

AMENDMENT 415 -- Eliminates congressional committees that do not conduct oversight by amending the government reform reserve fund.

“The most notable trend” in public opinion according to the latest Gallup poll “is the growing percentage of Americans saying dissatisfaction with government is the most important problem facing the country today, now at levels not seen in nearly 40 years.” The poll found 20 percent of those surveyed identified “dissatisfaction with government” as “the most important problem” facing the country, the highest percentage mentioning that issue since the Watergate scandal in 1974.¹

It is the responsibility of Congress to hold the executive branch of government accountable for overstepping its authority and wasting money. Article 1, Section 9 of the U.S. Constitution entrusts Congress with the responsibility to approve how money is spent out of the Treasury and to account for such expenditures. But Congress has failed to fulfill its oversight role and is too often contributing to Washington’s inefficient and out of control behavior.

During these contentious times when Americans find so much to disagree about, almost everyone agrees Congress is failing to do its job.

With the House and Senate controlled by opposite parties, partisans point fingers of blame at the party in control of the other chamber. But, the stalemate is not simply the product of split-party control between the two chambers. A number of important committees within both the House and the Senate are failing to do the important oversight work for which they are responsible.

Oversight is essentially supervision of federal agencies. Congress is expected to hold government agencies accountable for the decisions that being made in Washington, whether these are decisions are related to imposing regulations, spending taxpayers money, or carrying out government missions.

While oversight can be conducted in a number of ways, a key tool for Congress to conduct oversight is to hold a hearing to investigate problems, seek solutions, initiate conversation and debate, and advance an agenda.

Yet with all the problems facing our country today and the growing dissatisfaction with our government, few congressional committees are actually conducting hearings or other oversight of federal agencies.

Since the Senate last passed a budget four years ago, Washington has added more than \$5.5 trillion to the national debt. During this time—in addition to not producing a budget—the Senate Budget Committee also failed to hold many hearings. The committee held a mere 12 hearings in 2012 – fewer than all but five other congressional committees from both chambers.^{ii iii} During the first three months of this year, the committee has held only four hearings, none of which focused primarily on oversight.^{iv}

When Washington is borrowing 36 cents for every dollar it spends, Congress has an obligation to taxpayers to conduct oversight to ensure every cent is being properly spent.

This amendment would encourage congressional committees to do oversight or be eliminated.

The jurisdiction of any eliminate committee would then be reassigned to another appropriate committee which has proven itself willing and capable of oversight.

Six Senate Committees have not held a single oversight hearing this year while seven others have held only one oversight hearing.

Committee Oversight Hearings, 113th Congress

Standing Committees	Oversight Hearings
Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry	1
Appropriations	1
Armed Services	8
Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs	4
Budget	0
Commerce, Science, and Transportation	4
Energy and Natural Resources	0
Environment and Public Works	1
Finance	2
Foreign Relations	1
Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions	1
Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs	4
Judiciary	1
Rules and Administration	0
Small Business and Entrepreneurship	0
Veterans' Affairs	1

Special and Select Committees	Oversight Hearings
Indian Affairs	0
Special Committee on Aging	0

ⁱ Jeffrey M. Jones, "In U.S., Fewer Mention Economic Issues as Top Problem," Gallup, March 14, 2013; <http://www.gallup.com/poll/161342/fewer-mention-economic-issues-top-problem.aspx> .

ⁱⁱ See appendix. Hearings held by congressional committees in 2012, as of August 20, 2012, provided by the Congressional Research Service and compiled by the ProQuest Congressional database.

ⁱⁱⁱ By comparison, the House Budget Committee did produce a budget that was approved in that chamber and then voted down in the Senate, and held 20 hearings in 2012.

See appendix. Hearings held by congressional committees in 2012, as of August 20, 2012, provided by the Congressional Research Service and compiled by the ProQuest Congressional database.

^{iv} "Committee Hearings," Senate Budget Committee website, accessed March 21, 2013; <http://www.budget.senate.gov/democratic/index.cfm/committeehearings> .