TRANSCRIPT OF INTERVIEW WITH CALIFORNIA ASSEMBLYMEMBER KEN COOLEY REGARDING THE ROLE OF LEGISLATIVE OVERSIGHT

October 2017

On June 6, 2017, California Assemblymember Ken Cooley, Chair of the Assembly Rules Committee, and committee staff member Mukhtar Ismail Ali, sat down with CSG West staff to discuss the California State Assembly Legislative Oversight Handbook Cooley developed for his fellow committee chairs and vice chairs. This transcript of that conversation has been lightly edited for clarity.

KC = Assemblyman Ken Cooley
CSGW = CSG West staff
MIA = Mukhtar Ismail Ali, Rules Committee staff

CSGW: What generated the reason for the California Assembly Legislative Oversight Handbook? What made you think that this was needed?

KC: My career actually started in legislative work. I'm a lawyer, so I've spent at least 20 years in the private sector, but always doing legislative work. I go back in my legislative career to the late 1970s. And my gut feeling was we just had more active oversight in the old days. And, of course, here in the Assembly, for 20 years, we had a six-year term limit that applied. And when you [could] only be here for six years, there was a lot of churning because people would move on to the first available longer-term opportunity.

When members could be here six years, the average tenure was probably under four. It takes a certain amount of time in office to understand the scope of your office under the state constitution, and to understand how to interact with the executive branch. So, we saw a significant loss.

I will just describe something that's in [the handbook]. I had asked the state library to give me a run of all the oversight reports in their holdings going back 40 years. The
Senate dominated in oversight once term limits started to kick in. But when you get beyond that, then it was always the Assembly that was the dominant body in oversight.

I was chief counsel for the old Assembly Finance and Insurance Committee in the 1980s, and we had a very active oversight program. The approach to the book, and the notion of what would be helpful resources, grow right out of my own experience as a chief counsel of a big policy committee.

The old Finance and Insurance Committee had 21 members in the 80-member house. It was bigger than any committee we have now because it was all the banking issues, coupled with all the lending issues, and on the insurance side it was all the lines of insurance. You did not have a division between property and casualty and health insurance as we do today, [when] health insurance goes to the health committee. The other lines go to the insurance committee. Everything was in the F&I committee.

So I just saw this as: we're transitioning to longer-term members who serve up to 12 years in the body. If you're going to be effective as a lawmaker, you need to learn. A key part of what we should be doing is helping members become as experienced and as informed in their work as fast as possible, so then they can use their active available time to have more of an impact. And this book was basically looking at what can you put in that volume that somebody could leaf through in an hour, and start putting together a plan for how to be more effective as a chair or a vice-chair?

CSGW: Why do you think it's important for legislative institutions to exercise effective oversight functions?

KC: We are a system of laws. The job of the executive branch is to implement the laws as passed by the legislature and, of course, duly signed into law by a prior governor. But you can get into questions of, "How are the agencies construing the law?" "What's the meaning of the law?" As time goes on, maybe a law that was passed 5, 10, 25 years ago is no longer as well adapted, as it was first conceived, to the situation we're in today. So, oversight becomes a way to make sure that the law on the books is actually responding to the problems that current lawmakers see as the right priorities. So, it's a form of accountability on both the administration and executive branch side. But also on the lawmaking side, do we still have the right statutes on the books?

CSGW: So, how did you decide what to include in the Handbook?

KC: I've had a draft paper kicking around for about seven years on the general topic of oversight. Believe it or not, I have notes going back to the 1980s when I was chief counsel of the F&I Committee about how we conducted oversight. I am a lawyer, so, I just started thinking about what would help members.
The substance of the conversation about oversight is fairly brief in the book. It's less than ten pages of “What is oversight?” And everything else becomes resources. So, there's a very practical outline if you want to do oversight. These are the steps you can go through if you want to do a full-on thing. If you want a template, we have that.

Our House rules have a direct bearing on how oversight would be conducted. So, one of the things I did was I went through all of our Assembly and joint rules, constitutional provisions and statutes that are pertinent to the enterprise of oversight. And as I went through them, I asked myself, "What are the questions about oversight that these provisions answer." And then I produced a long series of questions that I felt our rules or the Constitution or statutes answer. Then I reorganized from 50,000 feet down to fine detail. And then I passed that list on to our Legislative Counsel office to supply the answers.

