# Contents

**Preface**

**Part I: Principles, Practices and Pragmatics of Legislative Inquiry**

**Chapter 1 – Introduction: Updating the Study of Legislative Inquiry and Adapting it to the Changed Climate of Congressional Oversight** ................................................................. 1

**Chapter 2 – The Institutional Framework of Congressional Oversight: Purposes, Powers, Limitations and Practicalities** ................................................................. 5
  
  A. The Purposes and Powers of Congressional Oversight ................................................................. 5
  B. The Power of Congress over Executive Branch Agencies ................................................................. 6
  C. Barriers to Effective Oversight ...................................................................................................... 7
  D. How to Conduct Effective Oversight ............................................................................................ 10

**Chapter 3 – The Powers and Tools Available to Congress for Conducting Investigative Oversight** ................................................................................................................. 13
  
  A. Congress's Power to Investigate ........................................................................................................ 13
    1. The Breadth of the Investigatory Power ......................................................................................... 13
    2. The Limits of the Investigatory Power ......................................................................................... 15
  B. Congress's Ability to Obtain Documents and Witness Testimony .................................................. 15
    1. The Subpoena Power ..................................................................................................................... 15
      a. The Power to Issue a Subpoena .................................................................................................. 15
      b. The Permissible Scope of a Subpoena ...................................................................................... 16
      c. The Necessary Legislative Purpose for a Subpoena ................................................................. 17
      d. The Pertinency of the Subpoena to the Investigation ............................................................... 18
    2. Staff Deposition Authority .............................................................................................................. 18
      a. Express Authorization of Staff Deposition Authority Is Necessary ........................................... 18
      b. The Utility of Staff Depositions .................................................................................................. 19
    3. Congressional Grants of Immunity .................................................................................................. 20
      a. A Committee May Override a Witness' Claim of Self-Incrimination Privilege ............................. 20
      b. How a Committee Grants Immunity .......................................................................................... 20
      c. Scope of the Immunity Granted .................................................................................................. 21
      d. Impact of Immunity Grants on Future Prosecutions ................................................................. 21
      e. Frequency of Issuance of Immunity Grants ................................................................................. 23
    4. Special Investigatory Powers Authorized in Extraordinary Inquiries ............................................... 23
  C. Enforcement of the Investigation Power .......................................................................................... 23
    1. Courts Have Recognized the Need for Effective Enforcement Mechanisms ................................. 23
    2. The Inherent Contempt Power ...................................................................................................... 24
      a. The Source, Nature, and Objectives of Inherent Contempt ....................................................... 24
      b. Rights of a Person Cited for Contempt ..................................................................................... 24
      c. Fines as an Alternative to Imprisonment for Inherent Contempt .............................................. 24
      d. Inherent Contempt Does Not Require Judicial Enforcement Assistance .................................. 25
      e. The Perceived Limitations of the Inherent Contempt Mechanism .......................................... 25
Chapter 4 – The Process of Conducting Investigative Oversight Proceedings ....................................................... 33

A. The Nature of an Investigative Hearing ............................................................................................................. 33

B. Jurisdiction and Authority .................................................................................................................................. 33

C. Initiation of an Investigation .............................................................................................................................. 34

1. Committees and Chairpersons Have Broad Authority to Commence Proceedings ........................................... 34

   a. Requiring Votes, Concurrence, or Consultation before an Investigation ......................................................... 34

2. Preliminary Inquiries Can Be Protective of Important Evidence ........................................................................ 35

D. Rules Applicable to Hearings ............................................................................................................................ 36

1. Committees Must Adopt and Publish Their Rules of Procedure ....................................................................... 36

2. Advance Notice of Hearings Must Be Published .................................................................................................. 36

3. Quorum Requirements for Certain Investigative Actions .................................................................................... 36

4. Closed Sessions ....................................................................................................................................................... 36

5. Audio and Visual Coverage of Open Hearings .................................................................................................... 36

E. Conduct of Hearings .............................................................................................................................................. 37

1. Opening Procedures .............................................................................................................................................. 37

2. Rights of Witnesses and the Role of Counsel ........................................................................................................ 37


