



Committee on  
**HOMELAND SECURITY**  
Chairman Michael McCaul

*Opening Statement*

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**Statement of Chairman Michael McCaul (R-Texas)  
Committee on Homeland Security**

**“Help Wanted at DHS: Implications of Leadership Vacancies on the Mission and Morale”**

As we conclude the first session of the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress, the committee can look back at a year of active legislative and oversight activity. A portion of that oversight has focused on the management of Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

Over 40% of the Department’s senior leadership positions are either vacant or have an “acting” placeholder. This means nearly half of the top positions at the third-largest Department in the U.S. government are not filled. This is an issue of accountability, or put more simply, who is in charge? Additionally, in my judgment, this sends a signal that homeland security is not a priority for this Administration.

As we all know, large organizations cannot be managed if they do not have managers. While DHS has thousands of dedicated career employees, it is suffering from a void of leadership because this Administration has failed to appoint qualified individuals to advance DHS’ many important responsibilities. From border security to internal investigations, top positions have remained vacant not for months, but years.

As I wrote in a *Wall Street Journal* editorial last month, the vacancy problem has snowballed as the Obama administration has failed to fill open spots. Customs and Border Protection—the DHS agency responsible for securing the border, regulating international trade and immigration—has not had a Senate-confirmed commissioner during the entire Obama presidency and is now on their fourth acting leader in almost five years. Just this fall the Senate received the first CBP nomination in three years.

When the ICE Director resigned this summer, he was replaced “temporarily” by a political aide to Secretary Napolitano who has no law enforcement experience – a violation of the Homeland Security Act. He continues to lead ICE today.

While rogue nations and terrorist groups continue to plot against the United States, the Under Secretary for Intelligence and Analysis (I&A) position has had acting leaders for nearly a year. I&A, the primary conduit for information sharing with state and local law enforcement, needs consistent leadership – especially after what we have learned in the aftermath of the Boston bombings this year.

Only just last month, the Senate received a nominee for Inspector General, a vital watchdog position that identifies fraud, waste and abuse. However, that position has been vacant since February 2011 – almost three years.

At a recent DHS event thanking an employee on their last day, DHS employees mused “Here comes the A-team – Acting Secretary, Acting Deputy Secretary, and Acting Under Secretary.” Undoubtedly these vacancies have a negative impact on mission effectiveness and employee morale.

The result of the 2013 Office of Personnel Management Federal Employee Viewpoint Survey ranks DHS near the bottom of all large agencies in employee satisfaction and that satisfaction is declining at rate greater than the rest of government. In the 2012 Partnership for Public Service rankings, DHS ranked 19 out of 19 large agencies – dead last – in effective leadership categories related to empowerment, fairness and senior leaders. This is especially alarming as leadership vacancies increased in 2013 and because effective leadership is consistently found to be the number one driver of employee satisfaction across the government. Admittedly, DHS has struggled with low employee morale during its entire existence. Filling vacancies will not by itself make the Department more effective with happy employees. But having quality, stable leadership will provide the direction and vision the dedicated employees at DHS deserve.

Renowned business executive Jack Welch said, “When you were made a leader you weren’t given a crown, you were given the responsibility to bring out the best in others.”

People are the Department’s greatest resource. We owe the personnel on the front lines of protecting the homeland leadership with vision, experience, and commitment. Secretary nominee Jeh Johnson has told me that working with the White House to fill these vacancies will be a top priority if confirmed. I look forward to working with the next Secretary of Homeland Security on this shared priority to build that vision and ensure the critical mission of protecting this nation.

After 9/11 President Bush declared:

*“We’re fighting a new kind of war against determined enemies. And public servants long into the future will bear the responsibility to defend Americans against terror.”*

Over a decade later, we now know those words remain true. The dedicated employees of the Department of Homeland Security and this Committee are some of the “public servants” the President spoke about. DHS deserves good leaders to advance their mission. Anything less does homeland security a disservice and makes our nation less safe.

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