Harmful and Job-Destroying Regulations

The Committee strongly opposes recent regulatory actions that threaten college access and put academic decisions in the hands of bureaucrats. The Administration's insistence on moving forward with a regulation to define "gainful employment" under the Higher Education Act targets the proprietary (or private) sector and will destroy jobs and stifle local economic development. Proprietary colleges are an important part of our nation's higher education system.

Their efforts to prepare students for a variety of careers are essential to meeting the President's goal of leading the world in college graduation rates by 2020. These colleges have the ability to adapt to the needs of the local workforce and develop key career programs that will encourage job growth.

On February 18, 2011, the Committee led a strong bipartisan effort to stop this job-destroying regulation. The House of Representatives adopted an amendment to H.R. 1, the Full Year Continuing Appropriations Act of 2011, by a bipartisan vote of 289 to 136, to prohibit the Department of Education from implementing its gainful employment regulation. While the Committee acknowledges the existence of "bad actors," federal policy should focus on providing students and families with the information they need to choose a high-quality college.

The Committee also has concerns with the recent "program integrity" regulations that were released last year to create a federal definition of a "credit hour" and put additional parameters around the authorization powers of states. The credit hour regulation will stifle innovation and prevent institutions from experimenting with new modes and methods of student learning. Developing a method for measuring a credit hour and assigning hours to programs are key functions for institutions of higher education, not federal bureaucrats.

Additionally, the Committee opposes program integrity regulations that will force states to change their laws or adjust long-standing policies, as well as requirements imposed on institutions offering their services through an online platform. Through these regulations, institutions with online programs may have to be authorized in every state, even if the institution is only serving a few students from any particular state. Certain institutions will start scaling back their operations or stay out of particularly burdensome or rural states, where the education of a few students will not be worth the hassle of complying with disparate state laws.

The American people have demanded their government foster an environment for economic growth and job creation. However, the Administration's efforts to regulate higher education will be detrimental to the nation's workforce and its ability to compete in the global economy. The Committee intends to thoroughly examine the unintended consequences of these regulations and will work to ensure institutions of higher education can operate without unnecessary red tape from Washington.

Putting Pell Grants on a Path to Stability

The Committee plans to rein in the runaway cost of the Pell Grant program to ensure it remains available to students who need it most. Funding for the Pell Grant program has tripled over the last five years and is expected to cost approximately $41 billion in FY 2012 – an amount equal to the total discretionary budget figure of all other K-12 and higher education programs run by the Department of Education. Over the last several years, Congressional Democrats and the Obama Administration have irresponsibly expanded the Pell Grant program beyond its original intent, making financial promises to students that American taxpayers simply cannot afford to keep.

The Pell Grant program is on an unsustainable path. Instead of making tough choices about changes to the program, the President's budget proposal adds to the burden by claiming additional mandatory "savings" to mask the true cost of the Pell Grant program. This budget proposal utilizes scoring gimmicks to take credit for additional "savings" through the creation of a "new" loan program that will force the federal government to borrow billions more from our nation's bondholders to finance the program, significantly adding to the national debt.

The Committee supports the Pell Grant program as the foundation of our nation's commitment to assist low-income students in accessing higher education. Further, the Committee is determined to put the Pell Grant program back on the path to long-term fiscal stability, enabling millions of low-income students to pursue their dream of a postsecondary education.

Assessing True Taxpayer Costs for Student Loans

The Committee believes budget gimmicks that have masked the cost of federal student loan programs for decades should not be allowed to continue. Instead, we urge the Committee on the Budget to examine reforms that will clearly illustrate the taxpayer costs associated with the federal student loan programs.

During the debate on the Student Aid Fiscal Responsibility Act (SAFRA), the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) determined that the supposed savings from eliminating the Federal Family Education Loan (FFEL) program decreased dramatically when market-risk is taken into account. Since that time, CBO, the President's National Commission on Fiscal Responsibility and Reform, and the Pew-Peterson Commission on Budget Reform have all recommended the incorporation of fair-value accounting into federal guarantee and loan programs. The Committee believes that incorporating market risk, as was done in assessing the costs of the Temporary Asset Relief Program (TARP), is a more accurate and fiscally responsible way to account for the government's liabilities in programs such as the Federal Direct Loan program.

WORKFORCE PRIORITIES

Working to Repeal the New Health Care Law and Ensure Lower Health Care Costs

The Committee continues to support fiscally responsible efforts to lower the costs of health care and insurance coverage for all Americans. Since most Americans obtain their health coverage through their employer, we remain concerned that rising health care costs continue to place significant strains on businesses, employees, and families, making it increasingly difficult to access quality, affordable health insurance. The Committee is concerned that the new health care law, the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2010 (PPACA), fails to "bend the cost curve" in health care and will likely exacerbate the problem of rising health care costs. Further, the Committee is also concerned that many Americans will not be able to keep their employer-provided coverage under the new law and will be forced to obtain government-subsidized coverage, which would ultimately increase costs to taxpayers.

