STATEMENT OF

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PRESIDENT
PROFESSIONAL SERVICES COUNCIL

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HEARING ON

"FEDERAL ACQUISITION: WAYS TO STRENGTHEN COMPETITION AND ACCOUNTABILITY"

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Introduction

Mr. Chairman, Senator Collins, members of the committee. I am Stan Soloway, President of the Professional Services Council (PSC); PSC is the principal national trade association for companies providing services of virtually every kind to virtually every agency of the federal government. On behalf of our more than 220 member companies, I want to thank you for your invitation and the opportunity to provide our views on S.680, specifically Title I, and the state of government procurement generally.

Whether assisting citizens seeking compensation for radiation sickness, providing support to military men and women stationed at home and abroad, or developing scientific analyses to better protect sensitive wildlife habitats, PSC's members are among the leading small, mid-tier, and large companies providing the full range of professional services to every federal agency. PSC member companies employ tens of thousands of individuals in every region of the country. These dedicated employees provide government customers and taxpayers with good value, specialized expertise, and innovative solutions. Our members believe strongly in the mutual benefit that is derived when the government and its private sector suppliers work closely together to ensure the delivery of better outcomes for America's citizens.

Over the last decade, the government's missions have evolved rapidly, increased in complexity and required new technologies, thus resulting in both growing challenges for the government itself and its workforce and a substantial increase in the government's reliance on contractors. The evidence suggests that these challenges and trends will continue well into the future.

The July 2007 report of the Partnership for Public Service highlighted that the Federal government will need nearly 200,000 "mission critical" new hires over just the next two years to keep pace with the rising need for national security, evolving agency needs, and expected federal workforce retirements. That doesn't even begin to account for the thousands of positions, across government, including in the acquisition workforce, which are today vacant and which the government is struggling to fill. On July 9, the *Washington Post* reported that there are scores of positions unfilled at the Department of Homeland Security, including FEMA, thus raising questions about the agency's preparedness. As the government's workforce demographic problems grow and its need for advanced skills and capabilities increases, fostering meaningful and productive partnerships between the public and private sectors will be critical to ensuring that government functions effectively.

Today, spending on federal procurement exceeds $400 billion, representing nearly 40% of the total discretionary budget of the federal government and more than 30 million transactions. Spending on services contracts, the primary focus of S.680 and this hearing, represents nearly 60% of that federal spending. Thus, federal procurement must be a core competency of the federal government and prioritized as such.

Moreover, given the centrality of acquisition to the proper functioning of our government, it is important that Congress, as part of exercising its vital oversight role, continually assess federal acquisition policies and explore changes to policy or practice that might be needed. As such, we are grateful to you for your thoughtful leadership and continued vigilance in this complicated

field and greatly appreciate the openness with which you have approached the dialogue about ways in which it can be strengthened.

S.680 represents a valuable starting point for discussing how to ensure that the federal procurement process fully protects how the government spends taxpayer dollars while also enabling the government to acquire the full array of necessary resources and support. When viewed in its totality, and despite its evident problems, the federal acquisition system functions quite well. But clearly improvement is needed. And we look forward to an ongoing dialogue about solutions that will deliver real value and improvement.

Debunking the Myths

Before I comment on a select group of specific provisions in the bill, I would like to step back just a little. Unfortunately, all too often the complexities and nuances of federal procurement have either been misstated or misinterpreted and led to the creation of several myths about federal contracting. Words and terms matter and as we examine avenues to enhance the quality of the federal acquisition process, it is important that we proceed based on appropriate and well-understood definitions, on sound data and on an accurate assessments of the current environment.

Differentiating Between Challenges and Fraud

There can be no doubt in anyone's mind that the government faces many difficult challenges in the acquisition arena; we also all recognize that the government's human capital crisis is real and impacts the federal acquisition workforce as much as, if not more than, it does the rest of the federal workforce.

This human capital crisis is not a new matter that arose in the last few years. It was a problem when I served at the Defense Department during the Clinton Administration and had a significant amount of responsibility for the department's acquisition workforce, and we continue to see it today. It is a problem not just of sheer numbers but also of workforce development, support and leadership. Despite what some have suggested, however, it is not, in the main, a problem of rampant fraud and abuse.

