



SEN. CRAIG V. HICKMAN, SENATE CHAIR
REP. ANNE-MARIE MASTRACCIO, HOUSE CHAIR

MEMBERS:

SEN. JILL C. DUSON
SEN. BRADLEE T. FARRIN
SEN. STACEY GUERIN
SEN. JEFF TIMBERLAKE
SEN. MIKE TIPPING
REP. JOHN M. EDER
REP. ADAM LEE
REP. MICHAEL H. LEMELIN
REP. CHAD PERKINS
REP. HOLLY B. STOVER

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE
GOVERNMENT OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

MEETING SUMMARY
January 23, 2026

Call to Order

The Chair, Senator Hickman, called the Government Oversight Committee to order at approximately 9:37 a.m.

ATTENDANCE

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| Senators: | Senator Hickman, Senator Duson, Sen. Farrin, Senator Guerin, Senator Timberlake, and Senator Tipping |
| Representatives: | Representative Mastraccio, Representative Eder, Representative Lee, Representative Lemelin, Representative Perkins, and Representative Stover |
| Legislative Staff: | Peter Schleck, Director, OPEGA Jennifer Henderson, OPEGA Senior Analyst Kari Hojara, OPEGA Senior Analyst Jennifer Greiner, OPEGA Administrative Secretary/GOC Clerk |

Introduction of Committee Members

The members of the Committee introduced themselves.

New Business

To watch this meeting - the recorded Live Stream can be viewed here: [January 23, 2026 GOC Meeting](#)

Meeting Summary – January 9, 2026

A copy of this Meeting Summary can be found here: [January 9, 2026, GOC Meeting Summary](#)

The Committee accepted and approved this meeting summary.

Consideration of OPEGA Tax Team Special Project Scope

Sen. Hickman moved to the next agenda item, further consideration of an OPEGA Special Project regarding transparency for business incentives. Sen. Hickman invited OPEGA Senior Analyst, Jen Henderson to share with the Committee the Proposed Scope for the Special Project and answer any questions members might have.

The Proposed Scope may be found here: [OPEGA Proposed Scope for Special Project: Improving Transparency for Business Incentives](#)

Rep. Mastraccio asked if the Dirigo Business Incentive data requirements which are in legislation, is important to compare with the transparency of other incentives.

Ms. Henderson stated the Dirigo Business Incentive Report, which is due out towards the end of 2026, could be important to review within this Special Project as it does have some different data requirements and collection model than other incentives OPEGA has come across in other evaluations done on incentives.

After further Committee discussion regarding the Scope and timing of the OPEGA Special Project, Sen. Hickman asked the Committee what it would like to do in this matter.

Motion and Committee Vote

Rep. Perkins made a motion to accept the Proposed Scope for the OPEGA Special Project to identify opportunities to increase transparency for business incentive data.

The motion was seconded by Rep. Mastraccio

After further Committee discussion the vote was taken.

The motion was unanimously approved by all members who voted. (Eleven members were present for the vote, one member was absent at the time of the vote.)

Possible Consideration of Taxation Committee Request for 30-Day Limited Analysis Review

Sen. Hickman turned to the next item on the agenda, Possible Consideration of Taxation Committee Request for 30-Day Limited Analysis Review.

Sen. Hickman stated the Taxation Committee has sent a memo requesting that this Committee approve a project for OPEGA to complete. Sen. Hickman stated this is a new process, and this is the first request from the Taxation Committee for a 30-Day Review. Sen. Hickman invited Kari Hojara, OPEGA Senior Analyst, to answer any questions the Committee might have about this process.

The memo from the Taxation Committee may be found here: [Request for 30-Day Project Memo](#)

Rep. Mastraccio asked Ms. Hojara to explain the process for a 30-Day Project.

Ms. Hojara stated that if the Committee approves this request, then OPEGA would communicate that approval to the Taxation Committee and that the 30-Day Project has begun. Ms. Hojara stated the finished project would be presented to this Committee as well as the Taxation Committee by February 20, 2026.

Ms. Hojara reviewed the 30-Day Limited Analysis Project Guide; this guide may be found here: [30-Day Limited Analysis Project Guide](#)

Ms. Hojara stated that the scope of this request, accessing readily available information, fits the parameters of a 30-Day Project.