4. Effect on Investigative Proceedings of a Final Adjournment of a Chamber at the End of a Legislative Session .... 38

Chapter 5 – The Breadth of Congress’s Authority to Access Information in Our Scheme of Separated Powers ........ 39

A. Executive Privilege .................................................................................................................................................. 39

1. The Presidential Communication Privilege: A Summary of the State of the Law ................................................ 39

2. Evolution of the Law of Executive Privilege and Helpful Guidance from the Cases .......................................... 40

   a. Nixon and Post-Watergate Rulings .................................................................................................................... 40
b. *Espy* ................................................................................................................................. 41
   i. The Presidential Communications Privilege Is Constitutionally Based, but Qualified, and
      May Be Overcome by a Substantial Showing of Need and Unavailability .................. 41
   ii. The President Need Not Have Seen or Known of the Documents in Question, but They
      Must Have Been Received by a Close Adviser; Agency Head Review Is Not Sufficient ... 42
   iii. The Privilege Applies Only to the “Quintessential and Non-Delegable” Powers of the
        President ......................................................................................................................... 42

c. *Judicial Watch* .................................................................................................................. 43
   i. Agency Documents Not Solicited or Received by Close Presidential Advisers Are Not
      Covered by the President’s Privilege .............................................................................. 43

d. *Loving* ............................................................................................................................... 44

e. *Miers* .................................................................................................................................. 44
   i. A Presidential Claim of Privilege Cannot Provide Absolute Immunity to Congressional
      Subpoenas ......................................................................................................................... 45

3. The Essential Elements of the Presidential Communications Privilege ............................. 45

4. Presidents are Subject to Compulsory Process: Presidential Appearances before Judicial
   Tribunals and Congressional Committees ......................................................................... 45

B. Presidential Claims of Constitutional Authority to Limit Congressional Access to National
   Security-Related Material .................................................................................................... 46

1. Congress’s Constitutionally Based Oversight and Investigative Prerogatives Apply in Full
   Measure to Executive Action Regarding National Security, Intelligence, and Foreign Affairs ......................................................................................................................... 46
   a. The AT&T Case ............................................................................................................. 47

2. The Executive Branch’s Claims of Legal Authority to Withhold National Security Information from Congress ............................................................................................................. 48

3. Congressional Notification Requirements and Procedures ............................................. 49
   a. The National Security Act of 1947 ............................................................................... 49
   b. “Gang of Four” and “Gang of Eight” Notification in Practice ....................................... 50
   c. Committee Security Procedures .................................................................................. 51
   d. The Intelligence Committees’ Jurisdiction Is Not Exclusive ......................................... 52
      i. The NSA Surveillance Program Example .................................................................. 52

4. Congress’s Role in Classification and Declassification .................................................... 53
   a. Congress May Establish Classification Standards and Procedures by Law, but Has Imposed
      Few Restraints on Executive Secrecy ......................................................................... 53
   b. Procedures for Publication of Classified Material ........................................................ 54
   c. Declassification of the Executive Summary of the Senate “Torture Report” ................. 54

C. Fifth Amendment Privilege against Self-Incrimination ................................................... 55

1. The Privilege Is Applicable to Congressional Investigations but Is Subject to Established Limitations ................................................................................................................................. 55
2. No Special Combination of Words Is Necessary for Invocation ....................................... 56
3. Grounds for the Assertion of the Privilege ....................................................................... 56
4. The Necessary Elements for a Contempt Citation ............................................................ 57
5. Waiver of the Privilege ...................................................................................................... 57
   a. The Contempt of Congress Citation of Lois Lerner ..................................................... 57
6. Congress May Grant a Witness Immunity to Obtain Testimony ..................................... 59

D. First Amendment ............................................................................................................... 59

1. The First Amendment Is Applicable to Congressional Investigations .............................. 59
2. The Degree of Protection Afforded by the First Amendment Is Uncertain.............................................. 59
3. Committees Often Tread Lightly When First Amendment Rights Are Implicated ................................ 60
E. Fourth Amendment ......................................................................................................................... 61
1. The Fourth Amendment Applies to Congress .................................................................................... 61
2. The Courts Have Given Congress Wide Latitude in This Area ....................................................... 62
3. The Burden Is on the Witness to Inform a Committee of Objections to a Subpoena.................... 62
4. Applicability of the Fourth Amendment’s Exclusionary Rule Is Uncertain .................................. 62
F. Sixth Amendment .......................................................................................................................... 63

