

I know as the second ranking minority member that neither he, I, nor any other Members have been consulted. We have read a lot in the paper about what the Committee on the Judiciary was going to do, what it would not be allowed to do, how it was going to be bypassed.

To have this funding request come forward, it is over a \$1 million, some of which would be presumably assigned the minority, with no consultation is a problem. And the problem is compounded because the chairman of the committee did say there would be consultation, but the consultation he discussed was on a subject that appears to be different.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. BOB SCHAFFER of Colorado). Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. RIGGS) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. RIGGS addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

CONFUSION SURROUNDING REQUEST OF COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Massachusetts (Mr. FRANK) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, the point is that the justification that the chairman mentioned, the consultations that have been held with staff of the minority and the majority, apparently are irrelevant to the request tomorrow.

So I would hope, and I would think the ranking minority member would agree with me, that we could get the Committee on House Oversight to hold off voting this kind of money until there could be a public hearing.

There appears to be a fundamental confusion, at best, about \$1.3 million. Is it money that is to redo the investigation of the independent counsel? Is it money to check up on whether the Attorney General has appropriately dealt with the independent counsel? Or is it for the reauthorization of the Justice Department?

What the chairman told us today was one justification, but the letter that he and the gentleman from Georgia (Speaker GINGRICH) sent to the chairman of the committee is entirely about something else. We ought not to have \$1,300,000 so casually used.

We also ought to stop what appears to be a two-track operation in which the ranking minority member is told one thing about the operation of the Committee on the Judiciary when other conversations are going on. There is a partisan tinge to this which is inappropriate when dealing with the most significant things we can deal with.

Mr. Speaker, I yield to the gentleman from Michigan (Mr. CONYERS).

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, here is what the justification submitted to the Committee on House Oversight said: "The Committee on the Judiciary contemplates an investigation of the Department of Justice's investigation, with an emphasis on the need for an independent counsel."

They go on to point out that the 17 Republican members have written a letter to the Attorney General and that their plans include the following: The Department of Justice Public Integrity Section and Campaign Fundraising Task Force has been plagued with conflicts of interest, et cetera. In the Chipewa casino matter the Department of Justice is acting as the criminal prosecutor.

Further on, the fundraising investigations, the last time the Committee on the Judiciary sought an appointment of an independent counsel was on the Health Care Task Force.

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. Mr. Speaker, if the gentleman would allow me, as he is making clear from reading this, nothing in here deals with the ongoing responsibilities of the Department of Justice, which was the stated purpose for this funding from the chairman. Maybe the chairman thinks it is for one thing and the Speaker is, to use his phrase, saddling him with another purpose.

There ought to be a public hearing. I would think the ranking minority member ought to have a chance to go before the committee and talk about that money, whether it is needed, what it ought to be used for.

Mr. CONYERS. Mr. Speaker, I would say to my friend, the gentleman from Massachusetts, if anybody in this House thinks that any serious investigation of the White House or this administration can begin on a partisan basis, as this is appearing to be, I think they are dooming it to a total failure. The notion that anything remotely resembling impeachment activity be sent to any committee other than the Committee on the Judiciary is a clear signal that something is wrong.

Mr. FRANK of Massachusetts. I would ask the ranking minority member, has there been any conversation on the part of any member of the majority, from the Committee on the Judiciary or elsewhere, with the gentleman dealing with how we might respond to Independent Counsel Starr?

Mr. CONYERS. No. Not only has that not happened, but I have been assured repeatedly, and I am sorry to have to put this into the RECORD now, that I would be kept abreast of all developments connected with this, because I have repeatedly been hearing in the media what they were trying to do. As a matter of fact, a January letter requesting this money was brought to me by a member of the press when I told them I had never seen it before. This document I did not see until after the hearing of the full Committee on the Judiciary late this afternoon.

So it is with some sadness that I make public that the agreement that I

thought that I was entering into has been shattered. Perhaps it can be replaced. But I want the entire Congress to know that these unilateral Republican shenanigans, whether they come from the Speaker or from the chairman of the Committee on the Judiciary, work an extreme disservice on the processes that are within the jurisdiction of the Committee on the Judiciary in the House.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. EWING) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. EWING addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

THE TAXPAYER BILL OF RIGHTS III

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Mr. FOX) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. FOX of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise to bring to the attention of my colleagues the importance now of the passing of the Taxpayer Bill of Rights III. We know that it was not that long ago the Senate Finance Committee had hearings wherein IRS agents, presently working for the agency, as well as taxpayers, came forward to talk about the problems of abuse, the problems of mom and pop stores being levied with fines and with penalties for violations that had not occurred, but they had paid them, nonetheless, out of fear of the agency going after them, and yet these people do not have attorneys or CPAs to help them.

My Taxpayer Bill of Rights legislation, which has enjoyed bipartisan support, is, frankly, a bill that is going to move forward in this respect to change the burden of proof to make sure that taxpayers will now be presumed innocent, and the Commissioner of the IRS will have the burden of proving otherwise, instead of the reverse, the way it is now.

It also will say, no more quotas for IRS investigations, no more quotas for IRS audits, no more fishing expeditions where taxpayers live in fear of the IRS, no more random audits, and, more importantly than the ones I have already mentioned, the fifth provision of the bill says that, in fact, if the IRS is overreaching or causes a legal business or individual loss in an unfair way to any constituent, then they would be responsible for reimbursing that taxpayer.

Moreover, there would be whistleblower protection. If in fact an individual comes forward to talk about an IRS violation by an agency employee or the agency itself, then they will not be audited just out of retribution. Moreover, the bill calls for mediators to be provided in case someone wants to settle a claim.

These are all commonsense provisions to make the IRS more taxpayer-