Motion and Committee Vote

With no further Committee discussion, Sen. Hickman asked the Committee if there was a motion on this matter.

Rep. Lee made the motion to approve the request of the Taxation Committee and direct OPEGA to do this 30-Day Limited Analysis Project.

The motion was seconded by Rep. Mastraccio.

The motion was unanimously approved by all members who voted. (Eleven members were present for the vote, one member was absent at the time of the vote.)

Request for OPEGA Review of Concerns About MaineCare Program Integrity

Sen. Hickman turned to the next item on the agenda, a letter submitted by Committee colleagues, Sen. Timberlake, Sen. Farrin and Sen. Guerin, requesting an OPEGA review concerning MaineCare Program Integrity. Sen. Hickman invited those members to make any opening statements.

Sen. Hickman stated that before Sen. Farrin presents the request, Sen. Hickman welcomed a comment from Sen. Duson.

Sen. Duson stated she wanted to share with the Committee that she has a family member who is employed by Gateway Community Services Maine, which she stated is not the organization highlighted in recent fraud allegations. Sen. Duson stated that Gateway Community Services Maine is a nonprofit organization that is independent from the for-profit LLC with a similar name. Sen. Duson stated that Gateway Community Services Maine is governed by a volunteer-led board of directors and operates in full compliance with federal and state law, and works to strengthen the mental, physical, civic, and economic health of communities across southern and central Maine through wellness services, youth leadership programming and community hubs in Portland and Lewiston. Sen. Duson stated that she is very proud of the work her family member does.

Sen. Hickman asked Sen. Duson if Gateway Community Services of Maine has any contracts with the State of Maine.

Sen. Duson stated that as far as she knows, Gateway Community Services of Maine does not have any contracts with MaineCare.

Sen. Hickman asked Sen. Duson if she has received any financial benefit from Gateway Community Services of Maine.

Sen. Duson stated that she has not received any financial benefit from Gateway Community Services of Maine.

Sen. Farrin read the request letter into the record. That letter may be found here: [Request for OPEGA Review from Sen. Timberlake, Sen. Farrin, and Sen. Guerin](#)

Sen. Hickman asked Sen. Farrin if he had viewed the information regarding the presentation that appeared before the Health and Human Services Committee (HHS) last week, which was sent to Committee Members last week. Information regarding that presentation may be found here:

- [DHHS Commissioner Statement to HHS Regarding Fraud January 15, 2026](#),
- [DHHS Fraud Presentation Slides for HHS January 15, 2026](#).

Sen. Farrin stated that he had received the presentation information. Sen. Farrin also stated that he, as well as Sen. Timberlake and Sen. Guerin, have received information of additional concerns regarding \$45.6 million in improper Medicaid payments for autism services. Sen. Farrin stated this is an ongoing concern and believes the Committee should look into the alleged fraud. Sen. Farrin also voiced a concern about the number of current investigators, wondering if that is an appropriate number and are controls in place within the Department to administer these large programs.

Sen. Hickman stated that the allegations of interpreter fraud regarding foreign test takers are alleged and so far, unproven, and the reference to Gateway in the letter is a speculation. Sen. Hickman reminded the members that this Committee deals with facts and evidence and not insinuation.

Sen. Timberlake stated that if the Committee voted for OPEGA to do a review on matters raised in the request, the report would reveal whether the concerns raised in the request letter were true.

Sen. Hickman asked members if there were any questions regarding the request for Sen. Farrin before opening up the Committee discussion on this matter.

Sen. Tipping asked Sen. Farrin if there are any elements of the request that are not currently being investigated.

Sen. Farrin stated that OPEGA would be able to gather more information on the concerns in the request, adding that the Department has not responded to requests for additional information on these concerns.

Sen. Tipping stated in order to assign OPEGA this request, he would like to seem some evidence of wrongdoing by the Department or a big unanswered question, which he does not see in the request. Sen. Tipping asked Sen. Farrin for a specific concern, and evidence of that concern not being investigated.

Sen. Farrin stated that the report regarding the \$46 million in payments from the Department of Health and Human Services is a large concern.

Sen. Tipping stated that there should be a specific concern brought to the Committee.

Rep. Lemelin stated that one item that is not being investigated is the whistleblower, John Morin, and the concerns of interpreter fraud happening during tests for driver's license and permits.