So why do you do that? Well, that's so a lawmaker who's new to this business, who has chair responsibilities, who wants to understand how our house rules focus on the oversight enterprise, can sit down with that set of three dozen F.A.Q.s, and just zoom through it and be up to speed on how our House rules shaped that enterprise.

[The handbook] includes a recommendation which is based upon what I saw, I think, in the state of New York, suggesting that each committee develop a committee reference book. We've got all these codes that sit here on the wall in my office. What are the various statutory schemes that are out there? Which ones are in your committee if you're a chair? What's the nature of that? What agencies are involved in the administration of those statutes? Are there local governments involved? Are there reports that need to get issued? When were the statutes originally adopted? When did they last get a comprehensive overhaul? That's an awful lot of intellectual grunt work to take a standing committee and put together what's the bible of all the bill subject matters in your committee. But you do it once. Now, you know what's in your neck of the woods, and you can start thinking about, "Okay, which ones do we want to look at and focus on a little bit more?" So that's how we approached it.

I included a lot of quotes on oversight. Now, the quotes are simply there because under the era of very short term limits, it was easy for this place to fall into the routine of being a bill mill where the primary focus is upon introducing bills, arguing bills, passing bills, sending bills on to the governor. And while that's important, a very important aspect of our responsibility is this reach in the existing body of law, and [to ask whether it is] still apt for its intended purpose, and do we agree with how it's getting administered.
So, the quotes here are quotes that I turned up in my work on the general subject matter, and they go on and on. They're from U.S. Supreme Court decisions and members of Congress, and political scientists, and commentators, and that sort of thing.

And really, the quotes are just there so someone can sit there and zoom through those and have an "Oh, my gosh" moment to hear the extraordinary unanimity of how vital the oversight enterprise is to the legislative function.

When I started, you had members who had a substantial career. First, the Speaker when I started was Leo McCarthy. He was replaced by Willie Brown, who was speaker for fourteen years, almost fifteen. And what is often forgotten is Willie Brown had already been a member in the Assembly for eighteen years when he became Speaker. So members had a different understanding of the office and function. This is just designed to let members who want to become more effective in their role, give them something that just draws together a lot of threads and strengthens them.

CSGW: The role of committee chairs, or budget committee chairs in the oversight, can you talk a little bit about the importance of the chairs and the role that they could play in oversight?

KC: Yeah, and I'm going to involve Mukhtar in this a little bit because we've been working on a training plan. I will point out that when you look at this book, the transmittal letter under the cover was directed to the chairs and vice chairs. Now, that sort of means it's really directed to our membership on a bipartisan basis. And a very key aspect of that is when you're in the bill mill mode, you can have conversations that acquire a partisan tone sometimes, what I refer to as—I'm dating myself—the old MAD Magazine "Spy Versus Spy," one side against the other.

Oversight is us, as members, on one side of the table, having a conversation with the executive branch on the other side of the table. In general, oversight is a more collaborative thing where we vindicate our role under the Constitution vis-a-vis another branch of government. And, so how do we help our chairs, with the vice chairs, enter into this reinventing of our role as lawmakers to be in this? We're all on the same side of the table having important conversations with the executive branch. It's clearly designed to help our members.

A fundamental notion to this book is that every one of our standing committees can be doing oversight. It's not the special province of a Budget Committee, or Business and Professions Committee, or an Accountability and Administrative Review Committee, but every committee, because you have subject matter experts on your staff and
overseeing a body of law who can actually start doing oversight in your special area. And that's institutionally important.

So, then it becomes, how do you help members know how to do the work, and how do you help them understand the members of the legislative team that can help them in the work? And so, for this, we've been having a conversation on how to do training.

Mukhtar, do you want talk about how we toyed with some different options and what our plan is?

MIA: Yeah, absolutely. So, the book has an abundance of resources and information. The next step was how do we deliver that information, and to build relationships between Assembly staff and professional resources staff, our Legislative Counsel, the State Auditor, and the Legislative Analyst, Mac Taylor?

And so, Mr. Cooley first had this idea of doing a teleconference. Staff suggested, "Well, let's build relationships. Let's make it interactive." And so, that's when the idea of having a training where the professional resource staff are there and the chairs and the vice chairs, and the key staff of the committees are there, all engaged, and they have the same goal of oversight. And it's not really a partisan issue, as Mr. Cooley mentioned.

So that's the next step. And we hope for it to be an hour, with mainly time for the professional resource staff to deliver how they can be helpful to the institution and give chairs, vice chairs and staff all an opportunity at the same time to ask questions and better be able to carry out oversight in their committees.