Chapter 6 – Common Law Privileges in Court Do Not Shield Witnesses from Complying with Committee Information Demands ................................................................. 65
A. The Attorney-Client Privilege and Work Product Doctrine ............................................................... 65
1. Defining the Attorney-Client Privilege and the Work-Product Doctrine ........................................ 65
2. Legal Basis for Denying Attorney-Client and Work-Product Privilege Claims .......................... 66
3. The Rationale for Congressional Discretionary Authority to Deny Attorney-Client Claims .......... 67
4. How Congress Has Traditionally Weighed the Attorney-Client Privilege ....................................... 68
B. Claims of Deliberative Process Privilege and Presidential Communications Privilege ............ 70
1. Definition and Purpose of the Deliberative Process Privilege ......................................................... 70
2. Application of the Deliberative Process Privilege to Congressional Investigations ................ 70
3. Congress Treats Deliberative Process Privilege Claims as Discretionary .................................. 71
4. The Deliberative Process Privilege Is More Easily Overcome by Congress Than the Presidential Communications Privilege .............................................................. 71
5. Congress Has Greater Ability to Obtain Deliberative Information Than Citizens Have under FOIA .... 71
6. The Anomalous Ruling in COGR v. Lynch ..................................................................................... 72
C. Release of Attorney-Client, Work-Product, or Deliberative Process Material to Congress Does Not Waive Applicable Privileges in Other Forums ........................................................................ 73

Chapter 7 – Executive Branch Investigations: Lessons from Department of Justice Probes ........... 75
A. Overview of Congressional Investigations of DOJ ............................................................................ 76
1. Congress’s Power to Obtain Documents and Testimony ............................................................... 76
2. Weighing Pragmatic Considerations When Seeking Disclosures .............................................. 77
B. The Justice Department’s Responses to Congressional Inquiries .................................................... 78
C. Lessons from Prior Investigations of DOJ ....................................................................................... 79
1. Oversight May Proceed Despite Pre-Trial Publicity, Due Process, and Concurrent Investigations Concerns .......... 79
2. Probes of Government Strategies, Methods, or Operational Weaknesses Should Not Be Limited ........ 79
   a. The Revelations of the Cover-Up of Investigative Findings of Misconduct at Ruby Ridge .... 80
3. Prosecutorial Discretion is Not a Core Presidential Power Justifying a Claim of Executive Privilege .......... 81
   a. Morrison v. Olson: Prosecutorial Discretion is Not Central or Unique to the Executive Branch .......... 81
   b. Recent Court Rulings Further Undermine Presidential Claims of Prosecutorial Prerogatives .......... 82
   c. Although Committees Enjoy Significant Investigative Powers, They Carefully Weigh Agency Interests When Seeking Information ................................................. 83
4. Neither Agencies Nor Private Parties Can Deny Committee Access to Proprietary, Trade Secret, Privacy, and Other Sensitive Information ......................................................... 83
   a. The Broad Right of Congressional Access and Disclosure ........................................................ 83
Departments and Agencies of Government

Chapter 9 – The Offices of Inspectors General: Congress’s Indispensable Eyes and Ears Inside the Departments and Agencies of Government

A. The OIG Mission and Purposes .......................................................... 104
B. Appointment and Tenure of IGs ....................................................... 104
C. OIG Authorities ............................................................................. 105
D. Elements of OIG Independence ..................................................... 106
E. Reporting Requirements of IGs ..................................................... 107
F. The Practical Value of OIG Efforts ................................................ 108
Chapter 10 – Speech or Debate Protection ........................................... 115
A. The History, Purposes and Protections of the Clause ....................... 116
B. Supreme Court Case Law ................................................................. 118
C. Current Uncertainties as to the Reach of the Clause’s Protections .... 123
  1. The Nature and Scope of the Member Privilege for Testimony before Ethics Committees ................................. 123
  2. Does the Clause Afford Members a Nondisclosure Privilege against the Compelled Production of Documentary Materials and Records? ........................................... 126
     a. Congressional Response to Document Subpoenas ......................... 126
     b. United States v. Rayburn House Office Building ......................... 128
     c. United States v. Renzi ............................................................... 130
e. The Institutional Importance of a Document Nondisclosure Privilege ................................................................. 133
     i. Flaws in the Legal Arguments against a Nondisclosure Privilege .......... 133
     ii. There Are Sufficient Alternate Institutional Measures Available to Impose Discipline and Restraint on Potentially Wayward Members ........................................ 134
     iii. The CIA’s 2014 Search of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence’s Computers: An Illustration of the Importance of a Documentary Privilege .................................................................................. 135

