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August 28, 2007

The Honorable Henry A. Waxman
Chairman
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
2157 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington D.C., 20515

The Honorable Danny K. Davis
Chairman
Subcommittee on Federal Workforce, Postal Service, and the District of Columbia
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
2157 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington D.C., 20515

Dear Chairman Waxman and Chairman Davis:

This letter is to respectfully request that we begin a series of oversight hearings on matters of critical importance to the Washington region.

The relationship of Congress to Washington, D.C., is unique, as reflected in the Constitution. Historically, it's taken a local crisis to compel the federal government to act. In the absence of a crisis, our oversight has played a critical role in focusing attention on developing concerns.

As we approach the somber commemoration of September 11, security issues for residents and visitors permeate discussions of service delivery in the Washington region.

In the National Capital Region, concerns have arisen with increasing frequency.

- This week, on consecutive days, five Metro rail lines experienced outbreaks of fire and smoke, each reportedly from a different cause, resulting in shutdowns and unprecedented evacuations. In view of what *The Washington Post* described as a

"chaotic situation" and the "mystery" surrounding these events, plus the obvious national security concerns, I urge an investigative oversight hearing at the earliest possible time.

- This week, the Water and Sewer Authority continued to test some of the city's 10,000 fire hydrants. The two fires on April 30 revealed that hydrants had not been comprehensively tested in almost seven years. More than 10 percent remain out of service. These hydrants serve schools, hospitals, libraries, highway tunnels and federal buildings such as the U.S. Capitol and the White House.

- Last week it was revealed that downtown areas have HIRED police officers because of security concerns.

- It is unclear how the city will pay for its initiatives – which include reconstruction of the Georgetown library and parts of Eastern Market and $120 million for emergency school repairs. Excessive borrowing and drawing down of reserves led to the last fiscal crisis. Congress bears responsibility to make sure such crises are not repeated. If a control board is reinstated under the "automatic trigger" provision in existing law, whatever budget autonomy the city has at the time would be rescinded.

Moving forward, I welcome the opportunity to work together to hold a series of oversight hearings on these and other issues. It has been my experience that bringing stakeholders together before Congress helps anticipate and resolve problems.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Tom Davis
Ranking Member