With these concerns in mind, the Committee will examine the extent to which the PPACA inflicts unnecessary financial and administrative burdens on individuals and job creators. Of particular concern are a variety of insurance coverage mandates that drive up the cost of coverage as well as the mandate that all employers with more than 50 employees provide government-approved health insurance coverage or pay a $2,000 per-employee penalty. Also worrisome is the fact that most employers will be unable to qualify for the PPACA provision that was intended to "grandfather" employer health plans in existence on March 23, 2010 and exempt them from the costly new coverage mandates. Accordingly, many American workers will see significant and costly changes in their employer-provided coverage.

The Committee will continue to investigate the new health care law and remains staunch in its opposition to this government takeover of the health care system. We maintain that this law creates a fiscally irresponsible entitlement program and imposes massive new taxes, penalties, and regulations on Americans. The Committee will also conduct comprehensive oversight of the Administration's efforts to implement the law, and oppose regulatory efforts that increase burdens on businesses and workers. Further, the Committee continues to offer and support sensible proposals to lower the cost of health care and increase access to affordable health insurance coverage, such as Small Business Health Plans, that would reduce financial pressures on employers, workers, and their families.

Monitoring and Assessing the Family and Medical Leave Act

The Committee intends to review the requirements of the Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA), examining areas where this law has worked as intended and where it may have failed to do so. The Committee will focus efforts on oversight of both pre-existing and new FMLA leave provisions and will support efforts, legislative and otherwise, to ensure that the FMLA accurately reflects the needs of the 21st century workplace. At the same time, the Committee will be vigilant with respect to proposals that would impose costly and onerous new burdens on employers, particularly those that would mandate paid leave.

In particular, the Committee notes that the Obama Administration has requested $23 million for the U.S. Department of Labor's State Paid Leave Fund to support competitive grants to states that establish paid leave programs. It is not clear how this fund would be created or funded. It is also unclear how this helps businesses create more jobs; in fact, this would likely make it more expensive to for employers to hire new workers.

Promoting Retirement Security

The Committee is working to strengthen the retirement security of American workers by protecting existing pensions, cutting regulatory burdens, and increasing opportunities for retirement savings. The Committee supports the continuation of a strong, voluntary, and portable private-sector pension structure. This involves fighting against proposals that would take away or limit workers' 401(k) retirement accounts and proposals that would increase the costs of such accounts through burdensome regulations and increased liability and litigation. Finally, the Committee supports fiscally responsible efforts to ensure the continued viability of the defined-benefit pension structure.

The Committee will scrutinize proposals included in the President's budget that would require employers to establish new individual retirement accounts for their workers and give the Pension

Benefit Guaranty Corporation (PBGC) the authority to determine premium amounts required of defined-benefit pension plan sponsors. Specifically, the Committee will guard against efforts to utilize this vague and undefined proposal to address budget concerns which, while legitimate, should not determine important policy changes affecting the future retirement security of American workers.

Improving Job Training and Employment Services

The Committee is dedicated to improving job training opportunities for Americans by streamlining unnecessary bureaucracy, eliminating duplicative programs and fostering economic development.

The nation's primary assistance for unemployed and underemployed workers is provided through the Workforce Investment Act of 1998 (WIA). Congress passed WIA to reform the nation's job training system and to provide states and local areas with the tools they need to provide worker training through One-Stop centers. WIA was signed into law more than a decade ago and has been up for reauthorization since the end of FY 2003. The Committee is concerned that the President's budget request does not include a proposal to update and reauthorize this program. Instead of reauthorizing WIA, the President's budget proposes to redirect a portion of the funding provided to state and local One-Stop Career Centers to new federally administered grant making programs. The Committee is also concerned by the Department's increasing emphasis on unproven federal grant programs, including the Green Jobs Innovation Fund, to meet the needs of America's unemployed and underemployed workers. The Committee continues to advocate using state and local One-Stop Career Centers to provide all job training programs and services and will consider measures to support a dynamic, results-oriented job training system that can effectively serve job seekers and workers in need of retraining.

Recently, the GAO released a report entitled, *"Multiple Employment and Training Programs: Providing Information on Colocating Services and Consolidating Administrative Structures Could Promote Efficiencies."* The report found 47 federal programs spread across nine agencies that spend approximately $18 billion on employment and training services. Almost all of the federal employment and training programs provide comparable services to similar populations and overlap with each other. The Committee on Education and the Workforce has jurisdiction over 33 of these programs and is committed to consolidating these funding streams to simplify program administration and create more efficient programs at the state and local levels. Other Congressional committees, however, have authority over the remaining 14 programs, a number of which are larger in scope and budget than those run by the Department of Labor. The Committee urges the Committee on the Budget to direct all Congressional committees with jurisdiction over job training programs to eliminate duplication so the nation's workforce development system can respond quickly and effectively to the changing needs of employees and job seekers.

