

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson*****Allegations of Special Access and Political Influence at the Department of Homeland Security***

April 30, 2015 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the full Committee hearing entitled “Allegations of Special Access and Political Influence at the Department of Homeland Security”:

“Last month, the Department of Homeland Security’s Office of Inspector General released the results of an investigation into employee complaints about the management of the investor visa program. This program, better known as the EB-5 program, accounts for less than one percent of all visas issued by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services; however, given the program’s potential as a “job creator,” it has great visibility to Congressional leaders from across the political spectrum.

I do not take issue with the Inspector General’s decision to limit his review to questions regarding Deputy Secretary Mayorkas’ involvement in the three EB-5 applications at issue. However, I am disappointed that, after expending months of resources to investigate these cases, the Inspector General produced an incomplete review. It only addressed the allegations made by USCIS personnel about contact with prominent Democratic figures, thereby giving the false impression that there were no Republican inquiries or outreach on these three cases.

At the time that Inspector General Roth testified, I was skeptical that Deputy Secretary Mayorkas only heard from Democrats on these cases, given the potential economic benefits of the EB-5 program. When I asked the Inspector General about other outreach on these three cases, the Inspector General was non-responsive. Subsequently, through further engagement with the Department, I learned that prominent Republicans contacted Deputy Secretary Mayorkas and asked him to give his personal attention to these three cases.

Given that this review has implications for Deputy Secretary Mayorkas’ reputation, it was incumbent on the Inspector General to present a complete picture of Mr. Mayorkas’ contacts and involvement in these cases. More broadly, I have learned that while serving as USCIS Director, Deputy Secretary Mayorkas was regularly contacted on EB-5 cases and other visa matters by not only Democrats, but also, Republicans, including Members of this Committee.

Not only am I disappointed about the incompleteness of the Inspector General’s review, I find it appalling that the Inspector General would not provide testimony to lay to rest questions of actual wrongdoing or impropriety, despite the fact that the report did not find that the Deputy Secretary’s involvement was inappropriate.

As I stated last month, the picture that emerged from the Inspector General’s report was that of an “activist manager” that demanded reform and responsiveness from his agency. If we want to have a comprehensive examination of Deputy Secretary Mayorkas’ leadership style, we should look at his actions as a whole, including in his current capacity, as Deputy Secretary. Under Deputy Secretary Mayorkas’ leadership, the Department has made great strides in some areas and remains stagnant in others. There has been progress on key areas identified on the Government Accountability Office’s “High Risk” list and, as a result of these efforts, GAO recently acknowledged improvement, stating that DHS has demonstrated “exemplary commitment and support for addressing the

department's management challenges.”

The Deputy Secretary is also working closely with the Secret Service Director on reform efforts. There is quite a bit of work to be done to improve the agency's performance and address longstanding cultural issues. Equitable treatment of Secret Service personnel is still an issue. There is also the matter of a racial discrimination class action lawsuit that has dragged on for fifteen years.

Also, we have not seen many of the recommendations issued by Department's independent panel implemented, including bringing someone from outside the agency into its leadership. These outstanding issues undermine morale and performance within this vital agency and certainly demand timely and thoughtful attention. More broadly, DHS has well-documented morale challenges of its own.

According to the 2014 Best Places to Work in the Federal Government, the Department comes in last with dismal scores in the areas of support for diversity, fairness, and effective leadership. The Department has spent millions of dollars on studying the workforce, but a plan that yields results has yet to be implemented.

I would like to hear from Deputy Secretary Mayorkas on how, through his leadership, substantial improvements can be achieved at the Department. Mr. Chairman, while I understand that much of today's discussion is looking backwards, I hope that you will seize this opportunity to also look ahead. Deputy Secretary Mayorkas is the highest ranking DHS official to appear before the Committee this Congress. We should seize this opportunity to have a meaningful discussion about DHS and how it is addressing its operational, administrative, and mission challenges. This Committee works well when we can work in a bipartisan manner to achieve the shared goal of advancing the Department of Homeland Security.”

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