KC: I had this idea of maybe doing a phone call, but actually the more we roundtable it just among ourselves, and this is kind of how the thing emerged. We had different staff at different times in these conservations working this out. It's like, "Well, we want all of the chairs, with the vice chairs, with the key staff, to realize that our lawyers, our internal law office, Mac Taylor, auditor general, are all there ready to be asked, "We'd like to get our arms around some issue. Can you help us," to sort of help the chairs realize that part of being a committee chair or being a part of the committee team, in the case of the vice chair, is to figure out, "Okay, how do we make use of the resources of the body?"

And so, I think that's our plan, to have the chairs, with their committee colleagues, realizing we can sort of rock and roll. We have institutional resources, and we're longer-term members, and we just need to start asserting our constitutional responsibilities vis-a-vis the agencies a little bit, and partly to move in the direction of— while we do have the power of issuing subpoenas—we actually shouldn't have to do
that. We should just have a track record that when a committee approaches, they've worked with the auditor and [legislative] analyst and the lawyers to get their arms around what is it you want to learn about and to focus the inquiry.

Always in the legislative realm, you do have to have a legislative purpose associated with your work, so [you're not] messing with someone to mess with them. You've got to have some arguable legislative purpose. But it's just designed to kind of tune up the whole enterprise, and it's better to cross every standing committee so that you don't have a bottleneck of one or two bodies that's supposed to do the whole work of the institution.

CSGW: Just so I understand, the training would be for the chairs and the vice chairs, and then you would just expect that they would take responsibility for ensuring the rest of the committees understand their oversight responsibilities?

KC: Yes. And by the time you put chairs and vice chairs together, given the nature of our body, most of the members are getting exposure to it because they're in different settings. It's one thing to have a book. It's another thing to have Diane Boyer-Vine, our Legislative Counsel, say, "Here's how we can help you. And it may not have occurred to you to think to ask us to come and help." But just reach out and have Mac Taylor do the same thing, our [legislative] analyst, the auditor, to get people to realize [help is available].

CSGW: As a follow-up to that, how do you internally coordinate to avoid duplication of legislative oversight functions, especially when you have overlapping committee areas of jurisdiction?

KC: Under our rules, the Speaker has to sign off on oversight, and [the Rules Committee] also has a function. But as a practical matter we defer to the Speaker's shop. Oversight of this type is primarily a function of our standing committees. We have standing committees, and we also have select committees that are more folks on individual areas of subject. [Unless a select committee is assigned an oversight responsibility by the Speaker], they don't have an oversight function. So, the general rule is oversight's in the standing committees. It's not in the select committee. We do leave it to the Speaker to sort out the overlaps. I think in time, issues of apparent conflict may come up, and we'll just learn how to deal with it.

Buried in this resource is the idea that if you're undertaking an oversight activity and you're aware that another committee has been in that same area, you may want to take their findings or recommendations into account as you are organizing your work. And that's not to say you couldn't conceivably have conflicts, and even annoyance. But on behalf of the institution, better just to work those through as almost a growing pain.
The role of oversight is so fundamental to the lawmaker's responsibility. "Let a thousand flowers bloom," sort of thing. Better to have a lot of energy out there, and lots of lawmakers learning to get better and better at oversight, because that revives a very important art.

CSGW: How can constituent feedback on their concerns about a state program or application of a law help inform the oversight process?

KC: The fact is, oversight can be as informal as a member themselves doing their own letter to an agency and asking some questions. I would always emphasize that the power of oversight is really inherent in the constitutional scope of our office. So, any member can send a letter, can invite an agency to come over and visit with them about an issue. I think that may not be the first thought members have, but actually, over time, I would hope more and more members would realize that's a fundamental part of their office under the state constitution. But then, also, that can feed into conversations with the relevant committee chair. And so I think that our constituents out there may see things first, and ask themselves, "Why? You're telling me to do X and Y. Why?"

We ended up having a satisfactory conclusion, but my wife was a church bookkeeper—had the very funny experience about a year and a half ago of getting a letter from an agency informing her—it was kind of a boilerplate letter out of an agency that they wanted to review the church's bylaws. And then they reviewed the church's bylaws, and then they sent a letter. It was kind of a boilerplate letter, [which said] that, "In reviewing your bylaws, we are of the opinion that your bylaws lack a provision that should be present in your bylaws, and you should update your bylaws to include this provision," and really just very straight and to the point general communication from a state agency.

