

FSO Subcommittee Hearing:

Rise of the Zombies- the unauthorized & unaccountable government you pay for.

October 30, 2019

Opening Statement of Chairman Paul

I call this hearing of the Federal Spending Oversight Subcommittee to order.

We are here the day before Halloween to talk about zombies. These are not the kind of zombies we see on the Walking Dead, or what we might see on our doorsteps tomorrow evening. In many ways, these zombies are scarier. These are zombie government programs; programs that have sometimes not been reauthorized for decades. Since the mid-19th Century, and reaffirmed in the '74 Budget Act, Congress separated spending bills from authority in mission parameters which are in what are called authorizing bills. In recent decades Congress has failed in its oversight by not reauthorizing the programs it creates.

So what are zombie programs? They are programs Congress created long ago that have since expired, yet somehow live on; continuing to receive appropriations. How big is this problem? Some might say, "Well, it's probably a few dozen programs, and probably just a few million dollars." If you said that you would be wrong. Annually, Congress provides more than \$300 billion to nearly 1,000 programs that have expired. This is a huge problem.

And what are these zombie programs? Some are ridiculous, and well out of date. For example, the Inter-American Foundation spent taxpayer dollars on such things as: a clown college in Argentina, Brazilian welfare programs, and jumpstarting the Haitian film industry. When I point these things out, people always ask me how such ridiculous things get funded. Part of the answer is unauthorized spending. The Inter-American Foundation was created in the 1960s and last

authorized more than 30 years ago, in the 1980s. It is no wonder a lot of people ask, what is the Inter-American Foundation?

It is not just bad programs though. There is a lot of conversation these days about election security. But it would probably surprise people to learn the Federal Election Commission was last reauthorized in the '80s, before there was the internet or electronic voting machines. That means the FEC does not have the proper powers or authorities to address current needs, or worse, they are making up their own rules as they go, without any real Congressional input or oversight.

I've put forward a solution, a zombie cure called the Legislative Performance Review Act. This bill would require programs be reauthorized every 4 years, and creates a targeted point of order against funding such programs. It provides for an orderly wind down of expired programs and it asks committees to consider performance evaluations, which Congress has been mandating but ignoring for the past 25 years, when reauthorizing programs.

Some insist robust oversight occurs even without authorizations and that appropriators keep track of every dollar spent. I find that hard to believe, when we hear of clown colleges, but even if they do track every dollar the authorization process was split from the appropriating specifically because often the desire to spend, obstructs the desire to correct. Congress acts through passing laws, so oversight is anemic at best if there is no threat of legislative action.

Some say this would just be a tool to cut government. Well, some government should be cut, but even things that we might need should be reviewed and kept up to date. Some say politics will get in the way, or it is just too hard. We have shown it's not. Congress rightly prioritizes national defense and finds a way to do a NDAA every year. Certainly we can review other spending every 4 years. My proposal isn't so egregious, it simply provides for a point of order that could be waived. Is it too much burden for the Senate to debate and vote on programs once

every 4 years? Do we really believe that programs are so good they never get out of date or lose effectiveness? I don't think so.

With that, I'll recognize Ranking Member Hassan for her opening statement.