

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson*****A Study in Contrasts: House and Senate Approaches to Border Security***

July 23, 2013 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the Border and Maritime Security subcommittee hearing entitled “A Study in Contrasts: House and Senate Approaches to Border Security”:

“Securing our Nation's borders is an important component of immigration enforcement, and border security provisions will be an integral part of any comprehensive immigration reform legislation considered by the 113th Congress.

In recent years, Congress, on a bipartisan basis, has supported critical new resources to enhance border security.

Congress has enhanced appropriations for border security-related programs. From Fiscal Year 2006 to 2012, appropriations for the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) immigration enforcement and border security-related activities increased by 50% to about \$11.7 billion in FY2012.

This spending enabled a doubling of the number of U.S. Border Patrol agents - from 10,819 agents in FY2004 to 21,394 in FY2012 - and a nearly 370% percent increase in miles of fence constructed on the southern border - from 139 miles in FY2006 to 651 as of this year.

In addition, with support from Congress, DHS has significantly increased technology deployed to the border, including surveillance systems, radar, and underground sensors.

These resources have helped move many of the usual indicators for border security, such as apprehensions of individuals entering the country unlawfully, in a positive direction.

More work remains to be done, however. For example, DHS currently lacks a Department-wide border security strategy to coordinate border security activities and resources across its components, including CBP, ICE, and Coast Guard.

Requiring such a strategy would help ensure border security investments are being utilized wisely, resources are leveraged, and coordination is better across components and geographic areas.

In short, we need to address remaining vulnerabilities in a smart and targeted fashion, rather than spending billions on border security measures that make for better politics than policy.

At the same time, we need to be realistic about efforts to require DHS to achieve new border security benchmarks.

Enhancing border security will not come without additional costs.

If Congress is going to mandate new performance standards, we also need to provide the Department the resources necessary to achieve these goals.

Finally, in the course of this debate, Members should be mindful that the border region is more than just a region to be secured.

Millions of Americans call border communities home.

We must consider the impact of any legislation on the daily lives of who live there, on the cross-border travel and commerce that is the lifeblood of those cities and towns, and on our Nation's economy as a whole.

As Ranking Member of the Committee on Homeland Security, I stand ready to work, on a bipartisan basis, to leverage existing resources and, where necessary, to make targeted new investments to make our borders more secure.

I expect that the Committee on Homeland Security, with its jurisdiction over border security and a long record of oversight of the Department of Homeland Security's efforts to secure our Nation's borders, will be a central player in these efforts.

I look forward to working with my colleagues in support of comprehensive immigration reform and border security legislation that addresses America's border security priorities as well as our humanitarian and economic concerns.

It is my hope that the full House will begin these efforts in earnest sooner rather than later."

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