As the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction (SIGIR) stated in his January 2007 testimony to the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, with all of the problems surrounding Iraq contracting, there has been "little evidence" of widespread fraud. The SIGIR's "lessons learned" reports on contracting, human capital and program management have instead cited workforce challenges, security, coordination, and planning as far more central to the problems that have emerged than the fraud some have suggested. Likewise, the head of the Federal Procurement Fraud Task Force for the Eastern District of Virginia said just three weeks ago that, when looked at proportionally, which is the only fair way to assess such things, he believes criminal fraud is likely less prevalent today than it was ten or fifteen years ago.

While I will address the workforce issues in more detail later in my testimony, it is important to recognize at the outset, as the SIGIR and others have recognized, that workforce challenges, honest mistakes, or other structural problems do not equate to massive fraud or abuse. As such,

the policy framework governing federal acquisition must recognize and be based on that foundation.

Understanding the Growth in Procurement

It is, of course, true that since 9/11 federal procurement spending on both goods and services has grown dramatically. This should not come as a surprise. Among other things, 9/11 significantly changed many of the government's missions and created requirements for new technology and innovative solutions to improve our domestic security and fight the war on terror. Needless to say, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have also contributed significantly to this growth. As well, today, more than ever, because the technologies and skills the government seeks are in the private sector, the government finds itself competing for people and capabilities in the broader economy, in which the availability of those very skills is in short supply.

However, this contracting growth did not happen in a vacuum. During that same post 9/11 period, the overall discretionary budget has grown nearly 65%. Thus, while significant and clearly growing, when looked at proportionally, spending on service contracts has actually increased about 15% as a proportion of the government's operations, from 21% to 24% of the discretionary budget. Significant, yes; but hardly the unconstrained, headlong rush some have suggested.

The "Shadow Workforce"

Moreover, we continue to see claims that the so-called "shadow" contractor workforce supporting the government now numbers over 8 million – making it more than four times the size of the federal workforce. Simply put, by any meaningful measure, that figure is wildly overstated, founded on the wrong baseline and mathematically impossible. In our view, any rational and rigorous analysis would suggest that this so-called "shadow workforce," while undeniably significant, is actually a fraction of what is claimed and is almost certainly less than the total number of federal employees. Understanding that basic fact is essential to the broader discussion.

Competition

Proportionality also explains some of the apparently dramatic data that some suggest show a decline in competition, and growth in sole source contracting, particularly for services. Competition is a core value in the private sector and we fully share your belief that competition is the engine that drives efficiency and performance. We understand concerns that arise when it is reported that competition has decreased. But context is important: with federal procurement spending having roughly doubled over the last five years, it only follows that when measured in dollars, the use of other than "full and open competition" techniques has also increased. However, when looked at as a percentage of total federal procurement spending, the data are far less compelling. In fact, the data indicate that competition in federal contracting is at about the same level as it was ten years ago.

Moreover, misunderstanding about and misrepresentation of the use of terms relating to different types of contracts and contract strategies has led to erroneous interpretations of the data and conclusions about the acquisition system.

I know this committee has concerns about the apparent increase in contracts awarded without full and open competition. However, "full and open competition" has a very specific meaning in government contracting, and many contract types that are not coded as "full and open" are, nonetheless, highly and sufficiently competitive. For example, current law provides a 23% government-wide goal for small business and/or other preference programs, such as 8(a) firms, firms owned by women, service disabled veterans, and HUBZone firms. None of these awards are coded in the database as "full and open" because, by their very definition, the competition is limited solely to those companies that qualify under the socio-economic or preference categories involved.

A similar situation exists with multiple award contracts. In those cases, there is typically a full and open competition through which companies vie for a position on the contract. The specific work is then competed for and awarded incrementally through individual task orders. However, those task orders are properly not coded in the Federal Procurement Data System as being awarded through "full and open competition" since they are only available to the companies that succeeded in winning a position on the overarching contract.

This is not to say that we should be satisfied with the degree of competition in government contracting. Indeed, we should be vigilant in our commitment to enhancing competition wherever possible. Our member companies, whose ability to grow and thrive depends upon an open, competitive marketplace, fully support efforts to increase competition.

