

House Small Business Committee Business Meeting
Jan. 26, 2011

Panel Chairman Promises to Find Common Ground With Democrats; Rules Package Approved

By Emma Dumain, CQ Staff

House Small Business Chairman Sam Graves, R-Mo., on Wednesday vowed to find common ground with the panel's Democrats on an array of issues, including health care and trade, that impact small businesses.

"I would like to set the right tone and retain the tradition of bipartisanship," said Graves at the panel's organizational meeting for the 112th Congress.

In two separate, and unanimous, voice votes, committee members approved the panel's rules package and oversight plan. The rules are nearly identical to those of the 111th Congress, with a few changes.

One involves the re-naming and restructuring of five subcommittees: Agriculture, Energy and Trade; Healthcare and Technology; Economic Growth, Tax and Capital Access; Investigations, Oversight and Regulations; and Contracting and Workforce.

Another will require that an announcement of the date, place and subject matter of any committee hearing be made public no later than seven days before the hearing is scheduled to take place.

To keep hearings from running too long, the committee's new rules would limit the number of non-governmental witnesses at any hearing to four. And all committee hearings will be streamed live on the web.

Graves said the rules package would make committee operations more efficient and "protects the rights of the minority by allowing it to control its budget and ensuring that subpoenas in most instances will be considered by the full Committee prior to issuance."

Oversight Plan

The committee also approved its oversight plan. The Small Business panel's oversight plan will, among other things, focus on probing the Small Business Administration (SBA), including its management, its disaster loan program and its effectiveness in providing capital access to entrepreneurs.

It will also examine the 2010 health care law's (PL 111-148, PL 111-152) impact on small businesses, conduct oversight on trade and intellectual property policy and look to streamline relevant government agencies to reduce the federal deficit.

Ranking member Nydia M. Velázquez of New York backed the oversight plan, saying she was "heartened by its emphasis on job creation" and that she believed it laid the groundwork for the "appropriate use of this committee's time and resources."

Graves added "although we have differences in policy, I strongly believe that there are many issues on which we can find common ground that will help small businesses."

In a gesture of good will and to thank Velázquez for her four-year tenure as chairwoman, Graves presented her with a gavel carved from the walnut wood of his family home in Missouri. She had always used a gavel made from wood from her native Puerto Rico.

Committee Votes

Committee Rules/Vote to Approve

Approve the committee rules for the 112th Congress. The rules are nearly identical to those of the 111th Congress, except for a few changes.

One change would require that an announcement of the date, place and subject matter of any hearing be made public no later than seven days before the hearing is scheduled to take place.

To keep hearings from running too long, the committee's rules would limit the number of non-governmental witnesses at any hearing to four.

All committee hearings also would be streamed live on the web.

In addition, the rules package would establish the following five new subcommittees:

- Agriculture, Energy and Trade Subcommittee
- Healthcare and Technology Subcommittee
- Economic Growth, Tax and Capital Access Subcommittee
- Investigations, Oversight and Regulations Subcommittee
- Contracting and Workforce Subcommittee

Approved by voice vote; Jan. 26, 2011.

Committee Oversight Plan/Vote to Approve

Approve the committee oversight plan for the 112th Congress, with particular emphasis probing the Small Business Administration, including its management, its disaster loan program and its effectiveness in providing capital access to entrepreneurs.

It also would examine the health care overhaul laws' (PL 111-148, PL 111-152) impact on small businesses, conduct oversight on trade and intellectual property policy and look to streamline relevant government agencies to reduce the federal deficit.

Approved by voice vote; Jan. 26, 2011.