



## The Congress Project

The Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars

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### A Brief Summary of House Oversight Rules

- **General Oversight Responsibilities** – Each committee shall review on a continuing basis the following matters within its jurisdiction: (a) the application, administration and execution of laws and programs; (b) the organization and operation of Federal agencies and entities; (c) any conditions or circumstances that might warrant the necessity or desirability of enacting new legislation on such matters; (d) future research and forecasting; (e) the impact or probably impact of tax policies. **(Rule X, clause 2(a),(b),(c))**
- **Committee Oversight Plans** – Not later than February 15 of each first session of a Congress, each committee shall, in open session, adopt an oversight plan for that Congress which shall be submitted to the Committees on House Administration and Government Reform. The plans shall ensure that all significant laws, programs and agencies in a committee's jurisdiction are reviewed every ten years. The Committee on Government Reform shall report the committee oversight plans to the House not later than March 31 after consultation with the Speaker and majority and minority leaders to ensure effective coordination of plans. **(Rule X, clause 2(d))**
- **Oversight Plan Accountability** – Each committee shall include in its biennial activity report separate sections summarizing its legislative and oversight activities, with the oversight section containing a summary of the oversight plans and the actions taken and recommendations made with respect to each such plan, as well as of additional oversight activities. **(Rule XI, clause 1(d))**
- **Oversight Subcommittees and Ad Hoc Committees** – Each committee with 20 or more members shall establish an oversight subcommittee, or require its subcommittees to conduct oversight in their respective jurisdictions. (A committee having an oversight subcommittee may have six subcommittees.) The Speaker may appoint special ad hoc oversight committees to review specific matters within the jurisdiction of two or more standing committees, subject to House approval. **(Rule X, clause 2(b)(2) and (e))**
- **Special and Additional Oversight Functions** – Special oversight functions are assigned to eleven committees. Additional review requirements are specified for the committees on Appropriations, Budget, and Government Reform. **(Rule X, clauses 3, 4)**

- **Investigative Authority** – Each committee may conduct at any time such investigations and studies as it considers necessary or appropriate in exercising its legislative and oversight responsibilities under rule X, and may incur travel expenses in connection with such investigations. **(Rule XI, clause 1(b)(1))**
- **Investigative Hearing Procedures** – (“Witness Bill of Rights”) The duties of committee chairmen and the rights of witnesses in investigative hearings are detailed here, plus provision relating to the confidentiality of testimony or evidence taken in executive session. **(Rule XI, clause 2(k))**
- **Power to Sit, Act, and Subpoena** – All committees are entitled to sit and act at such times in the united States whether the House is in session or not, to require by subpoena or otherwise the attendance and testimony of witnesses and production of materials. Subpoenas may be authorized by committees and subcommittees or the authority may be delegated to the committee chairman under conditions set by committee rule. **(Rule XI, clause 2(m))**
- **Calling and Questioning Witnesses** – The minority is entitled, upon request of a majority of its members, to call its witnesses during at least one day of hearings with respect to a measure or matter. Questioning of witnesses shall be by the five-minute rule, but the committee may adopt a rule permitting a specified number of its members to question a witness for longer than five minute. With such extended time divided equally between the majority and minority parties, not to exceed one hour. A committee may adopt a committee rule permitting majority and minority staff to question a witness for equal time, which shall not exceed one hour. **(Rule XI, clause 2(j))**
- **Contents of Committee Reports** – The report of a committee on a measure that has been approved shall include the oversight findings and recommendations of that committee, and a summary of oversight findings and recommendation by the Committee on Government Reform if timely submitted to the committee. **(Rule XIII, clause 3(c))**
- **Investigative and Oversight Reports** – A proposed investigative or oversight report shall be considered as read if available to members at least 24 hours in advance. A report on an investigation conducted jointly by more than one committee may be filed jointly provided each committee complies independently with all requirements for approval and filing of the report. **(Rule XI, clause 1(b)(2),(3))** The right to file minority, additional or supplemental views applies to a report on “any measure or matter,” and thus to investigative, oversight, and activity reports. **(Rule XIII, clause 3(a)(1))**
- **Resolutions of Inquiry** – A resolution of inquiry (filed by any Member seeking factual information of the executive) must be reported back by the committee of jurisdiction not later than 14 legislative days after referral, or it is subject to a discharge motion. **(Rule XIII, clause 7))**

**(Summary compiled by Donald R. Wolfensberger, Congress Project Director)**

## **House Rule X. Organization of Committees;**

### **Clause 2. General Oversight Responsibilities:**

(a) The various standing committees shall have general oversight responsibilities as provided in paragraph (b) in order to assist the House in -- (1) its analysis, appraisal, and evaluation of -- (A) the application, administration, execution, and effectiveness of Federal laws; and (B) conditions and circumstances that may indicate the necessity or desirability of enacting new or additional legislation; and (2) its formulation, consideration, and enactment of changes in Federal laws, and of such additional legislation as may be necessary or appropriate.

