

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson*****A New Perspective on Threats to the Homeland***

February 13, 2013 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the full Committee hearing entitled “A New Perspective on Threats to the Homeland”:

“Today we will hear from witnesses who will provide an overview of some the areas you have identified as priorities. I look forward to their testimony and thank each of them for appearing today. Before we hear the testimony, it is important to point out that as Members of Congress, each of us has a responsibility to ensure that the Department is able to adequately perform its mission of protecting this nation from and responding to terrorist attacks, man-made catastrophes, and natural disasters.

As Members of this Committee, each of us has a responsibility to assure the success of the homeland security mission. That mission cannot be achieved without appropriate funding, vigorous oversight and targeted legislation. We cannot play our part in assuring the success of the homeland security mission if we are not willing to use the full weight of the committee structure--both subcommittees and the full committee--to pursue a well-crafted agenda. That agenda should result in bringing our bills to the floor and assuring that our oversight yields effective outcomes. Our energies will be wasted and our opportunities will be squandered if we do not work toward the goal of making the people of this nation safer.

Therefore, Mr. Chairman, I commend you, for issuing a statement of priorities and hope that the work of this committee and each of its subcommittees will remain focused on those objectives and our mission during this session of Congress.

One of your priorities is border security. Since 2004, we have doubled the number of Border Patrol agents and more than doubled the number of unauthorized aliens removed from this country. In our examination of border security, we cannot be limited by calling for more of the same. DHS currently lacks a border security strategy that coordinates CPB, ICE and Coast Guard. We must continue to press DHS for such a strategy. Without it, we cannot be certain that our border control resources are strategic and well-coordinated.

Another priority is cyber security. As you know, today, the Administration released an executive order on cybersecurity. It is my understanding that the strategy calls for strong privacy and civil liberties protections and recognizes the necessary leadership of the Department of Homeland Security in establishing a voluntary program to promote the adoption of a Cybersecurity Framework. This strategy sounds a great deal like the PRECISE Act, a bill this committee marked up last Congress but was prevented from moving to the Floor by the Majority leadership. As we review cyber security, I hope we can try once again to take the PRECISE act to the floor of the House.

Third, I appreciate your identification of the management and administrative functions of the Department as one of your priorities. As you may know, since the inception of the Department, I have worked to bring accountability and transparency to their personnel and contracting practices. The Department cannot succeed unless every component is brought into an organizational structure that gives headquarters command and control over the most basic personnel rules and contracting procedures. Without such centralized authority and accountability, we should not be surprised by

stories of waste, fraud and abuse.

Fourth, I look forward to working with you to explore the terrorist threat, no matter where that threat originates. We must not take a myopic approach. We must protect this country from all enemies—foreign and domestic. Our view of the terrorist threat must include domestic terrorism. The focus on domestic terrorism was notably absent in the last Congress.

Finally, I noticed that disaster response and recovery was not included in your list of priorities. I would urge you to add this important area. No corner of this nation is safe from the devastation of a natural disaster. Our people must know that we will not forget them and are committed to improving the systems that must serve them in their most dire moment – whether in Hattiesburg, Mississippi, or New York City, New York.”

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