

UNITED STATES SENATOR • IOWA
CHUCK GRASSLEY
RANKING MEMBER • SENATE COMMITTEE ON FINANCE

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For Immediate Release
Friday, Jan. 18, 2002

Grassley Seeks Accountability for Hart Building Clean-up Cost

WASHINGTON – Sen. Chuck Grassley, ranking member of the Committee on Finance, today sought accountability for the cost of the multi-million dollar clean-up of the anthrax-contaminated Hart Senate Office Building. Grassley today learned the clean-up cost approached \$14 million two weeks ago and is likely to exceed that amount.

The text of his letters to the Environmental Protection Agency and the Senate Sergeant at Arms is below.

January 18, 2002

Christie Whitman
Administrator
Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20460

Dear Administrator Whitman,

I am writing to request information about the cost of and contracting process for the three-month long remediation of the Hart Senate Office Building.

My colleagues and I certainly appreciate all the hard work of your agency. We also realize the task poses many new challenges, such as the recent discovery of personal protective gear in the ceiling of the 6th floor, which has caused another delay in reopening.

I grant that this is a massive undertaking on your part, as evidenced by the small city of trailers and tents that have cropped up near the Hart building. And while I'm also confident that you take our safety very seriously, I am concerned about the fiscal integrity of this operation.

Also, my staff was informed by an EPA official today that the cost estimate through the end of December for the cleanup of all Capitol Hill buildings is \$14,000,000. The cleanup of the Hart building is 96 percent of that, or about \$13,440,000, which surely will increase by the time the

remediation is complete and the building reopened. My staff was also told that the Senate Sergeant-at-Arms office will be paying EPA for this.

As ranking member of the Senate Committee on Finance, my responsibilities include overseeing any government outlays of taxpayer funds. I am sure you agree that it's important to make sure the EPA is getting its money's worth on a project of such importance.

In a task of such large magnitude, costs can very easily escalate, and there can be a tendency to run up the tab.

My concern about accountability has also been heightened by two recent events involving your agency.

First, the EPA's ombudsman provides an important oversight and watchdog role. Trying to eliminate this position gives the appearance of attempting to silence a critic, especially after Robert Martin raised important questions about EPA's activities.

Second, I'm disturbed by revelations that EPA officials in New York City aren't following their own advice. They told worried residents near Ground Zero they only need clean their homes with wet rags and mops. At the same time, EPA officials hired a company to clean EPA downtown New York City offices for hazardous materials. It looks like the EPA isn't practicing what it preaches.

In light of these two situations, I fear that an attitude of accountability at the EPA may be slipping.

Therefore, I am requesting you provide the following information about the cost and contracts for cleaning the Hart Senate Office Building by Friday, January 25, 2002:

1) Describe the process by which these private companies were hired. Did a government agency circulate Requests for Proposals? Describe the circumstances of the bidding process, including whether companies were hired on a sole source basis, through a competitive process, or some other method. Provide the names of all companies who submitted bids for work but were not selected.

2) What specific funds have been allocated to pay for this? From what agency's budget will the funds come from? Is there any plan or discussion for one agency to seek compensation from another to pay all or some of the remediation costs?

3) The amount of money paid or promised to each of the private contractors involved in the cleanup. This data should include the specific service the contractor provided for the cleanup. Also include payments to any "support" contractors not directly involved in cleanup but who have been hired to support the operation. Your answer should contain this information for both the original contracts and any revisions.

A) The criteria for how the private contractors are paid: by hour, by contract, by task accomplished or some other method. Also include any performance measures they must meet to receive payment.

B) An estimate of food, housing and transportation payments to the contractors. How are these costs documented by the contractors, and how does the responsible government agency verify them?

C) A current estimate of the cost of remediating the Hart building, and an estimate for the final, total cost of the project.

4) The number and names of companies involved in the cleanup. Provide specific details on the type of service each contractor is providing for the remediation. Also, include basic company information such as location of corporate headquarters, approximate number of employees, and whether it is a publicly- or privately-held company. Also, include an approximation of how many employees from each company are involved in remediation.

5) Please provide a copy of any agreements or contracts between EPA and any Capitol agencies, such as the Office of the Senate Sergeant-at-Arms, that spell out who will ultimately pay for cleanup of the Hart buildings and other Capitol facilities.

I thank you in advance for your cooperation in this matter, and I look forward to receiving your reply by Friday, January 25, 2002.

Sincerely,

Charles E. Grassley
Ranking Member

CC via facsimile: (202) 224-7690
Alfonso Lenhardt
Senate Sergeant-at-Arms
Office of the Senate Sergeant-at-Arms
U.S. Capitol, S-151
Washington, DC 20510

January 18, 2002

Alfonso Lenhardt
Senate Sergeant-at-Arms
Office of the Senate Sergeant-at-Arms
U.S. Capitol, S-151
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Sergeant-at-Arms Lenhardt,

I am writing to request information about the cost of and contracting process for the three-month long remediation of the Hart Senate Office Building, and your office's role in the process.

My colleagues and I certainly appreciate all the hard work of your office in what is certainly a massive undertaking. While I trust that you and the EPA have our safety at heart, I am concerned

about this operation's fiscal integrity and level of oversight.

As ranking member of the Senate Committee on Finance, my responsibilities include overseeing any government outlays of taxpayer funds. I am sure you agree that it's important to make sure the EPA is getting its money's worth on a project of such importance.

My staff was informed by an EPA official today that the cost estimate through the end of December for the cleanup of all Capitol Hill buildings is \$14,000,000. The cleanup of the Hart building is 96 percent of that, or about \$13,440,000. My staff was also told that the Senate Sergeant-at-Arms office will be paying EPA for this.

First, is the information in the previous paragraph accurate as far as you know?

Second, if your office does plan to repay the EPA for this cost, will your office be requesting additional appropriations to pay for this, or are current funds sufficient?

Third, it is my understanding that the Environmental Protection Agency is handling the hiring and supervision of the contractors who are conducting the cleaning in the Hart building. What role does your office play in overseeing this process?

I thank you in advance for your cooperation in this matter. Please provide answers to my questions by Friday, January 25, 2002:

Sincerely,

Charles E. Grassley
Ranking Member

CC via facsimile: (202) 501-1540
Christie Whitman
Administrator
Environmental Protection Agency
1200 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20460