Rep. Lee stated that he sees meaningful concerns within the request letter; the alleged interpreter fraud, the concerns in the letter regarding Gateway is currently being investigated, and the concerns regarding procurement. Rep. Lee would like to know specifically what OPEGA would be asked to investigate.

Sen. Farrin stated that, as in previous requests to the Committee, he would like Director Schleck to ask the Committee questions to get a defined scope.

Sen. Tipping stated that he does not see a specific investigation request in the letter presented to the Committee at this time, noting that if a specific concern, that is not already being investigated, is brought to the Committee, then the Committee should look into it.

Sen. Farrin stated he believes there is a specific request within the letter regarding Medicaid overpayments or fraudulent Medicaid payments.

Rep. Stover stated she has reviewed the request letter and asked whether the Health and Human Services Committee (HHS) has had the opportunity to review the request letter before it was brought to this Committee and has that committee done any work on this matter.

Sen. Farrin stated that the HHS Committee did have a presentation from DHHS on Fraud, noting he is not sure if the HHS Committee has completed their work on this matter.

Rep. Stover stated she would like the committee of jurisdiction to weigh in on this request.

With no further questions directly for Sen. Farrin, Sen. Hickman moved on to Committee discussion of this request letter and invited Director Schleck to answer any questions.

Sen. Hickman asked Director Schleck to review with the Committee and the public where the matter on alleged interpreter fraud is after the meeting this Committee had with the Office of the Secretary of State.

Director Schleck stated that the Chairs of this Committee have invited the representatives of the Secretary of State who were before this Committee on December 17, 2025, to come to the February 13, 2026, meeting. Director Schleck stated that in a letter from the Chairs, all the questions this Committee asked during the December 17, 2025, meeting were sent to the Office of the Secretary of State. That letter may be found here: [Letter to Secretary of State from GOC](#)

Sen. Hickman asked the members to review the letter with the questions, and if Committee Members have any concerns or additional questions for the Secretary of State's Office to follow up.

Sen. Hickman asked Director Schleck what OPEGA has done, as directed by the Committee regarding state procurement.

Director Schleck stated there were a series of meetings in the 131st Legislature, which included a request for an OPEGA evaluation of the State's procurement services for goods and services. Director Schleck stated this included meetings with the Department of Administrative and Financial Services (DAFS) and ultimately the Committee assigned reviews to OPEGA with aspects of procurement through case studies, for example the Office of Cannabis Policy: Identification and Management of Conflicts of Interest in Procurement, the State Oversight of Juniper Ridge Landfill, and the Timeliness of Child Care Payments by DHHS for Children in Protective Custody.

Sen. Hickman asked Director Schleck if other than the Committee directing OPEGA to review the conflict-of-interest case study with Office of Cannabis Policy (OCP), and Juniper Ridge, did the Committee direct OPEGA to do any broad look at single-source contract process.

Director Schleck stated that the Committee has not directed OPEGA to review broadly the single-source contract process.

Sen. Hickman stated that the State Auditor has presented this Committee with the findings from the most recent Annual Single Audit, noting that the State Auditor had stated there was no fraud found during the Audit. Sen. Hickman asked if the Committee was satisfied with that statement or if the Committee would like another look.

Sen. Timberlake stated that the State Auditor did note deficiencies in the state's procurement process. Sen. Timberlake stated that new information is coming out, including the report released today about the \$46 million dollars. Sen. Timberlake believes this should be investigated to determine how and where money is being spent and believes there are a lot of questions the people of the State would like answered.

Sen. Farrin stated that the State Auditor's role is strictly auditing, to point out inconsistencies and areas of concern, not to fix issues. Sen. Farrin stated he would like this Committee to look at the issues found in the

Single Audit Report that was referenced in the request letter, such as the sole-source contracts. Sen. Farrin also asked, regarding committees of jurisdiction, what is being done to follow-up the Single Audit Report.

Sen. Hickman asked Sen. Farrin if he is asking OPEGA to gather more information regarding the 16 sole-source non-competitive procurement actions lacking documentation showing that a ‘reasonable investigation’ had been conducted to explore alternatives, ignoring an intentional safeguard under state law, or is he asking for the Committee to ask OPEGA to do an evaluation of every sole-source non-competitive procurement contract.

