



One Hundred Twelfth Congress
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20515

October 14, 2011

The Honorable Jeb Hensarling
Co-Chair
Joint Select Committee
on Deficit Reduction
129 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Patty Murray
Co-Chair
Joint Select Committee
on Deficit Reduction
448 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Representative Hensarling and Senator Murray:

As the Chairman of the House Committee on Homeland Security, I write to bring critical legislative proposals to your attention that will further the goal of the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction to find at least \$1.2 trillion in savings over 10 years.

Homeland Security is National Security. The following provisions are vitally important to the security of our Nation, while providing significant savings to address our current budget deficit. The Committee on Homeland Security is working closely with Secretary Napolitano and the Department to identify additional cost savings and program inefficiencies.

It is important that the Joint Select Committee endeavor to present meaningful reforms that reduce waste, rather than indiscriminately cut critical funding to security programs for our homeland by sequestration. Another attack on our homeland would have immediate and devastating effects on our national fiscal outlook. Security programs under the Department of Homeland Security constitute our national defense against Al-Qaeda and its affiliates as they continue to threaten our Nation.

To that end, I am submitting the following proposals for your consideration.

Nationwide First Responder Network

As the Joint Select Committee looks at the myriad of submitted proposals, it is important to look beyond spending cuts and tax reform, to legislative initiatives that will provide both cost savings and produce programs that will improve our Nation's security. H.R. 607, which has strong bipartisan support, will achieve the 9/11 Commission recommendation of a nationwide first responder network. This public safety initiative has been included in numerous savings proposals forwarded to the Joint Select Committee.

A national interoperable public safety wireless broadband network is a critical tool for first responders. Precious lives were lost on September 11, 2001 when firefighters and police officers were unable to communicate effectively. Over 40 key public safety and local governance groups have endorsed this proposal. In addition, the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation has passed similar legislation, S. 911, on a strong bipartisan vote.

The legislation will also generate immediate savings. A similar proposal included in President Obama's recent jobs proposal would generate \$8 billion in net savings over the next 10 years. This proposal represents the type of balanced approach that the Joint Select Committee should actively pursue, one that combines an immediate public safety initiative with good governance cost savings.

Committee Jurisdiction

To date, 108 Committees and Subcommittees have exercised oversight upon the Department of Homeland Security. Consolidation of jurisdiction was another unfulfilled, key recommendation, of the 9/11 Commission. The Committee has received testimony that the lack of consolidated oversight is a drain on departmental resources – both personnel and financial – and conflicting guidance from Congressional committees distracts the Department from fulfilling its critical mission of protecting the Nation.

The expansive jurisdiction of the Joint Select Committee presents a unique and timely opportunity to address this critical issue.

In a letter dated April 21, 2010, Secretary Napolitano stated,

“I have deep respect for Congress' constitutional role and believe that appropriate oversight is essential to further develop and mature the Department. I am concerned, however, that the overlapping hearings, briefings, and requests for information from so many different committees take important resources and personnel away from fulfilling our day-to-day operational responsibilities, long-term goals, and our

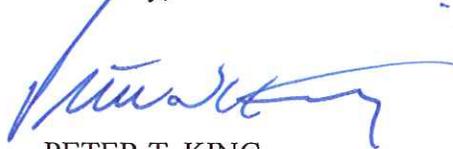
critical mission...If just one Committee in the House of Representatives...had jurisdiction regarding the oversight of the Department, Congress would receive the consolidated, streamlined information that it needs in an expedited fashion while DHS personnel could spend the majority of their time focused on achieving their strategic and operational mission.”

Secretary Napolitano went on to estimate that for Fiscal Year 2009, the Department expended nearly \$10 million on duplicative reports and testimony to the various Congressional committees and subcommittees. In the 110th Congress alone, the Department participated in 337 hearings with 496 witnesses and provided over 5,200 briefings.

The Committee believes that the full implementation of the 9/11 Commission recommendation to consolidate homeland security jurisdiction in Congress will improve Congressional oversight of the Department and enable further cost-savings and efficiencies to help reduce the deficit.

Thank you for your attention to these issues of critical importance. Please feel free to contact me for additional information on either of these proposals for savings.

Sincerely,



PETER T. KING
Chairman