And it just so happens that our church was established back in the '50s. It's a little bit cumbersome to deal with the bylaws, that are somewhat archaic, and my wife, who has to manage this thing when it comes up, did what seemed to her a very straightforward thing. She said, "Well, it's such a pain in the rear to do this at our church. It'll help me to talk to the board to just explain why we have to do this. So, can you cite me to the authority for this, just because someone's going to ask?" This led to about an eight-month process of their internal lawyers, and then getting outside lawyers, and eventually they came back and said, "Well, you know, funny, we've been sending that letter for a decade, and no one ever asked us why. And there is no authority for that question."

So, things just acquire a life of their own sometimes.
CSGW: So, out west, in our thirteen western states, California is the only full-time legislature. Across the country there's probably six other states that are considered "full-time legislatures." Then from there, you have states that meet only once every other year, and others are in between. So, for states that are considering enhancing their oversight capabilities, what would you recommend to them, in looking at their staffing, their resources, and their structure to ensure that they would have effective oversight capabilities?

KC: I think a basic thing would be to try to have some focus on—based on their committee structure, have all the committees try to ask themselves, “OK, when we've just passed a budget, is there something in the budget that is of particular interest to a given committee?” Because there's already been a lot of work done. People thought through the whole budget process. So, you can almost take the budget process as an opportunity, if you don't have people making some complaint about a given program, to just say, “Did this budget touch our committee in some way? Is there some program that got tweaked? Or are we doing something with our spending in a given committee’s subject area?” Because maybe you can take advantage of some of the existing internal resources that are focused on the budget to start examining, based on your key committees, is there some follow up here we might want to do? That sort of gets into the budget area, but it's arguably within a programmatic area of the standing committee. I think that's something you can do.

One of the things this book talks about is this committee resource book—to just start thinking about, what seem to be the main bodies of law that are in the committee? That would be something, if you've got someone who's able to provide some professional support to interns, probably a college intern, but really even the right high school intern might be able to start putting together, what are the bodies of law the different committees are.

And if you can start doing that, that's kind of a one-time venture. You just start trying to figure out what seem to be the key bodies of law that the committees deal with, figure out when they were adopted in Wyoming, or Colorado, or Idaho. Because if you find a handful of bodies of law, then you just try to drill down a little bit, which is basically, you have someone who’s not familiar with code, just try to read it and figure out what agencies seem to be involved. Are there any reports?

There's some things you can do just to start getting a structured look at what's on the books in a given committee and you can do some of that to just figure out, “Okay, where might we want to go?”

I do think oversight ultimately would take some resources. But I think there’s probably ways to dig deeper than you are currently, that you could do with some degree of
efficiency. And I think if you get in the habit of always asking, after the budget goes, "What happened?" And if you are starting over a span of a two-year cycle to try to bring in interns and, for a key committee, start developing a resource book. And once you have that, that doesn't really change once you know the key statutes that are there. I would say that's some pretty basic stuff. Then, I suppose—

[Brief interruption]

KC: I think the quotes—I would say a member of the legislature in one of your states could make a one-page sheet about, "What is oversight?" They could pick out a handful of what they feel are outstanding quotes about why oversight's important. And they could make that something that they go and talk with their constituents about, and [give] a brief explanation of what oversight is, and then, some of the great quotes that are in there about oversight probably prompts their constituents to start asking questions about how programs work.

And while this thing represents a 360-view of how you might approach oversight, but that reflects my skills and gifts and interest in trying to support all of my colleagues to develop this skillset. You can approach it from the standpoint of what [your] constituents raise as an issue. And that has the virtue of—it focuses on very brass tacks kinds of issues that might interest people. And then, you're able to use that as sort of a starting point. What is the source of aggravation in people's lives, or consternation, or what's going on? And that's a way to get into oversight where you feel like you're actually responding to a constituent need, something that came up.

CSGW: Or that the agencies are following legislative intent, right?

KC: Yeah.

CSGW: Obviously, this is a great resource. One of the things I found very interesting is the nuts and bolts section that gives staff and members a checkoff list of, how do you deal with witnesses, level of preparation? Can you talk a little bit about the preparation aspects, whether it be informational hearings or investigatory hearings? What are some of the things that you think are valuable in that process?

