

ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH CONGRESS  
**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
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**Opening Statement of Rep. Henry A. Waxman**  
**Ranking Member, Committee on Energy and Commerce**  
**“The Views of the Independent Agencies on Regulatory Reform”**  
**Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigation**  
**July 7, 2011**

Today, this Subcommittee is holding its fourth hearing on regulatory reform. The first two hearings focused on the President’s executive order on regulatory review. The third hearing focused on the Administration’s recent health regulations.

This time we are focusing on four independent agencies – the Consumer Product Safety Commission, the Federal Communications Commission, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, and the Federal Trade Commission – which are not subject to the President’s executive order.

I support efforts to ensure that federal regulations are clearly drafted and narrowly tailored, and I believe in transparency and eliminating needless regulation. But the focus of the Subcommittee’s hearings on regulatory review thus far has not been on improving the regulatory process. These hearings have devolved into forums for questioning health, environment, and consumer protection laws that my colleagues on the other side of the aisle find objectionable. These sessions also have been marked by a lopsided focus on costs with no seeming consideration of benefits. And they have not resulted in any substantial legislation or important oversight findings.

The four independent agencies before us have done a lot to make the lives of American citizens better.

The Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) recently launched a new consumer complaint database, which allows parents and concerned consumers to obtain important product safety information and which will improve CPSC’s ability to identify trends in product hazards more efficiently. Just this morning, I released the first analysis of the product safety database. We found that in its first three months of operation, the database has already logged over 1,600 incident reports, including reports of almost 500 injuries or fatalities. And consumers visiting the online database have conducted almost 1.8 million product searches.

Mr. Chairman, I ask that this report be included as part of the Committee record.

The FCC just proposed a rule to require cell phone companies to provide usage alerts that warn consumers of unexpected charges on their bills. Less than seven months ago, the agency adopted a crucial rule to protect the openness of the Internet.

The FTC has recently adopted rules to protect homeowners from scams falsely promising relief from mortgage payments. In the last year alone, the FTC's Bureau of Consumer Protection filed over 60 cases to protect the rights of consumers.

And FERC protects consumers from price gouging in the electricity and energy markets.

These accomplishments are important. They save money for the American public, prevent fraud, and improve public safety and public health. They may offend powerful companies that would like to take advantage of consumers, but that is no reason for us to browbeat the agencies. The focus of our oversight should be to help these agencies advance the goal of enhancing the lives of American families.

Our Committee is responsible for forging legislation in key areas: providing health care for seniors; setting our nation's energy policy; promoting telecommunications innovation and competitiveness; and ensuring appropriate consumer protections for American families and children. The oversight work of this Subcommittee should shed light on how to best legislate in these and other important areas.

That is why there are real costs when the Committee focuses its time on partisan wheel-spinning and messaging: we lose the opportunity to move legislation that will promote jobs, promote economic security, and protect the health, safety, and welfare of the American public.

I hope the Subcommittee makes good use of our time today with the Commissioners, and I urge the Chairman and all members to support their efforts on behalf of American families.