Congress addressed this issue in the 2003 defense authorization bill by requiring that all task orders under multiple award contracts awarded by the DoD be competed openly among all holders of the overarching contract. Section 111 of S.680 would extend this requirement across the government, and we strongly support doing so on the same basis as was applied to DoD. However, it should be clear that even then, those competitive task orders will not appear as having been awarded through "full and open competition."

Misapplication of the Term "No Bid" Contract

There is similar confusion created with the use of the term "no bid contracts," particularly when referring to indefinite delivery/indefinite quantity contracts, otherwise known as IDIQs, awarded to a single winner. The government often faces uncertain mission needs such as those experienced in a war or emergency, or in the development of complex technology solutions for the government's everyday needs, particularly in the very early mission stages. And in those circumstance these types of contracts are sometimes the smartest means by which the government can meet its mission.

For example, Mr. Chairman, you were most eloquent in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina when you expressed deep concern that FEMA did not have in place an adequate array of pre-positioned, emergency relief contracts to meet the disaster relief requirements. Such contracts are essential in those kinds of circumstances. Yet almost invariably, while those contracts are usually competitively awarded, they are structured as IDIQ vehicles under which the individual task orders are awarded solely to the company that won the initial contract, simply because it is impossible to know in advance precisely what the needs will be and because circumstances dictate exceptionally rapid response and action. There have been some examples of agencies

utilizing these contracts more than was intended by statute or regulations and we should insist on sound management and vigilant oversight to ensure the process is as open and competitive as possible. But it would be a mistake to arbitrarily limit this contract type or to assume that all such contract vehicles are the same as "no bid" contracts.

S.680: Focus on the Workforce

This brings me to S.680. One of the great strengths of S.680 is its recognition that the heart of the issues that have emerged in recent years can be largely traced to the human capital dimension. Through S.680, you have recognized that the greatest returns and improvements in the acquisition process will be found through a laser beam focus on the federal acquisition workforce and how they are supported, developed and resourced. Never has that focus been more important.

In 1998, the Defense Logistics Agency faced controversy over pricing of major spare parts. In the midst of it, at a department-wide event being broadcast to bases around the world, then-Secretary of Defense Cohen said that people should recognize that in a system as complex as ours, there will be problems and people will make mistakes. He then said "I want you to be far more concerned about pursuing innovation than being punished for making an error." Those words resonated across the defense acquisition workforce, some 200,000 strong, for it told them that as long as they were acting in good conscience and in what they genuinely believed to be the best interests of our military men and women and the taxpayer, the department would stand by them when times got tough, even as we worked together to understand how and why mistakes were made and to ensure that they were not repeated.

There is today a growing consensus throughout the government acquisition community that the commitment to our federal acquisition professionals has disappeared. I have many opportunities to interact with that community and it is clear that they feel more assaulted than supported and more questioned than resourced. Indeed, last year, PSC conducted its biannual survey of the federal acquisition leadership and almost every interviewee told us that their greatest concern is the degree to which their workforces felt undervalued and under-supported. As one respondent remarked, people are increasingly afraid not only of making a mistake, but of even making a decision.

Further, we need to be very clear that the objective of the acquisition reforms of the 1990s was not about speed of procurement for speed's sake. The goal of the reforms was to rationalize and modernize what was an almost comically cumbersome process—a process through which the government dictated to cookie makers how many chocolate chips could go into a cookie made for the military; a process that, as then-Vice President Gore demonstrated on the David Letterman Show, required dozens of pages of detailed specifications to govern the manufacture of a standard glass ashtray; and a process marked by a supply chain for military logistics that was generations behind commercial capabilities. The goal was also to move from the rigid, rule based process that was in part responsible for the dysfunctions in the system, to one based more on critical thinking, business judgment, and smart decision making. In simple terms, the technology and business process explosion surrounding the government mandated that the government move its age old system into the modern era.

As such, far from simplifying the life of federal acquisition professionals, many of the reforms actually made the acquisition process more demanding of the people charged with its execution. "Check the box" procedures are far easier – but also far less effective. Unfortunately, despite the demands created by these many factors, the investment in acquisition training and overall development of the workforce has simply not kept pace. The Defense Acquisition University (DAU) budget is at about the same level today that it was seven years ago when DAU was part of my organization at DoD. There is little evidence that any of the military departments have substantially increased their investment in continuous learning and other developmental opportunities for the workforce. The situation is even worse across the civilian agencies, where the availability of adequate funds to train and continually improve the acquisition workforce has been woefully inadequate.