Chapter 11 – Congress’s Extraterritorial Investigative Powers ............ 139
A. The Dilemma of Congressional Subpoena Enforcement in Foreign Countries ................................................................. 139
  1. Letters Rogatory: Law and Practice .................................................. 139
  2. Mutual Legal Assistance Treaties ...................................................... 141
B. Illustrative Informal Actions Taken by Special Investigative Committees to Obtain Information Abroad ......................... 141
  1. Iran-Contra ...................................................................................... 142
  2. House Select Committee on Assassinations ..................................... 143
  3. October Surprise ............................................................................. 143
  4. Koreagate .......................................................................................... 144
  5. The Investigation of the United Nations’ Oil-for-Food Program ........ 144
C. Concluding Observations .................................................................. 146

Chapter 12 – Congressional Interventions Into Agency Decision-making ................................................................. 147
A. Case Law Regarding Congressional Influence on Agency Decision-Making ................................................................. 148
  1. Key Early Rulings ............................................................................. 148
     a. Pillsbury Co. v. FTC (1966) .......................................................... 148
     b. D.C. Federation of Civic Associations v. Volpe (1972) ................... 149
     c. A Critique of Pillsbury and D.C. Federation ................................... 150
  2. Adjudicatory Rulings since Pillsbury .................................................. 151
     b. Gulf Oil Corporation v. FPC (1977) ................................................. 152
     c. Peter Kiewit Sons’ Co. v. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (1983) .... 153
e. ATX, Inc. v. U.S. Department of Transportation (1994) ..................... 154
  3. Informal Decision-making Rulings since D.C. Federation ................. 156
     a. American Public Gas Association v. FPC (1978) ......................... 156
Chapter 13 – The Congressional Review Act ................................................................. 165

A. The Scheme of Review of Agency Rules under the CRA .................................................. 167
   1. Reporting Requirements .................................................................................. 167
   2. Rules Covered by the CRA .......................................................................... 167
   3. The Roles of the Comptroller General and the OIRA Administrator .............. 168
   4. Effective Dates of Major and Non-Major Rules ............................................. 168
   5. Rules That Have Become Effective and the Carryover Period ....................... 169
   6. Effect of a Congressional Disapproval of a Rule ............................................ 169
   7. Senate and House Procedures for Consideration of Disapproval Resolutions 170
   8. Judicial Review of Actions Taken under the CRA ......................................... 170

B. Utilization of the Review Mechanism Since 1996 ....................................................... 171
   1. Summary of Rules Reported, Resolutions Introduced, and Actions Taken .... 171
   2. The Ergonomics Rule Rescission .................................................................. 171
   3. Illustrations of Attempts to Use the CRA to Influence Agency Actions ........ 173

C. Perceived CRA Structural and Interpretive Impediments ......................................... 175
   1. Lack of a Screening Mechanism to Pinpoint Rules That Need Congressional 175
      Review and the Need for a Supermajority; Proposals for Change; the REINS Act 175
      a. Independent Body Screening Proposals .................................................... 175
      b. Joint Congressional Committee Models .................................................... 176
      c. Affirmative Approval Proposals/The REINS Act ...................................... 177
   2. Lack of an Expedited Consideration Procedure in the House ....................... 178
   3. The Uncertainty of the Effect of an Agency’s Failure to Report a Covered Rule 178
      to Congress .................................................................................................. 178
   4. The Uncertainty of Which Rules Are Covered by the CRA ......................... 179
   5. The Problem of Agency Non-Reporting ......................................................... 180

D. Concluding Observations: Establishing a Collaborative Enterprise ...................... 180

Chapter 14 – Oversight of Federal Judges .................................................................... 185

