

Testimony**OPENING STATEMENT****SENATOR SAM BROWNBACK****S. 389, THE MANDATES INFORMATION ACT**

The Committee will be in order. Good afternoon and welcome to this hearing on S. 389, the Mandates Information Act. This legislation builds on the success of the Unfunded Mandates Reform Act by extending the same protections afforded State and local governments to the private sector.

Today, we will hear from Senator Spencer Abraham of Michigan, the author of the Mandates Information Act, as well as other key witnesses. I look forward to their testimony on how S. 389 would impact congressional consideration of private sector mandates.

I believe the Mandates Information Act is about two things: information and accountability.

-- First, the bill requires the Congressional Budget Office to provide information to Congress on the indirect costs of private sector mandates to consumers, workers and small businesses. It ensures that Congress will have more information when considering legislation that will impose new burdens on small businesses, individuals, and others who are affected directly by what we do here in Washington. I believe better information will allow us to be better legislators.

-- Second, the Mandates Information Act is about accountability. Every Member of Congress should be held accountable for the decision to pass a new cost on to the American people. The bill would allow any Member to raise a point of order against a mandate on the private sector that would cost in excess of 100 million dollars annually, and would require a majority vote to override that point of order and consider the mandate. The effect will be a full and open debate on the costs and benefits of new requirements on the private sector.

The Unfunded Mandates Reform Act has already proven, despite alarmist rhetoric to the contrary, that the point of order mechanism enhances congressional debate. UMRA has worked well in Congress, and I believe we can comfortably extend the law's intergovernmental protections to the private sector.

This morning we are pleased to have Senator Abraham, the sponsor of the Mandates Information Act; Representative Rob Portman and Representative Gary Condit, the sponsors of the Mandates Information Act in the House; Jim Blum (BLOOM), deputy director of the Congressional Budget Office which is given new responsibilities under the Act; Bruce Josten of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, who will speak to the effect of the bill on American businesses; Mary Ann Cricchio (KREE-chee-o), the owner of the Da Mimmo (Da-ME-mo) Italian

Restaurant in Baltimore, who will testify about S. 389 from a small business perspective; and, Sharon Buccino (Byoo-CHEE-no), legislative counsel at the Natural Resources Defense Council, who will share her perspectives on the Act.

Joining us on our first panel are the distinguished Senate and House sponsors of the Mandates Information Act: Senator Spencer Abraham of Michigan, the sponsor of S. 389, and Representatives Rob Portman of Ohio and Gary Condit of California, the sponsors of H.R. 3534, the House companion bill which passed the House last month by a vote of 279-132.

Thank you all for being here. We look forward to your testimony.

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