The private sector believes strongly that a smart, well prepared customer makes the best kind of customer. That is why five years ago PSC recommended to Congress the creation of what is now known as the Federal Acquisition Workforce Training Fund. Although the fund is growing and the resources are being put to use to benefit the federal acquisition workforce, it is far from adequate. And just this year, PSC collaborated with DAU on the development and delivery of a training module on business risk awareness and management for its new course on performance based services acquisition.

Nonetheless, across the board, workforce development is a glaring weakness in the government and has been for a long time. Nowhere is the old adage truer that when budgets get tight the first thing cut is training than throughout the federal government.

An Acquisition "Marshall Plan"

S.680 contains important provisions that we fully support to address this enormous challenge, including those that would create a governmentwide acquisition intern program, an acquisition fellowship, and a government-industry exchange program to help acquisition professionals gain invaluable exposure and experience.

But more must be done. Overall, it is our belief that if we want to improve the quality of federal acquisition, we shouldn't start by layering an already beleaguered workforce with more regulations and process demands. Instead, we need a kind of workforce "Marshall Plan" that aggressively addresses the hiring, retention, training, reward and development of the workforce we are asking to manage 40% of the discretionary budget of the federal government.

It is time to recognize, as virtually every high performing company recognizes, that sometimes it is necessary to create special authorities and flexibilities to manage that portion of the workforce that is most central to the organization's success. It is standard commercial practice for companies to develop, reward and otherwise foster their core workforces differently, and even more aggressively, than they do other elements of the company. For those workforces, per capita expenditures on training, rotational assignments, performance rewards and more are very significant. Unfortunately, such is not the case in government. The time has come to rethink that paradigm.

We also believe this initiative should also include a special focus on emergency and contingency contracting, since so many of the concerns that have emerged in recent years have emanated from experiences in Iraq and with Hurricane Katrina.

Our work on a detailed "lessons learned" review of Iraq contracting, conducted in partnership with the Army Materiel Command, as well as the numerous reports of the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction and GAO, have all clearly identified the shortfall in numbers and skills of government contracting personnel as being central to many of the issues that have emerged. The issue is not whether the government has good people; the issue is whether the government adequately prepares and resources them.

For example, we have heard over and again from government and company personnel who have served in Iraq about the constant turnover of contracting personnel—some of which was driven by existing federal personnel policies that conflict with the mission needs—and about the number of dedicated acquisition personnel who deployed voluntarily but simply did not have the knowledge or experience for the job they were tasked to perform. Likewise, when Hurricane Katrina hit, FEMA had only 40 contracting officers in the entire agency and was wholly understaffed to respond to that major disaster.

Of course, FEMA's needs for responding to a disaster are significantly greater than its needs for quieter times. Maintaining a full time "bench" to respond to unknown and unpredictable needs is almost certainly impractical. Further, emergency or contingency acquisition environments present a range of unique challenges and demands.

A Contingency Contracting Corps

As an alternative to further restrictions or more detailed rules which could collide with mission realities, and in keeping with other models for emergency relief, we propose that Congress direct the creation of a government-wide Contingency Contracting Corps. This corps would be drawn from across the government contracting workforce, be given special training in emergency and contingency contracting, and be deployable when the need arises. When not deployed, the individuals populating this vital cadre would continue to perform their regular functions at their home agencies. Creation of such a capability would go a long way to substantially improving the effectiveness and efficiency of government contracting in these especially challenging environments; but it will only happen if Congress gets directly involved.

Limits on Task Orders

There are provisions of S.680, as currently written, with which we have concerns. Section 116 would impose definitive time limits for performance of task orders awarded in emergency or contingency situations and Section 117 would arbitrarily limit the size of task orders that can be awarded under multiple award or single award IDIQ contracts. There are already clear rules regarding the use of limited competition in emergency or similar situations. Both titles 10 and 41 of the United States Code contain provisions, which are further elaborated on in the Federal Acquisition Regulations. There are also clear requirements for submitting written Justifications and Approvals (J and A's), when exceptions to full and open competition rules are used.

