

**Statement of
Senator Susan M. Collins**

**'Recovery and Reinvestment Spending: Implementing a
Bold Oversight Strategy'**

**Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental
Affairs**

April 2, 2009

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Nearly two months ago, the President signed into law the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act to help turn around our economy. Now the challenge is to make sure the billions of dollars provided by that law achieve the purpose of boosting our economy and saving and creating jobs.

As my Senate colleagues and I worked to craft this bill, we established an oversight board and imposed tough reporting requirements to help ensure transparency and accountability in the expenditure of the

funds. We remain determined to protect this critical spending from waste, fraud and mismanagement.

Several provisions included in the law provide safeguards and oversight of stimulus spending. Perhaps most important is the Recovery Act Transparency Board, created to coordinate federal oversight efforts. The Government Accountability Office and many of our nation's Inspectors General also have been provided additional funding to carry out investigations and reporting requirements. A new website, Recovery.gov, has been launched to report expenditures and to provide the public with access to stimulus information. The more eyes we have on this spending, the better.

The Recovery.gov website is now up and running and already has received 300 million hits. It now is

linked to the individual Recovery Act websites for states and for federal agencies.

I have included a link to Recovery.gov from my own Senate website as well as a special website I created to provide Mainers with specific information about Recovery Act spending as it relates to our State. This technology not only allows an abundance of information to be shared quickly with people across the country, but also helps ensure transparency and accountability.

The American people have high expectations for the Recovery Act. The President has estimated that it will save or create approximately 3.5 million jobs and help turn the economy around. Taxpayer dollars will be used to improve roads and schools, enhance health care, and invest in infrastructure and science and must be spent wisely.

Funds need to be dispersed quickly to meet the goals of stimulating the economy, but we must ensure that haste does not make waste – or permit fraud and mismanagement. Striking the right balance between speed and caution will be difficult when administering the grants and contracts funded by the stimulus.

Press reports have already questioned whether the first few contracts awarded using stimulus funds were sufficiently transparent and whether contracting mistakes were made. This is not a reassuring start. Problems like these can easily erode public support and leave our economic goals unrealized.

Today’s hearing will provide us with a more in-depth look at the most important oversight organization, the Recovery Accountability and Transparency Board. I look

forward to hearing from Mr. Devaney, the Board's recently appointed Chairman.

From the Office of Management and Budget, I am particularly interested in hearing how it expects to address challenges in tracking funds at the state and local level, providing accurate and timely information on this spending on the Recovery.gov website, and ensuring transparency, accountability, and competition for stimulus contracting.

Our government has an obligation to make sure stimulus funds provide the maximum possible benefit to our economy. The American taxpayers deserve no less from their investment.

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