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Hearing on
“A Growing Capitol Complex and Visitor Center: Needs
For Transportation, Security, Greening, Energy and Maintenance”

Before the
Subcommittee on Economic Development, Public Buildings
and Emergency Management
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
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Madam Chairwoman, I appreciate this opportunity to appear before the subcommittee this morning to address the progress we're making in implementing Speaker Pelosi's Green the Capitol Initiative.

On June 21, 2007, the Speaker approved a “Green the Capitol Initiative.” The stated purpose of this initiative is to make the House of Representatives “carbon neutral” in its operations by the end of the 110th Congress. This initiative, which was based on recommendations developed by my office, was designed to offset the 91,000 metric tons of greenhouse gases the House generates as a result of its operations each year.

After less than one year of operating under initiative, we have implemented a wide variety of innovative actions designed to reduce energy consumption, offset carbon emissions and change the way the House does business. As a result, rather than achieve carbon neutrality by December 2008, it is now anticipated the House will achieve that goal before July 4, 2008.

The major way in which we will meet our goal of carbon neutrality includes the following three steps:

- (1) Purchasing only electricity generated by wind energy to meet the Houses needs. This will reduce the House carbon footprint by 57,000 metric tons.
- (2) Using natural gas, not coal, to meet the House's needs for heating and cooling from the Capitol Power Plant. This will reduce the carbon footprint by an additional 10,000 metric tons.
- (3) Finally, the House purchased offset credits from the Chicago Climate Exchange for remaining 24,000 metric tons of greenhouse gases to insure carbon neutral operations.

In addition, the Speaker directed us to reduce our carbon footprint by working to achieve a goal of reducing energy consumption in the House by 50 percent over the next ten years. We recognize this is an aggressive goal, but we think it can be attained if we implement our Green the Capitol plan.

We have launched a number of other important efforts to reduce the institution's carbon emissions:

- **The Capitol Dome** will be relit with energy efficient lighting within the next six months. The conventional lights illuminating the outside of the structure are, in fact, prime examples of dated and uneconomical technology: They use a considerable amount of energy, need to be changed frequently and get extremely hot.
- **The House now has “Green” food service facilities.** All of the House restaurants, cafeterias and catering facilities are taking dramatic steps to “green” their processes and equipment. More energy efficient equipment has been purchased, and recycled materials have been used for counters and food stations. More important, the food waste from all House facilities is now composted. What was garbage yesterday is being turned into a commercially usable asset: compost. This will significantly reduce the estimated 250 metric tons a year of waste sent to landfills.
- **A new on-site food pulper** reduces the weight of the waste by as much as 70 percent by extracting the water from it. We are sending the output from the pulper to a U.S Department of Agriculture research facility and a commercial composter. These efforts will reduce the waste sent to landfills by the House and save us tipping and transportation fees.
- The House now sells only environmentally-sound **100 percent post-consumer recycled paper**. The House uses 70 million sheets of copy paper a year. Using the 100 percent recycled paper will save more than 29,000 trees, 3.5 million gallons of water and 400,000 pounds of solid waste annually. The recycled paper will also prevent the creation of nearly 775,000 pounds of greenhouse gases.
- **The House has completely revamped its paper recycling program** to insure compostable food waste is picked up from Member offices. In addition, the paper recycling program has been streamlined to promote greater participation by Member offices.
- **Low VOC carpeting** is now used throughout all House facilities. Using low VOC materials significantly reduces the emission of chemical compounds which have been linked to eye and respiratory irritation, headaches, fatigue and other symptoms associated with “sick building” syndrome. Low VOC materials improve regional air quality, broadly improving worker safety and health.
- **The Architect of the Capitol has now received approval to begin installation of new and improved electricity meters** in all House office buildings. This will improve management of electricity consumption in each building and will lead to reduced energy use.

- **7,000 compact fluorescent lights (CFLs)** have already been installed in House offices. The House is working to replace the remaining 30,000 incandescent bulbs with the improved CFLs, which pay for themselves in as little as five months.
- **Computer servers**, which are now spread out in various locations and require individual cooling systems, are in the process of being consolidated at fewer locations to diminish energy consumption by 65 percent. By changing operating procedures and installing new technology, we are working to reduce energy consumption in our computer centers by 40 percent.
- All of the House's **84 vending machines** have been replaced with energy-efficient machines.
- **A Green Expo** was held in October, 2007, showcasing more than 30 leading green transportation companies and 19 alternative fuel vehicles. Exhibitors provided 1500 House employees with information on ride-sharing technologies, bike-to-work programs and various public transportation commuter solutions.
- **A bike-sharing program**, known as "Wheels4Wellness", has been launched for employees to take House-owned bikes, rather than motor vehicles, on short errands during the day. The program helps reduce carbon and provides an exercise benefit for employees.
- **A car-sharing program** is already in place, allowing employees to rent a hybrid car on an hourly basis right out of the House parking garage.
- **Other transportation improvements** have been introduced in three areas. Employees taking public transportation won't need to deal with cumbersome paperwork any longer and will instead use a "smart card," which will have their benefits automatically loaded onto it every month. Those benefits will also be centrally funded and administered, instead of managed office by office, which will further increase participation in the program. And commuters who pay to park their cars at public transportation stations will also now receive a benefit for their parking expenses.
- **The House has purchased its first electric powered truck for small package deliveries** and is working with manufacturers to purchase hybrid diesel trucks for larger capacity needs.

Chairwoman Norton, I want to thank for providing us with this opportunity to outline our efforts for you. I believe the Green the Capitol Initiative has brought about some enormous changes in the way we do business in a very short period of time. The House has provided leadership in showing that being green can save money, taxpayer money in this case and do the right thing for the environment. We are doing this in your district and would be happy to work with you and Mayor Fenty to put the lessons we have learned into the District of Columbia schools and other local institutions.