

Statement of Ranking Member Thomas R. Carper
*“Federal Real Property Reform: How Cutting Red Tape and Better Management
Could Achieve Billions in Savings”*

June 16, 2015

As prepared for delivery:

Good morning. I want to thank Chairman Johnson for holding this important hearing today. I know that the Chairman and many of the new members of this Committee have shown great interest in finding ways to improve federal property management, a topic which has been a priority of this Committee for over a decade now.

My strong interest in this issue dates back to 2006 when Senator Tom Coburn and I went to Chicago to hold a hearing across from a massive, empty Postal Service building that the agency was spending millions to maintain and secure. We learned at our hearing that the Postal Service was unfortunately not alone when it came to wasting money on property it didn't need.

Property management has been on the Government Accountability Office (GAO) High Risk List for the last twelve years. GAO has found repeatedly during that time that the federal government lacks consistently reliable data to account for what it owns or leases.

Agencies often don't know the condition their assets are in or how the assets are being used. And all too often, as was the case with the Postal Service in Chicago, agencies are spending money to holding onto buildings and other property they just don't need. So, I've worked with Dr. Coburn and others over the years to find ways to find ways to get better results for less money in the way we manage federal property.

Unfortunately, legislative efforts to achieve this goal have always hit a roadblock. But our calling attention to this issue and providing ongoing oversight has ultimately paid dividends by encouraging some very good work by both the Bush and Obama Administrations.

Just this past spring, the President announced two new property management initiatives, the National Strategy for Real Property and the Reduce the Footprint initiative. The National Strategy requires agencies to freeze the growth in their inventory and take steps to reduce its size. Further, through the Reduce the Footprint initiative, agencies are now mandated to reduce, rather than freeze, their footprint starting in fiscal year 2016.

As Mr. Mader will note in his testimony, this effort has shown some success as agencies have reduced the size of their portfolios over the last two years, letting go of 21 million square feet of office and warehouse space. I look forward to learning more about these successes, as well as about what might be coming next.

I am eager to hear from our witnesses today as we work together to critically analyze what Congress and the Administration can do in the days ahead to find even smarter ways to approach federal real property reform in our never-ending drive to achieve better results for less money.

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