

RELEASE IN FULL

From: Mills, Cheryl D <MillsCD@state.gov>
Sent: Tuesday, November 9, 2010 9:42 AM
To: Mills, Cheryl D
Subject: FW: Issa plans hundreds of hearings

FYI

From: Toiv, Nora F
Sent: Tuesday, November 09, 2010 8:51 AM
To: Mills, Cheryl D
Subject: Issa plans hundreds of hearings

POLITICO

Issa plans hundreds of hearings

By: Jake Sherman and Richard E. Cohen

November 8, 2010 05:13 PM EST

California Rep. Darrell Issa is already eyeing a massive expansion of oversight for next year, including hundreds of hearings; creating new subcommittees; and launching fresh investigations into the bank bailout, the stimulus and, potentially, health care reform.

Issa told POLITICO in an interview that he wants each of his seven subcommittees to hold "one or two hearings each week."

"I want seven hearings a week, times 40 weeks," Issa said.

Issa is also targeting some ambitious up-and-comers like Reps. Jason Chaffetz of Utah, Patrick McHenry of North Carolina and Jim Jordan of Ohio — all aggressive partisans — to chair some of his subcommittees.

He also wants to organize aggressive oversight beyond his committee and plans to refer inquiries to other House panels, drawing even more incoming GOP chairmen to the cause of investigating the executive branch.

"As Clint Eastwood says, a man needs to know his limitations," Issa said in the interview. "With other committees, we have good working relationships. Our committees have some areas of primary jurisdiction, including the federal work force, procurement and the Postal Service. We will take care of our core knitting, but we have very narrow legislative jurisdiction."

While he promises an ambitious — and some say confrontational — agenda, Issa is making overtures to the Obama administration: He already has a meeting scheduled with Vice President Joe Biden to discuss stimulus oversight.

But Issa's specific plans bring a certain reality to what has been known for months: Oversight of the Obama administration and congressional Democrats will be a central

purpose for the new Republican House.

To give an idea of how expansive Issa's oversight plans are, look at the record of Rep. Henry Waxman (D-Calif.) when he chaired the oversight committee during in the 110th Congress during George W. Bush's presidency. Waxman held 203 oversight hearings in two years; Issa has signaled he's prepared to hold about 280 in just one year.

Issa sees the committee's role as not policy but to "measure failures." He likens his job to seeing "whether the fuel being consumed meets the specifications." And he isn't looking to catch witnesses off guard, saying that "oversight should be done with a balance for the American people and not as a gotcha."

Issa won't have a shortage of targets. He's been hammering for better tracking of the stimulus and has a growing list of other investigative targets, including the housing meltdown and the bank bailout.

Earlier this year, Issa pressured Oversight and Government Reform Committee Chairman Edolphus Towns (D-N.Y.) to issue a subpoena to Countrywide Financial about its VIP loan program. Other investigations during the minority included inquests into actions taken during the financial meltdown and a look at problems with Toyota automobiles.

There are already résumés piling up from people looking to join Issa's staff — mostly lawyers, a source said. Republicans have a good deal of hiring to do in the weeks ahead, although the House Republican Steering Committee will approve chairmen in December. Issa will most likely face no serious challenge.

In the coming weeks, Issa and his staff are also planning to reach out to the inspector general community and staffers at the various bureaucracies the committee will oversee.

Issa also is looking to dig into procurement and government contracting, and he seems sure to return to the Countrywide VIP program — which has subpoenaed records en route to the Capitol. He's also got inquiries into Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac's role in the financial collapse. And with earmarks all but gone from the Capitol, Issa will turn his fire toward the White House and the far larger sums of cash controlled by the executive branch at a time of huge deficits.

"We really want to study presidential earmarks and the grant-making process: How do we take all this discretionary money and see what is necessary," Issa said. "The debate on how to shrink the federal government is at the core of our problem of government not doing its job."

Issa is also pointedly looking to avoid probing what he seems to view as peripheral issues — like Waxman and former Chairman Tom Davis's foray into hearings on steroids in baseball.

"This is important, in contrast to hearings on steroids in baseball, where I felt that it was inherently wrong to get Roger Clemens to lie to Congress," Issa said. "The American people really want us to shrink government."

Issa also wants to avoid the sometimes petty controversies that enmeshed Rep. Dan Burton (R-Ind.) as committee chairman during the Clinton presidency and sometimes

made him the issue.

Another, more cosmetic change could be coming up the pipe.

“We will seriously consider a name change back to what it was,” Issa said, hinting the committee will again be named the Government Reform and Oversight Committee — “to emphasize government reform and not oversight.”



© 2010 Capitol News Company, LLC