

# **Opening Statement of Chairman Ron Johnson**

## *“Federal Real Property Reform: How Cutting Red Tape and Better Management Could Achieve Billions in Savings”*

June 16, 2015

Good morning and welcome.

The federal government’s mismanagement of property that it owns and leases is an issue that Ranking Member Carper has been working to address for a long time. As chairman, I’m happy to partner with him on this important issue. Today’s hearing will lay out the reality of the federal government’s massive real property holdings, the bureaucracy that stands in the way of selling excess property, and the lost opportunities to save taxpayer dollars. I think we can agree that Congress and the administration need to act to stop wasting millions, if not billions, of taxpayer dollars on unused and unneeded federal properties.

The federal government owns and leases more than 275,000 buildings within the United States. These buildings cost \$21 billion a year to operate and maintain. A third of this cost, \$7 billion, is paid annually for leasing building space.

In preparation for this hearing, I asked my staff to provide me with the total value of the federal government’s buildings. This is a common-sense calculation that the government officials should have at their fingertips. Unfortunately, that is not the case.

Reports from government watchdogs such as the Government Accountability Office have questioned the accuracy and reliability of real property data reported by agencies. This is yet another example of the federal government is trying to manage something that it cannot measure. It is simply impossible to address this problem if the federal government can hardly identify what it owns and what it is spending. It will be impossible to achieve true reform without better facts and figures to measure the value of what we have, what we can do without, and how much we can save by getting rid of superfluous buildings.

Today I want to talk briefly about a proposal that the administration has been supportive of for years. We have been working with our friends in the House on legislation that would cut through the miles of red tape and years of delay between when an agency decides it no longer needs a building and when the General Services Administration actually gets around to selling it.

One of my goals as chairman of this committee is to pass bipartisan bills that have a good chance of being signed into law and that can save taxpayers billions of dollars. By selling wasteful federal properties or otherwise getting rid of empty buildings that we’re paying thousands of dollars a year to maintain, we can start to accomplish that goal. I look forward to working with Ranking Member Carper to move property reform legislation through the Senate.

I look forward to hearing from the witnesses today on how we got to this point, what is being done today to stop wasting taxpayer dollars on unneeded and unused properties, what can be done to manage and provide reliable data on real property, what more needs to be done to truly see results, and what Congress can do to make this reform a reality. Thank you for being here today.

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