KC: Well, I do think—and I want to say this comes out of my own personal experience doing this sort of work, this whole litany of things. I definitely think, trying to ask yourself, "What is it that we're trying to accomplish? What do we think is the legislative purpose that's being furthered? So, you focus the inquiry as best you can, and then you start brainstorming, "Okay, if that's the question, who might be the witnesses? Where are subject matter experts that we could reach out to help us develop that issue?"
You know, you want to get quality information for the members to understand what goes on. I've taken what the legislative purpose is. Once you have a general area of interest, then you start thinking about who would seem to know something about the subject? Then you start sending your staff out to just engage people in conversation. You're trying to figure out, "Okay, is that issue current? Is that issue actually a live one? Are there people that feel there's something there?"

And I would put some of that—this is a made-up word, but I like it, "presearch." You know, you engage in some conversation with people just to start—before you really start putting things together—start finding out who can tell me what the issue is in Montana, or Wyoming, or Idaho, or Nevada, or you name it, Arizona, New Mexico. What seems to be the issue? Then, you just start having a conversation with people. You get through that, and then you'll start figuring out who seems to know what.

Probably you'd try to figure out, where are lawyers that practice in this area that have a good reputation? And you do that for a while, and you'll start putting together a list of people that seem to say, "Well, I'm glad you brought that up. This is an issue. This is what I think." And you can start figuring out who seems to have perspective on it. What would they want to talk about? Does it seem that there's an issue worth following up?"

And when you've done that sort of work, then you can start developing an outline of what might go into a hearing. What panels of people would you use? What would they cover?

And as I say, this looks pretty complicated. But I would say you just scale it back to your situation. This is more of an idea roadmap. But you have your issue. You start talking to some people. You sit around as a chairman with your staff, and include your vice chair. What are our staff uncovering? How might we pursue that in a hearing? Do you want to use witness panels? What's each person's take on this? What would be the panels to put together? What questions would we want? Is there some sort of question we ought to be directing to a public agency? If a public agency's involved, you can always ask the question, Are they aware of any of the agency's published reports, or letters they've sent to people. That sort of has a bearing. You'd be surprised what people know if you actually ask them the question. And you may find that there's something out there that sheds light on the inquiry that you didn't actually know about. But someone says, "Oh, yeah, I've got a file folder on that."

I go through research, and the issue which is basically, are there different public agencies that might help us, and something like that, that could be: do you have a law school in this state, for example. Do you have a graduate school doing public policy? I mean, you can just think of what rocks you might turn over. Has there been some coverage in the big newspaper in the state, or something like that? Once you have a
general subject, you can start looking online and see what you find. You know, you still have to vet your sources. But there's an awful lot of stuff that you can turn up just by starting to ask some questions online.

CSGW: At the end [of the handbook] you have the California Research Bureau List of all of the recent oversight reports—a great number of them, on a variety of very important issues. What are some of the outcomes that you believe have resulted of such oversight reports, or one that you just say, you know, this report resulted in this change in policy in the state of California?

KC: Well, that's an interesting question. In recent years, we had a lot of oversight hearings associated with the new Oakland-San Francisco Bay Bridge and its construction issues. State Senator Mark DeSaulnier, who's now in the Congress, was instrumental in those. But I would say there was a lot of tightening up in the way CalTrans administers big projects, and the use of expert panels and other sorts of things to provide a way to get some informed insight on very complicated technology issues.

I also think—not so much bricks and mortar technology—but there's been a lot of oversight hearings looking at how we do high-risk projects, which are projects which are very large dollar value, and great complexity. So this could be retooling data systems and other sorts of things at the state level. I would say the focus on high-dollar projects goes back a long way, through many governors. And there has been a push to get more systematic about how large, complicated projects are managed, and there's actually emerged a manual on how you approach these sorts of things. I think oversight has helped push the state to regularize to a greater extent how they deal with very complex technology projects.

Another one, which is a fairly dramatic example. Going back many years now, you had questions about how a former state insurance commissioner was doing their work and the staff was doing their work. This was Commissioner Chuck Quackenbush. And there were extensive hearings conducted concerning that, which led, eventually, to a resignation as insurance commissioner. So, not everything is quite as dramatic as that.

My basic view of government is—which I articulated in Sproul Plaza when I was still a student at Cal—was people in government make decisions. Those decisions touch people's lives. If you can improve the quality of those decisions, you've improved life for people, which is sort of the basic object, I would say.

And I think the oversight function can be definitely fit into that category, if you can improve the quality of what's going on in government. And there's a lot of power in oversight in that a chair doesn't have to wait for a bill to be introduced by somebody, and roll into the committee. They can look at the full scope of their subject matter
jurisdiction and decide to take an interest in how a given area is being administered, and how the agency is doing, and just plunge into that.