Sen. Farrin stated that he believes a starting point for OPEGA could be with the 16 sole-source procurement actions mentioned in the request letter.

Rep. Perkins stated his background is in law enforcement as a detective in a department and he handled all the major crimes. Rep. Perkins noted that when an investigation of a crime is started, often investigators begin finding other crimes, which he believes is happening now in the State of Maine as there are more allegations of fraud, with multiple whistleblowers alleging this type of behavior, adding there may be a systemic issue. Rep. Perkins stated he does not want to narrow the scope of a review that may hinder OPEGA from being able to look into additional areas of concern that may arise during the review so that the facts may be known.

Sen. Hickman stated that both the State Auditor and OPEGA staff, while doing an evaluation of any government program or agency, if something they come across does not look right they will say something, and if anything is discovered that appears to be criminal that will be reported to the appropriate prosecuting authorities. Sen. Hickman noted that Sen. Tipping stated there are already criminal investigations of fraud occurring, and he would not want to duplicate that work.

Sen. Hickman asked Rep. Perkins, regarding the person that reported overpaying for interpreting services as early as 2020, would Rep. Perkins be interested in having the Committee direct OPEGA to ask DHHS questions of what was known, when they knew, and when was something done about it.

Rep. Perkins stated he believes that the heart of the question is who knew what when and what has been done since then. Rep. Perkins stated he would be very interested in knowing the answers to those questions.

Rep. Lee stated the request letter appears to have three areas of concern which are the alleged Bureau of Motor Vehicles interpreter fraud, procurement issues, and MaineCare fraud. Rep. Lee stated on the procurement concern, the potential question is why the 16 procurement actions were missing documentation and what is lacking in the process that would cause that.

Rep. Stover stated she worked for the State for 25 years in DHHS working on the behavioral and developmental services and that there had been investigations of fraud and at least once instance where a whole agency was put under receivership. Rep. Stover stated that it would be helpful for the Committee to understand what happens when fraud is found within any agency and what is the recovery process.

Sen. Hickman asked Rep. Stover if she believes it would be helpful for DHHS to present to this Committee the presentation regarding fraud which was presented to the HHS committee.

Rep. Stover stated having DHHS present to this Committee what happens when fraud is found would be helpful. Rep. Stover also stated that when findings are found during an audit, the agency must complete a plan of correction, and she would like to know what happens if the plan of correction is not sufficient.

Sen. Tipping stated an actionable item within the request letter is the question of the frequency of program integrity and compliance audits that DHHS has conducted, noting he would like this included in the request. Sen. Tipping also stated that regarding the general question of who knew what when, he is unsure of the who and what the Committee is talking about in terms of answering the question and would like this specified.

Rep. Lemelin stated that he is on the HHS committee and noted the DHHS presentation to that committee was to inform those members that DHHS does have a fraud division as well as breakdown of that fraud division. Rep. Lemelin stated that presentation did not address what DHHS is doing regarding Gateway or whether there is other Medicaid fraud, and he has additional questions and concerns for DHHS.

Sen. Timberlake stated that the State Auditor, while he did discuss the issues found in the audit, made it clear that his office does not dig deep into agency books. Sen. Timberlake also stated that DHHS has seven investigators to investigate their own department adding that he believes it is important for an independent investigation to determine if there is any fraud. Sen. Timberlake added that during the investigation, OPEGA would report back if fraud was or was not found. Sen. Timberlake stated he believes it is this Committee's job to give the people of the State faith that the Legislature is doing its job to make sure whether or not fraud is happening.

Sen. Guerin stated she would like the Committee to thoroughly investigate the 16 sole-source procurement actions with a scope that allows OPEGA to look further if something else shows up during the investigation.

Sen. Hickman turned the discussion back to the letter sent to the Office of the Secretary of State with the list of questions the Committee asked during the December 17, 2025, meeting regarding alleged interpreter fraud. Sen. Hickman stated that he believes, unless there is objection, that the Committee does not need to take any action on this item at this time as the representatives of the Secretary of State will be returning to the Committee to answer those questions.

Rep. Mastraccio stated that if the Committee is having people come before them to answer questions and provide information, then the Committee should wait for that information before making further decisions on that matter.