Updating the Fair Labor Standards Act

Numerous hearings held by the Committee over the past several years have demonstrated the need to update the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938's (FLSA) regulatory scheme. Responding to the need for reform, the Bush administration undertook a historic initiative to update the regulatory scheme and ensure the regulations reflect the intent of Congress and the realities of the 21st century workforce. The updated regulations have provided a catalyst for compliance and helped ensure that the law is more relevant for today's workforce. In addition, the changes have helped clarify workers' rights to overtime, assisted employers in determining how to pay their employees, and assisted the Department of Labor in its enforcement of these important workplace protections. The Committee believes the Department of Labor should continue efforts to utilize a combination of targeted enforcement, technical assistance, and education to encourage compliance under the FLSA.

In addition, as the Committee continues its focus on ways for employers to provide more family-friendly workplaces, the Committee will place a high priority on looking at ways to eliminate impediments within the FLSA that prevent employers and employees from working out mutually beneficial and innovative arrangements regarding compensation and flexibility in work schedules. Working families face a host of challenges when trying to balance the competing needs of home and work. That is why the Committee supports legislation that would modernize federal labor laws to give workers more flexibility through the use of "comp time," also known as 'family time," which allows workers the option of taking paid time off in exchange for working overtime hours. Conversely, the Committee will continue to oppose job-destroying proposals to mandate benefits and taxes on employers during periods of high unemployment.

Protecting Workplace Democracy

The Committee remains determined to protect employee and employer rights under the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) and ensure union transparency and democracy. To that end, the Committee will be vigilant with respect to the National Labor Relations Board and will oppose efforts or actions undertaken by the Board that are meant to tip the scales of balance in labor-management relations. For those employees who choose to join a union, the Office of Labor-Management Standards (OLMS) plays a critical role in holding union leadership accountable to rank-and-file members. The Committee will continue to scrutinize the performance of OLMS in this regard and will support measures that will improve union transparency and accountability overall. In addition, the Committee notes that even as the President's budget requests additional funding for federally directed grant making programs, OLMS is the only enforcement agency at the Department of Labor for which no increase was included in the FY 2012 budget proposal. The Committee is concerned that the President's budget instead expects OLMS to do more with even less enforcement staff than it had in FY 2010. Finally, the Committee will focus its legislative attention on NLRA reforms that promote job growth, while ensuring employees have the right to choose whether or not to join a union.

Reforming the Federal Employees' Compensation Act

The Obama administration has proposed a number of reforms aimed at improving the operation of the Federal Employees' Compensation Act (FECA) program. The reforms would incorporate the best practices of many state workers' compensation programs, improve return to work procedures, streamline claims processing, and update benefit levels. The Committee shares the Administration's interest in updating and improving the workers' compensation program for federal employees, and believes the Administration should work toward achieving a balanced reform of the program while ensuring the program is responsive to the needs of injured federal employees.

Enhancing Workplace Health and Safety

The Committee remains dedicated to ensuring the health and safety of all American workers. To that end, we support workplace safety and health policies that incorporate both proactive safety programs and appropriate enforcement of existing workplace safety laws. In the coming year, the Committee will examine the efficacy of current workplace safety regulations and enforcement in addition to promoting cooperative programs between employers, employees and the federal government.

Occupational Safety and Health Administration

The Committee has made clear its concern about the punishment-based approach in the Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (OSHA) regulatory agenda. An enforcement-only approach does little to protect workers before they are injured on the job. The Committee will closely scrutinize the punitive proposals and actions undertaken by the agency.

The Committee is encouraged that the Administration's budget proposal recognizes the need for cooperative safety programs and reinstates funding for the Voluntary Protection Program (VPP). However, OSHA must ensure that any new regulatory proposals consider the impact on small businesses, and that steps are taken to avoid unworkable one-size fits-all safety programs. The Department of Labor's statistics demonstrate that occupational injury and illness rates have declined every year since 2003. Achieving the right mix of cooperative programs and enforcement is the only way to ensure that trend continues.

Mine Safety and Health Administration

Over the last year, the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA) has undertaken a number of actions intended to improve mine safety, including the issuance or proposal of several new regulatory initiatives, expanded mine inspections, and more aggressive legal and enforcement activities. While these efforts are welcome, the Committee remains concerned by the extent to which the agency is fully and effectively utilizing its current regulatory, legal, and enforcement tools. Recent reports indicating problems related to the training and performance of MSHA field personnel are particularly troubling. The Committee will continue to examine and evaluate the agency's performance, and will give careful consideration to any regulatory or legislative proposal that may be needed to enhance MSHA's ability to fulfill its obligation to better protect American miners.

CONCLUSION

The Committee on Education and the Workforce believes the federal budget is a statement of priorities. The fiscal challenges we face as we prepare the FY 2012 budget are daunting, but those challenges must not deter our commitment to reform. The Committee stands ready to work with the Committee on the Budget and the Obama Administration to enact fiscally responsible reforms on behalf of students, workers, and retirees.

John Kline

John Kline
Chairman