So it affords a lot of opportunity for an energetic chair to support the stature of the legislature as a coequal branch of government. That is very much a part of why this was done.

CSGW: When you were working on this, was there any other state that you saw that gave you some modeling?

KC: I think New York has some good material. Seems to me [that] online I found some resources in the state of...I think it was Arkansas. I did look at some of the U.S. Congress material that's out there. I did look at resources from those three states just considering it. And then, a lot of it was just my sense as a lawyer of what's out there, what would be helpful. The whole. F.A.Q. idea was my idea. I asked the clerk's office to give me copies of all the House rules and statutes with a bearing on oversight. And as I described, I read them. And as I read them, I wrote questions. “What is it that I think this rule is answering? What's the question?” And that became my 50,000 feet down to the nitty gritty, and let them produce things. I will say, what is actually amazing about this basic resource, eventually, we greatly improved it by adding indexes, and Mukhtar was instrumental in making that happen as he has assisted with the training and the rollout that way.

But I had been asked in probably February of 2015 to see what might be done to provide training in oversight by the then Speaker and my predecessor as Rules chair. And I said I'd work on that.

Well, a variety of things transpired. I had staff I was working with, but it's pretty busy once you get into March and April. And so, we go to late June and pretty much nothing had happened. So, we went into summer recess. I think we probably went into recess on the morning of July 16th, which I think in 2015 would have been a Thursday.

So, I had a group of senior staff in my office that afternoon talking about this idea of putting together this resource book. And the basic book had been assembled by August 21st. It's basically a very senior group of people. And a big part of my method is I will ask people for things. And then they would send stuff back to me, and I always try to turn it around with my feedback very quickly, so I'm not the weak link in the chain—and I shouldn't put it that way—so I'm not slowing them down. Because my feeling is, that was the summer break, so if I give people speedy responses, they can manage their end of things. It is intrusive in their summer, but once we get into August, it was going to be craziness.
So, everything went through a few iterations. For example, we have provisions in there about how to work with the lawyers, and how they can support them. And what I would just say is our current Legislative Counsel realized that, herself included, there was a number of senior deputies that were involved in the Quackenbush process. And so, as sort of an outgrowth of just trying to work on this, she eventually got that group of people together to talk about “What are the ways we can help?” And so, I would say, institution-wide, we skimmed a lot of cream.

My recommendation for anybody who looks at this sort of thing is, just get a pad of paper. And if you’re the chair just go through and think about the things that interest you. And I would say no more than a page or two of ideas, and then just run with that. There’s never any belief that you’ve got to—that this is like a recipe book that you got to adhere to every little thing. It’s just designed to put a arrows in the quiver of a chair and that committee. And if you go through it, you’ll get some ideas that, “Well, we can try this or approach it this way.” Just do that.

CSGW: That's good. Somebody might look at that, and it's pretty daunting, but what you're saying is you don't have to have this huge project. You can just get started with …

KC: Yeah, well, that's what I say. The introduction, the definition, it's like, that's ten pages. And a lot of the other stuff, it's—you got that, you got the resource book, you got the nuts and bolts, you got those quotes. And I'm pretty darned sure that for most lawmakers, there'd be some quotes there that they'd love to use with their citizens about, "We're going to be doing more oversight, and let me give you a great quote on oversight and why that makes sense."

And it does make sense. Some of the dynamics we've seen emerge since November remind us that oversight by a legislative body is pretty darned important. It reminds us of what's involved in our oath of office. In fact, one of the great quotes, talking about quotes, almost my favorite, in one sense, is from a Republican Congressman, Mickey Edwards. "When it comes to oversight functions—of either oversight committees, or oversight subcommittees, or any other special task force; anything that is created to do oversight over the executive branch—take off your party hat, and put it in a drawer, and deal with this as somebody who has taken an oath of office, or worked for somebody's who's taken an oath of office, to carry out the mandates of the Constitution to function as the people's voice." Pretty good.

I'm very excited, obviously, about the subject matter. And I will say, I was doing oversight back in the '80s. Then, in '09, '10, I guess, I was working in the Senate, and they were interested in someone to organize thoughts on oversight. So, I sort of memorialized my thoughts back then. And so, I've sort of had a goal to get something online here in California on oversight. And with the addition of the indexes and things,
we've put it online on our simple webpage back in February, so anybody in the country that's interested in oversight can just go to our website.