After further discussion, and with no objections Sen. Hickman turned to the concern in the letter regarding the sole-source contracts that lacked documentation showing that a reasonable investigation had been conducted to explore alternatives, ignoring an intentional safeguard under state law.

Rep. Lemelin stated he would support an OPEGA review of the 16 sole-source contracts mentioned in the letter if the OPEGA was given permission to look beyond the 16 sole-source contracts if they noticed other potential issues.

Sen. Tipping stated he believes the two specific requests, that are not broad requests, in the letter regard the 16 sole-source contract issue as well as question of the frequency of program integrity compliance audits,

adding that he would like the Committee to ask for information on these two items and then determine next steps after the information is received.

Director Schleck stated that if the Committee does decide to assign OPEGA any or all of these items for review, he referenced, from the Committee Rules, that the Committee may vote to assign specific reviews to be priority over other approved reviews with a 2/3 majority vote.

Sen. Timberlake stated he would approve of OPEGA beginning the evaluation with the 16 sole-source contracts mentioned in the letter and also give the Director permission to expand the evaluation if he sees additional concerns.

Sen. Hickman stated the normal process of the Committee is to assign OPEGA a review with a vote, the Director then comes back to the Committee with a scope for the review for Committee approval.

Rep. Lee stated that he agrees the Director would not be limited to just the 16 cases, adding the question for this matter would be why the reasonable investigation documentation is missing for these cases and in that process, he believes OPEGA would find out if there is a systemic issue that is causing that.

Sen. Tipping stated that in order to get answers sooner, the Committee might want to request that the Department answer questions on this matter before deciding to assign it to OPEGA.

Following further Committee discussion, Sen. Hickman asked Director Schleck for his thoughts on the matter.

Director Schleck stated that the procurement concerns are a separate matter from the question of the frequency of program integrity compliance audits under MaineCare. Director Schleck asked whether the Committee would like to invite the Program Integrity office about their general process and frequency or have OPEGA gather this information for the Committee.

Sen. Hickman asked the Committee members if they would like to invite officials from DAFS to a future meeting to answer questions the Committee has on the matter of procurement. Sen. Hickman also reminded the members of two powers the Committee has available which are the power of subpoena, and the power of putting people under oath when sitting in front of the Committee, which could be used if questions are not getting answered.

Sen. Hickman stated that with a motion, the Committee could ask the Director to scope out a potential evaluation of single source, non-competitive contracts using the 16 most egregious ones as a start with the permission to go above and beyond that should it be necessary and schedule a future meeting where officials from DAFS appear to answer Committee questions.

Sen. Duson suggested that it could be useful to have an overview from the Department of its audit function and how it is used to provide a context for all of the topics the Committee might be going forward with, as well as provide the Committee with more information to ask more pointed questions of the Department. Sen. Duson stated that her understanding of the discussion so far is the issue is not the audit but rather how the resources of the government are managed while providing services to constituents.

Motion and Committee Vote

With no further Committee discussion Sen. Hickman stated he would entertain a motion.

Sen. Farrin made the motion to direct OPEGA to begin an evaluation of the sole-source non-competitive procurement process with an initial focus on the 16 that lacked documentation showing that a reasonable investigation had been conducted to explore alternatives, ignoring an intentional safeguard under state law, and that the Chairs, in the next Chair's meeting, will determine the best Committee meeting to invite officials of DAFS for the members to ask questions directly regarding this matter even as OPEGA is developing a scope of work for this review.

The motion was seconded by Rep. Stover.

After Committee discussion on the motion, the vote was taken.

The motion was unanimously approved by all members.

Sen. Hickman next asked what the Committee members would like to do on the matter of DHHS and Medicaid.

Rep. Mastraccio stated she would like to invite the Medicaid Fraud Department to answer Committee questions before taking further action. Rep. Mastraccio also suggested asking OPEGA to gather initial information, to learn more about what is happening regarding this matter before asking OPEGA to do an investigation.

Sen. Farrin stated he agrees with Rep. Mastraccio and would also like the Director to prepare a scope in the event that the Committee, after hearing from the Medicaid Fraud Department, decides to move forward with directing OPEGA to start a review.

Rep. Perkins stated, regarding his earlier comment on who knew what when, he is concerned that it appears from the request letter, that there was fraud that the State may have been alerted to which was overlooked. Rep. Perkins stated whether the fraud being overlooked was intentional or from incompetence is the core of the issue, and he would like to know if there was fraud, if there was fraud was it addressed, and if it was not addressed why not.

