

The following are remarks as prepared for delivery by Rep. Chris Van Hollen at the markup of the Expedited Legislative Line-Item Veto and Rescissions Act of 2011(H.R. 3521)

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I want to thank you, as well as your staff for working together in a cooperative manner to bring this legislation before the Committee for consideration. As you said, I think it's important when you can demonstrate that we can work together because I think, as all of us in this Committee know, we've had some very deep and fundamental differences over big policy issues, and I'm sure we will as we move forward. But this is an area where there is agreement and I hope that we would all agree that we want to be good stewards of the taxpayers' dollars. I think we would all agree that we want to demonstrate greater fiscal discipline. And to the extent that we can create mechanisms for greater accountability, a greater transparency in the spending of taxpayer dollars, then I think we accomplish that mutual goal.

This is a piece of legislation that was introduced by the former chairman, John Spratt, and it has bipartisan co-sponsorship in the United States Senate. And I would just say that for those of us who believe that government can play a positive role in people's lives -- in creating opportunity through spending on education, through investments in science and research, through infrastructure development -- that it is especially important that we let the taxpayers know that their dollars are being spent wisely. To the extent that they have the impression that dollars are not being spent wisely, it undermines our efforts to make key investments in things like education, science and research, and the like going forward.

I think that the timing of this mark-up is especially timely. In the next twenty four hours, or forty eight hours, maybe next week -- we don't know exactly - we are all going to be voting on a 'megabus' piece of legislation. It will combine nine separate appropriations bills, totaling almost \$1 trillion. Let me just give the Members some facts: of those nine bills, four of them haven't been voted on in the full House. No Member of this Committee has voted on them as a Member of the full House; two of them haven't even had a vote in the Appropriations Committee; one of those two is the 'Labor-H' bill - \$160 billion in taxpayer money, not voted on; Foreign Ops, not voted on -- I'm talking about not voted on in the Appropriations Committee itself; and only one of those nine appropriations bills has been voted on in the United States Senate. Those bills, if we have it coming out of a conference report, will all come before the House and you're going to have an up-or-down vote on close to \$1 trillion. Let me give you an idea of what is in this bill [Rep. Van Hollen displays the ~1,209 page bill]. This was at about midnight last night when the House majority filed this bill. In case we can't get a conference report they wanted to get it moving. I would suggest that no Member of this Committee has had an opportunity to scrutinize this piece of legislation.

What the bill we're marking up today does is retains the absolute prerogative of the Congress by majority vote, at the end of the day, to vote up or down. But, what it says is, if we pass one of these bills, like in the next forty eight hours, and the President says that there are items in there that are not necessary -- if the Commander-in-Chief says that he doesn't need

particular weapons systems to defend the security of the United States of America -- then he brings it down here and we have to vote. We get to vote – a majority vote, up or down. If we agree with the President that out of all those items that we had to vote up or down on, maybe we didn't really need that weapons system or that particular item. Maybe we disagree.

But what is wrong with one more layer of accountability? What's wrong with all of us taking responsibility for making a decision on whether or not we think an item that might have been in this 1,200 page bill maybe wasn't necessary? And that is all that it does.

It creates more accountability, more transparency, and again I emphasize the fact that for those of us who think that there is an important role for government investment to play in creating opportunity, when things get in these big bills that are passed without scrutiny sometimes they come back and 'boomerang' on us, it is our efforts to invest in the things that do create opportunities that suffer. So I would urge my colleagues to join in this bipartisan effort.