We recognize and appreciate your concern that there have been cases in which either the proper

procedures were not followed or, more commonly, the requisite J and A's were not prepared. In fact, a substantial portion of the cases identified by the Inspectors General and the GAO in this area have involved cases in which the J and A was not written or not documented, thereby depriving the oversight community of the information needed to assess whether the exception to full and open competition was appropriate. We thus cannot say with certainty whether a problem truly exists.

We also recognize and appreciate your concern about some isolated contracts, particularly in Iraq and Katrina, which appear to be for larger amounts or of longer duration than what would normally be expected or would be considered appropriate. At the same time, there will always be cases in which mission needs dictate unusual actions—to put these actions in context, Iraq is the largest single sustained military operation since Vietnam, and Katrina is one of the largest natural disasters in our nation's history.

In this regard, we would ask that you reconsider the language in these provisions. To the extent there is reason to believe the workforce is inadequately trained in or aware of their responsibilities when utilizing these exceptions, we believe that problem can best be solved by focusing our efforts there, rather than by legislating limits that could actually impair the effective response to as yet unknown future mission needs. As well, we believe many of the concerns that these sections seek to address will be avoided in the future through the creation of the Contingency Contracting Corps I previously mentioned.

We have similar concerns with Section 126, which would limit the so-called "tiering" of subcontractors. There too, while we recognize and appreciate the impetus behind the provision, we are concerned that it limits the government's appropriate flexibilities to respond to mission needs.

Opposition to Bid Protests on Task Orders

We also respectfully oppose that portion of Section 114 that would allow protests to be filed on task order awards under multiple award contracts. Current law prohibits such protests, except in limited circumstances, although protests are fully allowed when the initial, master contract is awarded.

Protests are designed to ensure the government gets the right answer by providing unsuccessful offerors a quasi-judicial process, overseen by the GAO, through which they can seek redress for what they believe are process fouls. We recognize that task order buying now accounts for nearly half of all acquisition in the services marketplace and that fact alone has driven some to suggest that task orders should be subject to the same post award processes as more traditional, stand alone contracts.

But this is one area in which the views of industry are perhaps most relevant. After all, if there is growing concern about the government's adherence to the rules of fair play contained in the Federal Acquisition Regulation and administered during the acquisition process, it is the companies that would be the first to call for more opportunities for redress. After all, it is their ability to succeed in the marketplace that is at stake. Yet, across industry, there is a resounding consensus that adding protests to task order awards is unnecessary and would be costly and time

consuming. In fact, we support the provisions in Section 113 requiring post-award debriefings to unsuccessful bidders on task orders, much as is the case today on most other federal procurements. While we have some specific recommendations as to the details of that provision, there is a strong consensus in the private sector that focusing on the debriefing process, as well as improving front end communication, will largely obviate the need for additional legal challenges.

Furthermore, because task orders are awarded as part of an already awarded overarching contract, problematic actions involving those task orders are more appropriately dealt with through the existing contract administration and contract disputes procedures.

Therefore, our recommendation is to strike the protest provision in Section 114 in its entirety. Better communication between the government and its suppliers and higher quality debriefings will do far more to assist the process than the addition of further unnecessary, time consuming and very expensive litigation.

Fixed Price vs. Cost Type Contracting

Section 119 encourages the greater use of fixed price contracting rather than cost reimbursement contracts. We believe this provision is unnecessary. The Federal Acquisition Regulation already contains significant guidance and rules surrounding the selection of the contract type that is most appropriate for a given circumstance.

Moreover, from an industry perspective, fixed price contracts are actually the preferred method of doing business IF there is adequate awareness of the risks involved and an opportunity to address them, the requirements are stable, the customer's needs and expectations are clear and mutually understood, as spelled out in its requirements and the contract. Needless to say, certain environments naturally inhibit either party's ability to meet those basic criteria. This would include a significant amount of contracting in an active war zone, emergency relief, the development of complex technologies and weapons systems and similar environments. Where the risks and unknowns are unavoidably high, fixed price contracts are impractical and often more expensive; bidding companies either have to price into their bids any and all possible contingencies that could affect their ability to perform under the contract at that fixed price, or not bid at all.

Here, too, we fully recognize and appreciate your concern that cost type contracts appear to contain inadequate incentives and mechanisms to constrain cost growth. At the same time, companies operating under cost reimbursement contracts are not without significant risk. Although they may be eligible for reimbursement of their basic and approved costs, any profit they might earn is generally limited and tied directly to their performance. And while reimbursement for out of pocket costs is important, it is obviously profitability that drives the value of a commercial enterprise.

