

Opening Statement by Senator Scott P. Brown

March 29, 2011

Subcommittee on Federal Financial Management, Government Information, Federal Services, and International Security

U.S. Senate Homeland Security & Governmental Affairs Committee

**“Tools to Prevent Weapons Systems Cost Overruns”**

Thank you, Chairman Carper, for holding this important hearing. The role of this Subcommittee in protecting our tax dollars from waste, fraud, and abuse is critical, and I appreciate your partnership in this pursuit.

Our nation is in a perilous financial position with our national debt over \$14.2 Trillion dollars and an expected Fiscal Year 2011 deficit of \$1.3 Trillion. Now, more than ever, we must ensure that our scarce tax dollars are well spent. With spending exceeding \$700 billion, the Defense Department budget consumes 18% of our total budget. While there cannot be a more important mission for our government than protecting its citizens, we still must be mindful that Defense spending is not exempt from the necessity of ensuring that taxpayer dollars are being spent efficiently and effectively.

A major problem that this committee has focused on in the past is cost overruns in major defense system acquisitions. It's no secret that cost overruns in Defense Department acquisitions consume billions of dollars every year. Despite the many attempts by the Congress and the Defense Department to reform the acquisition process, these cost overruns are still occurring. I understand that sometimes programs run over budget, but it seems that a mindset exists that these cost overruns are a part of doing business. We need to change that.

We need to change a process that allows a program like MEADS to go on for almost 20 years without acceptable results. We need to change the thinking that if only we give a program a couple more years and a couple more billion dollars, the program will be successful. Look, if a program hasn't worked in almost 20 years, giving it another couple years and \$800 million isn't going to help. It's just going to divert our precious tax dollars from other critical programs.

Let me also state that we must not be afraid to take the risks necessary to develop the next generation of weapon systems that our nation depends on for its future defense. Incumbent in that risk is failure and unfortunately sometimes cost overruns. However, the Defense Department must do a better job of managing that risk and enforcing more realistic cost estimates before a major weapon system acquisition is initiated and we are on the cycle of cost overruns.

I would like to thank the witnesses for being here today and I look forward to a productive discussion on how the Defense Department and Congress can instill accountability into the system while not creating needless reporting requirements. I would also like to walk away from this hearing with some positive ideas that will help foster an environment at the Defense Department where good acquisition management is rewarded. Where someone isn't afraid to say you know what, this program isn't a good use of taxpayer dollars.