

CRS Report for Congress

Received through the CRS Web

Ad Hoc Select Committees: Use in the House of Representatives

name redacted
Specialist on the Congress
Government and Finance Division

Summary

A select committee is generally created to focus on a specific, significant issue. Although not extensively used in recent years, select committees have been employed when jurisdiction over a subject matter is so fragmented or overlapping that no single committee has a clearly established leading jurisdictional authority. As such, the development of a coordinated approach may only be possible through the use of a select committee. An ad hoc select committee is a type of select panel that is usually formed for a single purpose to deal with a specific subject. This report describes the creation and membership of the four instances the House has formed ad hoc select committees. It will be updated as events warrant.

A select committee is a panel established by resolution for a special purpose, and usually for a limited time. Most select committees are created because jurisdiction over a subject matter is so fragmented or overlapping that no committee has exclusive responsibility over the subject. An ad hoc select committee is a type of select committee that can be formed for a single purpose to deal with a specific subject within a limited time frame. An ad hoc select committee may be granted the authority to report legislation, but the extent of that authority has been carefully defined in past uses.

The Committee Reform Amendments of 1974 authorized the Speaker to create ad hoc committees to consider measures or matters that fall within the jurisdiction of several standing committees. The Committee Reform Amendments also required that such ad hoc committees include members of the appropriate standing committees. Four ad hoc select committees have been created since 1974: the Ad Hoc Select Committee on the Outer Continental Shelf, the Ad Hoc Select Committee on Energy, the Select Committee on Homeland Security, and the Select Bipartisan Committee to Investigate the Preparation for and Response to Hurricane Katrina.

Ad Hoc Select Committee on the Outer Continental Shelf

Creation. The Ad Hoc Select Committee on the Outer Continental Shelf was created in the 94th Congress, on April 22, 1975, pursuant to H.Res. 412, and reauthorized in the 95th Congress pursuant to H.Res. 97, adopted on January 11, 1977. The committee officially expired on June 30, 1980. The panel was authorized to report to the House on specific legislation (revision of the Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act), thereby granting it legislative jurisdiction.

Membership. The panel was slated to have 16 members, although that was increased by the Speaker on May 6, 1975, to 19 members. The ratio reflected party strength in the chamber; the majority was granted 11 seats (increased to 19) and the minority was granted 5 seats (increased to 6). The resolution creating the panel also stipulated that the Speaker was to appoint members from the Committees on Interior and Insular Affairs (now Resources), Judiciary, and Merchant Marine and Fisheries (now predominantly in Resources). The reauthorization resolution in the 95th Congress specified that the Speaker should appoint other members from other committees “so as to insure the expeditious consideration and reporting of appropriate legislation.”

Ad Hoc Committee on Energy

Creation. The Ad Hoc Committee on Energy was created in the 95th Congress on April 21, 1977, pursuant to H.Res. 508. The panel was authorized to “consider and report to the House on the Message of the President dated April 20, 1977, (relating to comprehensive energy legislation and creation of a Department of Energy) on other messages or communications related thereto, and on any bill or resolution which the Speaker may sequentially refer thereto which the Speaker determines relates to the substance of the President’s Message: *Provided however*, that this paragraph shall not preclude initial reference to the ad hoc Committee of a bill or resolution incorporating the recommendations of the committees with the subject-matter jurisdiction over the substance of the President’s Message.” The Speaker imposed a time deadline for the standing committees to complete action.

Membership. The panel was slated to have 37 members, although that was increased to 40, pursuant to H.Res. 509. Reflecting party strength in the chamber, the majority party was granted 25 seats (increased to 27), and the minority was granted 12 seats (increased to 13). The Speaker was directed to appoint members “from those committees of the House which he determines have subject-matter jurisdiction over the substance of the President’s Message, and from such other committees as the Speaker may determine so as to insure the expeditious consideration and reporting of appropriate legislation.” Of the 40 members, 11 were from the Committee on Commerce (now Energy and Commerce), 10 from the Committee on Ways and Means, 5 from the Committee on Banking (now Financial Services), and the rest were appointed from the Committees on Government Operations (now Government Reform), Public Works (now Transportation and Infrastructure), Interior and Insular Affairs (now Resources), and Science and Technology (now Science).

Select Committee on Homeland Security

Creation. The Select Committee on Homeland Security was created in the 107th Congress, pursuant to H.Res. 449, adopted on June 19, 2002. The panel was authored to “develop recommendations and report to the House on such matters that relate to the establishment of a department on homeland security...” The resolution also provided that each standing or permanent select committee which received a referral of the bill to create a department of homeland security would submit the recommendation to the select committee. The Speaker imposed a July 12, 2002 time deadline for the standing and permanent select committees to complete action. During floor debate, the majority leader stated that the Speaker and Democratic leader would jointly propose to the Committee on Rules a resolution governing floor consideration of the select committee’s recommendations.

Membership. The panel had nine members, five majority members and four minority members. The members appointed represent the respective party’s elected leadership, minus the Speaker and Minority Leader.

Select Bipartisan Committee to Investigate the Preparation for and Response to Hurricane Katrina

Creation. The Select Committee to Investigate the Preparation for and response to Hurricane Katrina was created in the 109th Congress, pursuant to H.Res. 437, adopted on September 15, 2005. The panel was authorized to investigate and report to the House on 1) “the development, coordination, and execution by local, state, and federal authorities of emergency response plans and other activities in preparation for Hurricane Katrina; and 2) the local, state, and federal government response to Hurricane Katrina.” The Select Committee was to report membership by February 15, 2006.

Membership. The panel was to have 20 members, 11 majority members and 9 minority members. The minority did not appoint members.

EveryCRSReport.com

The Congressional Research Service (CRS) is a federal legislative branch agency, housed inside the Library of Congress, charged with providing the United States Congress non-partisan advice on issues that may come before Congress.

EveryCRSReport.com republishes CRS reports that are available to all Congressional staff. The reports are not classified, and Members of Congress routinely make individual reports available to the public.

Prior to our republication, we redacted names, phone numbers and email addresses of analysts who produced the reports. We also added this page to the report. We have not intentionally made any other changes to any report published on EveryCRSReport.com.

CRS reports, as a work of the United States government, are not subject to copyright protection in the United States. Any CRS report may be reproduced and distributed in its entirety without permission from CRS. However, as a CRS report may include copyrighted images or material from a third party, you may need to obtain permission of the copyright holder if you wish to copy or otherwise use copyrighted material.

Information in a CRS report should not be relied upon for purposes other than public understanding of information that has been provided by CRS to members of Congress in connection with CRS' institutional role.

EveryCRSReport.com is not a government website and is not affiliated with CRS. We do not claim copyright on any CRS report we have republished.