

## Statement of Ranking Member Spencer Bachus, Full Committee Markup

July 26, 2007

Mr. Chairman, thank you for convening this markup of a number of important measures, including bills to extend the Terrorism Risk Insurance Program; reform the National Flood Insurance Program; promote divestment of investments in Sudan; and establish a National Housing Trust Fund.

Mr. Chairman, I am particularly grateful that the first bill the Committee will take up this morning is H.R. 3002, Mr. Pearce's legislation to create a five-year demonstration program with HUD-guaranteed loans to finance tribal community and economic development activities. Mr. Pearce should be commended for offering legislation that helps meet the critical need in Indian Country for improvements to basic infrastructure such as roads, water, and sewage.

I also wanted to say a few words before we start the markup on the Darfur and flood insurance bills that are on today's agenda.

H.R. 180, the Darfur Accountability and Divestment Act, is intended to cut off funding to companies operating in Sudan, as a way of pressuring the government of that country to end the genocide that it is currently waging on the people of the Darfur region. The objective of this legislation is one that I wholeheartedly embrace, and that I have sought to achieve in legislative proposals of my own in previous Congresses. While I am therefore inclined to be supportive of moving this legislation out of the Committee today, I do have concerns that the process we have followed to this point has not been a fully deliberative one. Republicans saw the version of the bill that is being marked up today - which reflects substantial changes to the introduced text - for the first time earlier this week. Unlike the Iran divestment legislation that the Committee marked up in May, there has been very little consultation with the Minority, and not all of the technical concerns that we have raised about the legislation have been accommodated in the manager's amendment that the Chairman will offer. It would be my hope, Mr. Chairman, that before this bill goes to the floor, our staffs can work together and with other interested stakeholders to ensure that any technical or drafting issues that might have been identified through a more thorough vetting process in Committee are fully addressed.

With respect to the flood insurance legislation, the debate today is likely to focus on provisions added to the bill last week that would permit homeowners and businesses to purchase coverage for wind damage through the National Flood Insurance Program. The author of those provisions, the gentleman from Mississippi, Mr. Taylor, speaks from personal experience on this issue, as someone who lost his home in Hurricane Katrina and disputed his insurance carrier's denial of his claim for wind damage. No one who has heard the gentleman from Mississippi speak about his experience and the experiences of his constituents can doubt the strength of his commitment to this cause or the sincerity of his belief that the flood insurance program should be expanded to cover wind-related risks.

While I share Mr. Taylor's view that the current system for adjusting claims in the wake of a major storm involving both wind and water damage is in need of reform, I am not presently prepared to support the gentleman's proposal that would shift liabilities from the private insurance sector to a government program that is already almost \$18 billion in the red. Our first priority must be to stabilize and reauthorize a currently insolvent federal flood insurance program. Then we need to establish a solid foundation for further reforms. The GAO will be submitting to Congress this fall a series of studies we requested last year addressing the wind vs. water issues and an appropriate government response. Accordingly, I will support Republican amendments at today's markup that would protect the American taxpayer by maintaining the flood

insurance program's current focus on water-related risks.

Thank you again, Mr. Chairman, for convening this markup, and I yield back the balance of my time.

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