

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson*****Organizational Meeting for the 113th Congress***

January 23, 2013 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the full Committee organizational meeting for the 113th Congress:

“Ten years ago tomorrow, the Department of Homeland Security officially began operations. In 2003, the Government Accountability Office designated ‘implementing and transforming’ the Department as high risk because, in its words, ‘DHS had to transform 22 agencies—several with major management challenges—into one department, and failure to effectively address DHS’s management and mission risks could have serious consequences for U.S. national and economic security.’

At the time, GAO acknowledged that successful transformations of large organizations, even those faced with less strenuous reorganizations than this one, can take years to achieve. For the past decade, DHS has remained on the High Risk list.

In my years of service on this Committee, I can tell you that for the Department to effectively execute all its missions and become the agency that the American people deserve, it is critical that this Committee—as the Department’s lead authorizer —be active and engaged. We must not only conduct consistent and robust oversight but legislate in those areas where the Department needs authorities, guidance, and resources.

Unfortunately, this Committee, in recent years, has not effectively advanced long-awaited authorizations. In the 112th Congress, this Committee did not bring targeted legislation authorizing the Department’s chemical security program to the House floor. It did not bring critical cyber legislation to the House floor. And, it did not bring a DHS authorization bill to the House floor. In fact, in the 112th Congress, the Committee did not bring a single piece of legislation to the House floor under a Rule.

I have long argued that the limitations of this Committee’s legislative jurisdiction under House Rule X undermine our ability to fully execute our responsibilities. Yet, up until this Congress, the Committee’s jurisdictional statement had not changed but the Committee, in the not-too-distant past, was still able to successfully usher a DHS authorization bill, a TSA authorization bill, C-FATS legislation, an S&T authorization bill, and the ‘Implementing 9/11 Recommendations Act.’

I look forward to working with the new Chairman, Mr. McCaul to get this Committee back on the path to legislating.

Before I close, I would like to highlight that the House Leadership did see fit to change our jurisdictional statement for the 113th Congress. For the first time, the Committee was directed to specifically legislate on ‘general management’ issues. At first blush, it looks like a signal from House Leadership that they expect this Committee to advance DHS authorization legislation. However, to my dismay, it was inserted in a manner that will have no impact on referral paths or

ensure that this Committee is not impeded from advancing homeland security legislation. The Rules Committee said as much.

Mr. Chairman, we have a lot of work ahead of us. I am hopeful that we can work in a bipartisan and collaborative way to help the Department succeed in its transformation and advance policies and programs that are not only effective and efficient but consistent with our cherished civil liberties and privacy rights. Certainly your willingness to work with me on improvements to the Committee Rules and the Oversight plan displays your openness to such cooperation.”

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