Sen. Hickman asked Rep. Perkins if he would be satisfied having the Medicaid Fraud Department come and answer those questions directly.

Rep. Perkins stated he does not believe that would be sufficient.

Sen. Tipping asked Rep. Perkins what allegation of fraud, that is not being investigated, is Rep. Perkins concerned with.

Rep. Perkins stated that there was an allegation of fraud made in 2020 that as far as he is aware of, was not addressed, but would have to look for the specific information about what that allegation was specifically.

Rep. Perkins stated that at this time, a specific allegation is not known but there are concerns that should be looked into to determine if there is or is not existing fraud.

Sen. Tipping stated that without a specific allegation of fraud that is not being addressed, the next step of asking the Medicaid Fraud Department questions is appropriate.

Sen. Hickman stated the Committee will ask the Fraud Investigation Unit from DHHS to come before the Committee and explain their process. Sen. Hickman noted that there was an article that a federal investigator pointed out to the agency that there seemed to be a pattern of overbilling for interpreter services and the question in the article was if anything was done about the concerns raised in 2020. Sen. Hickman noted that DHHS has suspended payments due to an audit that revealed overbilling. Sen. Hickman stated he would like to hear directly from those that made the decision to stop payments and why that made that decision before asking OPEGA to create a scope of work on this issue. Sen. Hickman also stated that it is clear that criminal investigations are currently ongoing that are outside of the scope of this Committee. Sen. Hickman stated he would also like to ask the Fraud Investigation Unit questions about pharmaceutical fraud.

Sen. Timberlake stated he is very concerned that the Federal Government will take back millions of dollars due to improper Medicaid payments which will affect all the programs the state administers. Sen. Timberlake stated he wants to get to the bottom of where the fraud is sooner than later, and he wants the Director to have everything needed to look into this to determine if there is or is not fraud in the state.

Sen. Hickman asked Director Schleck to compile all the articles that have been published recently regarding alleged fraud and the investigations that may or may not be happening for the Committee to determine who is reporting it, is there evidence, is it speculation or opinion.

Director Schleck stated he would like to include reports on this topic along with the news articles.

Sen. Hickman asked the Committee if inviting the Fraud Investigation Unit of the DHHS to come before the Committee to answer questions before making the decision to do anything further on the matter of DHHS and Medicaid.

Sen. Timberlake stated he would agree with Sen. Hickman if this were on the agenda for the next Committee meeting.

OPEGA Director's Report

With no further discussion on this matter, Sen Hickman next asked Director Schleck to present any other matters for the Committee.

Director Schleck stated the next meeting is tentatively scheduled for February 13, 2026. Subject to the Chair's approval of agenda items, Director Schleck stated that the representatives of the Secretary of State are invited back for the February 13th meeting, as well as invitations to those the Committee would like to have before them.

Sen. Hickman asked Committee members, based on today's conversation, if they have specific questions for those invited to come before the Committee to send those questions in writing to the Chairs, also noting that the Chairs may compile a preliminary letter so that those invited may know what will be asked so they may be prepared.

Director Schleck stated that for the February 27, 2026, Committee meeting, he anticipates presenting the OPEGA report on *Timeliness of Payments by DHHS for Foster Children in Child Care*.

Sen. Timberlake, with permission from the chair, read a letter into record which he submitted to OPEGA yesterday evening. That letter may be found here: [Letter to GOC from Sen. Timberlake](#)

Sen. Hickman stated, with no objection from Sen. Timberlake, that this matter would be taken up at the next Committee Meeting.

Sen. Tipping stated that one of his constituents was taken by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement yesterday noting this individual has a work permit and no criminal record, was brought to another state and eventually released. Sen. Tipping stated that he would like to have the Committee invite the Department of Public Safety to present a briefing on what is being done to protect Maine people's rights and safety. Sen. Tipping stated he has submitted a letter to the Senate Chair on this matter.

Sen. Hickman stated the Chair's have received Sen. Tipping's letter and will take it under consideration and arrange to have the Department of Public Safety at a future meeting.

Adjourn

With no further discussion, Sen. Hickman adjourned the Government Oversight Committee, without objection, at approximately 11:36 am.