



Congressman H. Morgan Griffith  
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### **Rep. Griffith Statement on Proposal to Change House Rule XXI**

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in today's hearing. I am pleased to come before the Subcommittee to discuss changes to Rule XXI and how to best reform the authorization and appropriations processes.

One proposal, which I have offered up twice before the House Republican Conference, would restore the ability of Members of Congress to offer more limiting language amendments to appropriations bills on the floor.

As background, in 1983 when the Democrats were in the majority, the rules were changed relating to the offering of amendments to appropriations bills to make it more difficult to offer floor amendments. This was seen by the minority Republicans as a partisan move to hinder the ability of Reagan Republicans to succeed on the floor in reducing spending items. Republicans had been working with some Democrats during the first two years of the Reagan administration, and the rules were changed to restrict Members' ability to offer limiting language to appropriations bills.

The change that I propose would largely restore the rule that had existed prior to 1983 and had remained substantially unchanged since it began in 1850. This change opens up mandatory spending to so-called limitation amendments during the appropriations process, as this auto-pilot spending is currently protected from reductions by Rule XXI (see Attachment 1).

My proposal would give Members of both parties the ability to offer amendments on the floor and in the Appropriations Committee to cut the amount of money an agency could receive, the number of employees that the U.S. government or its agencies could have, and the amount of money that could be paid to an employee of the U.S. government. Prior to 1983, amendments abolishing offices of the Customs Service, reducing the number of naval officers, and imposing an employment ceiling on federal employees in the bill were held in order under this formulation.

It is impossible to get serious about cutting spending and setting priorities in Washington when our own rules prevent us from doing so. We need to modify House Rule XXI to open up mandatory spending to the will of the House and eliminate barriers that put mandatory spending outside the reach of the amendment process.

With our federal government \$19 trillion dollars in debt, we cannot afford to shield mandatory spending from our efforts to curb wasteful spending and to reign in a ballooning bureaucracy.

The American people expect Congress to get their fiscal house in order, but right now, our own rules are standing in our way. When people think of mandatory spending, most people think of the big-ticket items such as Medicaid and Medicare. However, there are numerous mandatory

spending programs, many of which might surprise you are mandatory. The list that my office has been able to identify includes thousands (see Attachment 2).

I hope the members of the Subcommittee will join me in supporting this proposal to House Rule XXI and I look forward to continuing to work with you to ensure that our rules promote a more open and productive legislative process.

Thank you.