A. Congressional Investigatory Authority over the Judiciary: Constitutional Controls and 185
   Their Limits ........................................................................................................ 185
   1. Constitutional Controls of the Judiciary Vested in the Congress .................... 186
      a. Creation and Abolition of Federal Courts .................................................. 186
      b. Appointment and Removal of Federal Judges ............................................. 186
      c. Defining Jurisdiction of Federal Courts ..................................................... 186
      d. Procedural Rulemaking .......................................................................... 186
e. Making Substantive Law .......................................................................................................................... 187
f. Appropriations and Judicial Administration .............................................................................................. 187

2. The Limits on Congressional Control of the Judiciary .............................................................................. 187
   a. Issuance and Enforcement of Congressional Subpoenas to Federal Judges .................................................. 188
   b. Downward Sentencing Departures and the Testimony of Judge Rosenbaum ............................................. 189
   c. Downward Departures and the Feeney Amendment .................................................................................. 190

B. Judicial Nominations ..................................................................................................................................... 191
   1. Stages of the Appointments Process ...................................................................................................... 192
   2. Opportunities for More Extensive Access ................................................................................................. 192
      a. The Estrada Nomination and DOJ Opposition to Disclosure ................................................................ 193

C. Judicial Discipline ......................................................................................................................................... 196
   1. Illustrations of Handling Allegations of Misconduct in the Administration of Judicial Business under the Disciplinary Act ........................................................................................................... 197
      a. Claims of a Judge’s Misconduct in the Misuse of a Court’s Random Assignment Rule ............................... 197
      b. Allegations of Procedural Misconduct by Manipulation of the Composition of an Appellate Panel and the Timing of En Banc Review ........................................................................................................... 198
      c. Lack of Transparency at the Tax Court .................................................................................................. 199

D. Impeachment .................................................................................................................................................. 201
   1. Frequency of Impeachments of Judicial Officers ....................................................................................... 202
   2. Initiation and Prosecution of Impeachment Proceedings ............................................................................. 202
   3. The Nature of an Impeachable Offense ...................................................................................................... 203
   4. Is the Impeachment Standard Different for Judicial Officers? ................................................................... 204
   5. Can a Judge Be Impeached for Misconduct Occurring Prior to the Time of Holding His Present Office? .... 206
   6. Can a Judge Who Has Resigned Be Impeached for Misconduct During His Judicial Tenure? ................... 206

E. Concluding Observations .............................................................................................................................. 207

Chapter 15 – Concluding Observations: The Constitution and Oversight of the Administrative Bureaucracy ................................................................................................................................. 209

A. Congressional Options for Restoring Its Subpoena Enforcement Authority and Its Ability to Effectively Assess and Utilize Vital Information for Legislative Purposes ........................................................................................................... 213
   1. Criminal Contempt ....................................................................................................................................... 213
   2. Inherent Contempt ......................................................................................................................................... 214
   3. Civil Contempt ............................................................................................................................................... 214

B. Restoring the Centrality of the Roles of the Committees and Subcommittees in Policy Development and Oversight and Their Ability to Assess and Evaluate Vital Legislative Information ........................................................................................................... 215
Part II: Case Studies

Elise J. Bean: Investigating the Financial Crisis ................................................................. 219

Curtis W. Copeland: The Presidential–Congressional Power Imbalance in Rulemaking.......... 235

Lydia Dennett, Elizabeth Hempowicz & Justin Rood: The Roles of NGOs and Whistleblowers in the Oversight Process ................................................................. 259

Alissa M. Dolan: The House Committee on Government Reform Investigation of the FBI’s Use of Confidential Informants ............................................................... 265

Louis Fisher: Investigating Iran-Contra ............................................................................. 275

Todd Garvey: The Webster and Ingersoll Investigations ...................................................... 287


Irvin B. Nathan: Protecting the House’s Institutional Prerogative to Enforce its Subpoenas... 301

Michael L. Stern: Henry Waxman and the Tobacco Industry: A Case Study in Congressional Oversight ...................................................................................................... 313

Appendix A: Institutional Support Resources for Legislative Oversight ................................ 319

Appendix B: Selected Readings on Investigative Oversight ................................................ 327