

Congressman Spencer Bachus, Ranking Member, House Financial Services Committee Opening Statement at Committee Markup

Full Committee Markup

February 13, 2007

Chairman Frank, thank you for scheduling this markup. We have a number of important issues for the Committee to consider today, including the Committee's oversight plan, Hawaiian homeownership legislation, and a CFIUS reform bill to improve our national security.

With respect to the Committee's oversight plan, I want to begin by thanking Chairman Frank for incorporating many of the specific comments and additions that Republicans offered last week. While the oversight plan that the Committee will approve later today is not the plan that Republicans would have written if we were still in the Majority, it does reflect a number of our priorities, as well as many other oversight initiatives on which there is bipartisan consensus. I look forward to working with Chairman Frank and the other Members of the Committee – both Republicans and Democrats – to implement this ambitious agenda.

I do expect that a limited number of targeted amendments will be offered to the oversight plan on issues where there appear to be fundamental differences between Republicans and Democrats, and on which the Majority was unwilling to accommodate our concerns. These important changes should be reflected in the Committee's priorities. I look forward to the debate, and once again thank Chairman Frank for his openness to Republican input.

The Committee will also consider H.R. 835, the Hawaiian Homeownership Opportunity Act of 2007. This legislation, introduced by Congressman Neil Abercrombie, is strongly supported by Hawaii's Governor, Linda Lingle. It would reauthorize Title VIII of the Native American Housing Assistance and Self-Determination Act, a block grant program that supports infrastructure development, Habitat for Humanity of Hawaii, down-payment assistance programs, self-help home repair programs, and financial literacy initiatives. In addition, the bill makes the Department of Hawaiian Home Lands eligible for loan guarantees under Title VI of the Act. A similar bill passed the Committee by voice vote last Congress, although it was never considered by the full House.

Lastly, today's markup will include H.R. 556, the "National Security Foreign Investment Reform and Strengthened Transparency Act of 2007," better known as the CFIUS bill. Mr. Chairman, I thank you and your staff, as well as Chairman Maloney and her staff, for continuing the bipartisan spirit that characterized the CFIUS reform process in the last Congress.

I support both this bill and the Chairman's mark – a bipartisan amendment that addresses the legitimate concerns raised at last week's hearing, while leaving the structure of the bill intact. It ensures that national security considerations are fully vetted when foreign entities or persons invest in our country and increases opportunities for meaningful Congressional oversight, but avoids politicizing the process. The legislation requires CFIUS to thoroughly scrutinize each transaction, identify any threats to national security, and if necessary, develop and monitor adherence to agreements to mitigate any such threats.

This legislation alleviates possible vulnerabilities in the present CFIUS process in a way that does not discourage foreign investment. As Assistant Secretary Lowery pointed out at our hearing last week, the world is watching what we do here, and we need to get it right. A vigorous economy forms the foundation of strong national defense, and a key component of our current vibrant economy is foreign investment.

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