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## **Rep. George Miller (D-CA) Opening Statement for the Markup of Committee's 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter Activities Report of the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress**

*WASHINGTON, D.C. – Below are the prepared remarks of U.S. Rep. George Miller (D-CA), the senior Democratic member of the House Committee on Education and the Workforce, for the committee markup of a report on the activities of the Committee on Education and the Workforce for the third quarter of the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress.*

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The Education and the Workforce Committee meets this morning to mark up the majority's quarterly activities report. Last year, a similar report made promises that the committee would advance an agenda to re-energize the economy and better prepare America's workers for 21<sup>st</sup> century challenges. These were encouraging words.

Millions had been thrown out of their jobs as a result of the Wall Street financial scandals and were looking for a way forward. Our nation's education law was in desperate need of reform so that all children could have the opportunity to succeed. Our workforce investment system was in need of modernization so it can efficiently respond to current and future economic needs.

However, one year later, not a single piece of legislation to move this country forward in these key areas has become law because the majority chose partisanship over consensus. And the draft activities report before us today indicates that this committee intends to continue down that same ideological path in the very limited legislative days that remain in the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress.

This is unfortunate. From early childhood education to ensuring a secure retirement, this committee has the ability to be a positive force to help grow and strengthen the middle class. But it can only happen if the majority chooses to work with Democrats.

The majority gets to set priorities. But, as pointed out in a recent markup, it's up to the majority to choose to work in a bipartisan manner. I agree.

I'm not naïve enough to think that we are going to agree on every issue or priority. There are deeply-held views on both sides of the aisle. I respect those differences of opinion. But entrenched ideological positions will not improve the lives of the American middle class who simply want their kids to go to good schools and to have stable jobs with decent wages.

Sadly for those families, nothing has nor will get done on the most important business of the day when the majority chooses to go it alone, even when consensus is achievable.

For instance, there was a real opportunity to build on bipartisan work over the years to rewrite No Child Left Behind. There is broad agreement that we need to modernize the law by focusing on college and career ready standards and a better balance between flexibility and accountability.

If the majority chose to work with Democrats, this law would likely be in the history books by now. In fact, the Obama administration has worked hard to support Congress in reauthorizing the law and released a blueprint over two years ago. Our Senate colleagues were able to reach a bipartisan deal. We have not.

Because a partisan path won out over consensus-driven solutions, NCLB remains the law of the land. And instead of looking to Congress, states are now looking to the Department of Education for waivers to modernize their education systems. Nearly 40 states have applied for and 19 states have been approved for relief from NCLB to date.

Likewise, there was a real opportunity to reauthorize a streamlined and efficient Workforce Investment Act so that it worked for those who truly need its services. This too could have been a legislative victory for Congress and an economic victory for workers across the country. However, the majority chose a different path.

The activities report fails to address these and other missed opportunities to fix real problems that are squarely within our committee's responsibility.

This committee has yet to live up to our promise to improve mine safety – a promise we made to the 29 families who lost a loved one at Upper Big Branch more than two years ago.

On jobs, the record reflects a failure of initiative. This committee could be spurring job growth. By getting construction workers back on the job rebuilding schools. Or, by ensuring that teenagers and young adults can earn a paycheck with a summer job.

But job creation measures like these have been repeatedly voted down in this committee.

And, in this Congress, we have yet to address the scourge of child abuse, despite repeated requests for this committee to take action to better protect children from sexual and other abuse in school.

These are all missed opportunities. And families are paying the price.

This committee should not take its cue from the House and Senate Republican leadership. For a year and a half, that leadership has chosen to obstruct progress rather than seek consensus that improves lives.

In this House, ideology prevails over bipartisanship. The powerful over middle class families. Politics over job creation. Brinksmanship over cooperation.

And Congress has paid the price in its approval ratings which hover in the teens. But low approval ratings do not compare to the damage this sort of politics inflicts on the American people and our economy.

While time is running short, I believe there are still opportunities to work together this Congress to make positive change for the American people. We should seize them. Without such a commitment, I cannot support this activities report as written.

*<http://democrats.edworkforce.house.gov>*