



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

December 17, 2015

The Honorable Jeh C. Johnson
Secretary
Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Johnson,

The Committee is aware that there is no mandatory screening of the publically available social media accounts of visa applicants. This is troubling as applicants can post affiliations and allegiances to terror groups and other nefarious actors without detection. We would like to better understand why in this high threat environment DHS security screening policy has not kept pace with the dynamic terrorist threat. The tragic events in San Bernardino were the latest in a sprawling list of Islamist terror attacks and plots against the Homeland. It is imperative that the Department do everything in its power to keep Americans safe. Social media is a valuable tool that should be leveraged as widely as possible to review those seeking to enter our country. As we know, many individuals, at home and abroad, are becoming radicalized by hateful and barbarous terrorist propaganda, like that of ISIS. Reviewing their social media accounts can provide important “red flag” information, which may not be available in traditional intelligence and law enforcement databases.

It is the Committee’s belief that DHS’s United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) must be able to more widely use social media to vet individuals trying to enter the United States. The Committee understands that USCIS does have the authority to examine the public social media accounts of those individuals who wish to enter the United States, but has only done so in a limited matter. It is the position of the Committee that an examination of public social media accounts should be a mandatory step before any foreign national from a high risk country (e.g., Syria, Iraq, Yemen, Libya, Pakistan, Sudan, and Somalia) is admitted to the United States.

In continuance of the Committee on Homeland Security’s oversight of the management and administration of the Department of Homeland Security, and pursuant to Rule X(3)(g) and Rule XI of the Rules of the House of Representatives, we request that the information below be provided to the Committee by no later than December 22, 2015.

1. Why does DHS not have a mandatory social media review policy and process for all visa applicants?
2. Does DHS plan to incorporate the examination of public social media accounts into the process for vetting ESTA and other immigration benefits recipients? If so, when?
3. The Committee is aware that DHS’s 2012 Privacy Policy for Operational Use of Social Media guides the Department’s use of social media, including the use of social media in the visa vetting

process. Has the policy been updated since it was originally issued? If so, please provide the Committee with an updated copy of the policy.

4. It is the understanding of the Committee that USCIS has several approved Operational Use of Social Media Templates. Please provide a copy of these templates to the Committee. At any time, before the templates were approved, was USCIS instructed to stop using social media for vetting visa applicants?
5. According to DHS officials, the Department initiated three pilot programs to specifically incorporate appropriate social media review into its vetting of applicants for certain immigration benefits. When were these pilots initiated? What has been the result? How has USCIS changed its vetting of individuals applying for immigration benefits to better examine social media for signs of radicalization and terrorist connections?
6. USCIS Director Rodriguez testified earlier this month that his agency is reviewing all visa security applications dating back to 2013. How does USCIS plan to review the extent to which social media could have strengthened the vetting of these applications? Will DHS officials use social media to re-vet these individuals?
7. If derogatory information were to be found on any re-vetted applicants, would DHS pass the information to law enforcement or intelligence personnel for possible action?

Thank you in advance for your prompt attention to this matter. Should you have any questions, please have your staff contact Mr. Brendan Shields, Staff Director for Committee on Homeland Security, at 202-226-8417.

Sincerely,



MICHAEL T. McCAUL
Chairman



SCOTT PERRY
Chairman
Subcommittee on Oversight and
Management Efficiency



PETER KING
Chairman
Subcommittee on Counterterrorism
and Intelligence



CANDICE MILLER
Chairman
Subcommittee on Border and
Maritime Security



JOHN RATCLIFFEE

Chairman

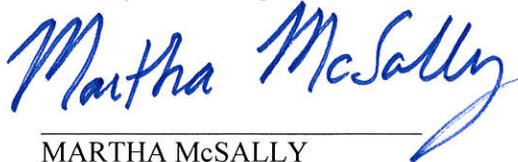
Subcommittee on Cybersecurity,
Infrastructure Protection, and
Security Technologies



JOHN KATKO

Chairman

Subcommittee on
Transportation Security



MARTHA McSALLY

Chairman

Subcommittee on Emergency Preparedness,
Response, and Communications

CC: The Honorable León Rodríguez, Director,
U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services

The Honorable Sarah R. Saldaña, Director,
U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement

The Honorable R. Gil Kerlikowske, Commissioner,
U.S. Customs and Border Protection