As such, we recommend that the provision be modified to focus more on agency reviews of their existing guidance and training to ensure their acquisition personnel are fully aware of and knowledgeable about the use of different contract types, particularly under FAR Part 16. Further, as the GAO and the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, among others, have recommended, Congress and the agencies should also focus on tools to improve program

funding and requirements stability —which, in the development of weapons systems, technology solutions and wartime and emergency contracting, have all too often proven to be the most significant causes for program cost and schedule issues.

Interagency Contracting and the Services Industrial Base
Section 123 of the bill requires further analysis and study of the role and quality of interagency contracting. We share your belief that interagency contracting remains an area worthy of further study and support the intent of this provision. However, we would suggest a slightly different tack to broaden the provision's focus.

In the last few years, there has been significant administrative attention to and progress made in addressing the management, financial and fiscal control issues surrounding some interagency vehicles. While work continues, that progress is real.

Nonetheless, more recently many agencies have moved to greater use of "enterprise-wide" contract vehicles which are often as large and as complex as the major interagency contracts, but are generally only available for use by a single agency or a limited customer base. This trend is creating real concern and substantial challenges for both government and industry. Companies, particularly small and mid-tier firms, that wish to compete and grow across the marketplace, now face rapidly growing bid and proposal costs and as a result, significantly higher barriers to market access.

The magnitude of some of these dynamics was made clear in the 2006 Center for Strategic and International Studies' report on the structure and dynamics of the federal professional services industry. That study documented a significant fall off in the market share going to mid-tier firms—those companies that have exceeded the minimal size standards defining "small business" for the purpose of federal procurement, but remain too small to compete for the very large contracts. For our members, 65% of which are small and mid-tier firms, this growing market imbalance is the number one long term issue they face. Interagency contracting, and the shifts taking place in the federal contract landscape, is clearly one of the dynamics affecting that imbalance.

As this issue has become a major focus of concern and discussion within industry, so too should it become a significant focus of the government customer. Maintaining a diverse, competitive marketplace is not only good for the companies seeking to compete in that marketplace; it is of real value and importance to the government as well.

As such, we recommend that the interagency provisions in the bill be modified to require a broader analysis of the relative role and balance of interagency and enterprise contracts, how best to ensure the protection of individual agency interests, and, equally significantly, how to ensure that the ever evolving federal contract landscape not be a threat to the long term competitiveness of the supplier base on which the government relies. Interagency contracting is not a solution whose time has passed; it remains a vital component of the broader federal marketplace. And now is the right time to take a broader, more strategic look at that marketplace and how best to ensure that it will continue to serve the government customer most effectively for years to come.

Finally, let me share some thoughts regarding Section 128, which speaks to the debarment of contractors that are considered threats to national security. We certainly agree that no contractor that is such a threat should be allowed to receive government contracts. But the provision as written is too broad and non-specific and we would appreciate the opportunity to work with you to ensure it achieves its stated goals in a manner consistent with the important standards of due process under acquisition law.

Before I conclude I would like to point out that there are other bills, before this committee and arising in other committees, about which we have very grave concerns and which, we believe, will have a very deleterious effect on the environment, do little or nothing to improve actual acquisition or mission performance, and potentially have a significant negative effect on the long-term competitiveness of the marketplace. In many cases, these bills involve solutions seeking a problem or proposals that have not been subject to the kind of thoughtful review and analysis about their real world implications that you have given, and continue to give, to S.680. We therefore hope that this committee, as the principal committee of jurisdiction over procurement matters, will not hesitate to engage on these other bills and demand of them the same kind of rigor you are applying to your own legislation.

Let me once again thank you for your leadership on these crucial issues and for your nonpartisan approach and openness to dialogue about the perceived and real problems as well as possible solutions and their effects. And as I noted earlier, S.680 is an important, positive foundation for those ongoing discussions. We appreciate the opportunity to share some of our views with you today and look forward to continuing to do so. The issues are complex, often very nuanced, and central to the long term effectiveness of our government. As such, this is a dialogue that must continue.

This concludes my statement and I would be happy to answer any questions you might have.