



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson**

***Cutting DHS Duplication and Wasteful Spending:  
Implementing Private Sector Best Practices and Watchdog  
Recommendations***

April 26, 2013 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the Subcommittee on Oversight and Management Efficiency hearing entitled “Cutting DHS Duplication and Wasteful Spending: Implementing Private Sector Best Practices and Watchdog Recommendations”:

“Given the current fiscal climate, every level of Government – Federal, State and local – has joined the effort to eliminate wasteful spending, weed out unnecessary duplication and cut costs where possible.

Eliminating duplicative programs is a common sense approach to saving scarce Federal funds.

This approach, however, should be implemented with an eye toward ensuring that reducing programs and activities does not diminish homeland security capabilities.

Given the broad range of the Department of Homeland Security’s mission – including aviation, rail, border security, emergency preparedness, cyber security, critical infrastructure protection and counterterrorism – there may in fact be a need for built-in redundancy throughout such a far-reaching agency.

As a result, any effort to reduce duplication and downsize programs must not result in leaving the United States vulnerable.

Yet, there is clearly a need to tighten the belt.

In many instances, the Department has done just that.

Since 2009, through its Efficiency Review and component initiatives, the Department has identified more than \$4 billion in cost avoidances and its Fiscal Year 2014 efficiency initiatives are expected to result in an additional \$1.3 billion in savings.

To aid in the effort to reduce spending, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) has conducted its annual examination of duplication, overlap and fragmentation across Federal government programs and has released its third report in this series, including recommendations for improvement.

In its report, GAO identifies 31 areas where agencies may be able to achieve greater efficiency or effectiveness.

Within those 31 areas, GAO also identified 81 actions that the Executive Branch or Congress could take to reduce fragmentation, overlap, or duplication, as well as other cost savings or revenue enhancement opportunities.

Due to its size, mission, and inherent overlapping authority, the Department of Homeland Security is named in more areas of overlap than any other agency.

The report contained two areas where fragmentation, overlap and duplication exists at the Department: (1) Research and Development; and (2) Field-Based Information Sharing.

GAO also identified Checked Baggage Screening as an area that presented an opportunity for cost-savings and revenue enhancement.

Hopefully, the Department will heed GAO's recommendations. I look forward to hearing from GAO on the Department's response.

I must note, however, that while GAO makes recommendations in its report for agency action, it also makes recommendations for Congress.

Unfortunately, following the last two GAO reports on reducing duplication, the Executive Branch addressed far more of its recommendations than the steps taken by Congress to fix situations that could only be addressed through legislative action.

In fact, in a follow-up status report on the 176 recommended actions made in the first two reports, GAO determined that nearly 80 percent of the issues identified that required Executive Branch action had been addressed.

On the other hand, Congress had addressed less than 40 percent of the GAO recommendations that required Congressional action.

I would urge the Majority to live up to its stated goal to reduce spending by not merely providing lip service but working in a bipartisan manner to bring common-sense, cost-savings bills on actions recommended by GAO to the House floor.

I would be remiss if I did not address at least one effort to reduce Departmental duplication that is once again before Congress seeking approval.

That is the Department's proposal to consolidate its sixteen individually-authorized preparedness grant programs into a single pool of money.

This ill-conceived proposal causes me grave concern.

It was voted down last Congress and I urge my colleagues to do the same this year.

Stakeholders, first responders, and state and local representatives have all spoken against this proposal and stated that such a consolidation could result in hamstrung first responders facing unprecedented natural and man-made disasters.

As the world watched, first responders who were on the scene at the Boston Marathon made the difference between lives being saved and a higher death toll.

Moreover, in the subsequent search and capture of the surviving perpetrator, local law enforcement, equipped with infra-red technology and other homeland security apparatus – that are often purchased with homeland security grant funds – brought a swift end to what could have been a protracted nightmare for Boston-area residents.”

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