(b)(1) In order to determine whether laws and programs addressing subjects within the jurisdiction of a committee are being implemented and carried out in accordance with the intent of Congress and whether they should be continued, curtailed, or eliminated, each standing committee (other than the Committee on Appropriations) shall review and study on a continuing basis--

(A) the application, administration, execution, and effectiveness of laws and programs addressing subjects within its jurisdiction; (B) the organization and operation of Federal agencies and entities having responsibilities for the administration and execution of laws and programs addressing subjects within its jurisdiction; (C) any conditions or circumstances that may indicate the necessity or desirability of enacting new or additional legislation addressing subjects within its jurisdiction (whether or not a bill or resolution has been introduced with respect thereto); and (D) future research and forecasting on subjects within its jurisdiction.

(2) Each committee to which subparagraph (1) applies having more than 20 members shall establish an oversight subcommittee, or require its subcommittees to conduct oversight in their respective jurisdictions, to assist in carrying out its responsibilities under this clause. The establishment of an oversight subcommittee does not limit the responsibility of a subcommittee with legislative jurisdiction in carrying out its oversight responsibilities.

(c) Each standing committee shall review and study on a continuing basis the impact or probable impact of tax policies affecting subjects within its jurisdiction as described in clauses 1 and 3.

(d)(1) Not later than February 15 of the first session of a Congress, each standing committee shall, in a meeting that is open to the public and with a quorum present, adopt its oversight plan for that Congress. Such plan shall be submitted simultaneously to the Committee on Government Reform and to the Committee on House Administration. In developing its plan each committee shall, to the maximum extent feasible-- (A) consult with other committees that have jurisdiction over the same or related laws, programs, or agencies within its jurisdiction with the objective of ensuring maximum coordination and cooperation among committees when conducting reviews of such laws, programs, or agencies and include in its plan an explanation of steps that have been or will be taken to ensure such coordination and cooperation; (B) give priority consideration to including in its plan the review of those laws, programs, or agencies operating under permanent budget authority or permanent statutory authority; and (C) have a view toward ensuring that all significant laws, programs, or agencies within its jurisdiction are subject to review every 10 years.

(2) Not later than March 31 in the first session of a Congress, after consultation with the Speaker, the Majority Leader, and the Minority Leader, the Committee on Government Reform shall report to the House the oversight plans submitted by committees together with any recommendations that it, or the House leadership group described above, may make to ensure the most effective coordination of oversight plans and otherwise to achieve the objectives of this clause.

(e) The Speaker, with the approval of the House, may appoint special ad hoc oversight committees for the purpose of reviewing specific matters within the jurisdiction of two or more standing committees.

**Committees of The House and Senate, 108th Congress  
With & Without Exclusive Oversight Subcommittees**

<b>HOUSE</b>		<b>SENATE</b>	
Agriculture	No	Agriculture, Nutrition, & Forestry	No
Appropriations	No	Appropriations	No
Armed Services	No	Armed Services	No
Financial Services	Yes	Banking, Housing, & Urban Affairs	No
Budget	No	Budget	No
Energy & Commerce	Yes	Commerce, Science & Transportation	No
Education & Workforce	No	Health, Education, Labor & Pensions	No
Government Reform	No	Governmental Affairs	Yes
House Administration	No	Rules & Administration	No
International Relations	No	Foreign Relations	No
Judiciary	No	Judiciary	No
Permanent Select Intelligence	No	Select, Intelligence	No
Resources	No	Energy & Natural Resources	No
Rules	No	Special, Aging	No
Science	No	Indian Affairs	No
Small Business	No	Small Business	No
Standards of Official Conduct	No	Select Ethics	No
Transportation & Infrastructure	No	Environment & Public Works	No
Veterans' Affairs	Yes	Veterans' Affairs	No
Ways & Means	Yes	Finance	No
Select Committee on Homeland Security	No	No comparable committee	--