



One Hundred Sixteenth Congress
Committee on Homeland Security
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

November 12, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Republican Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Madam Speaker and Leader McCarthy,

As the current and former chairmen of the Committee on Homeland Security (CHS), we strongly support the expansion of the Committee's black letter jurisdiction to ensure that the Committee has the jurisdiction necessary to fully authorize the Department of Homeland Security (DHS or the Department). As next year marks the twentieth anniversary of the September 11th attack, we believe that the 117th Congress is the time to fulfill the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States' (9/11 Commission) recommendation to create a "single, principal point of oversight and review for homeland security" by expanding the Committee's jurisdictional statement under Rule X of the House Rules.¹

Over the past fifteen years, the Committee's jurisdiction has proven to be woefully inadequate. When the Committee was established in 2005, it was conferred a Rule X statement that was arguably the most restrictive of all standing House committees. While all other Committees have statements with subject matter jurisdiction that capture the activities of the agencies they oversee, the Committee's statement only grants narrow authority over a small subset of what the Department does.² As a result, in 2019 alone, the Committee did not receive a referral of any kind on 247 of 330 introduced bills directing the Secretary of Homeland Security to take action.

¹ The 9/11 Commission, *The 9/11 Commission Report (2004)*, Section 13.4

² House Rule X (1) (j) Committee on Homeland Security.

- (1) Overall homeland security policy.
- (2) Organization, administration, and general management of the Department of Homeland Security.
- (3) Functions of the Department of Homeland Security relating to the following:
 - (A) Border and port security (except immigration policy and non-border enforcement).
 - (B) Customs (except customs revenue).
 - (C) Integration, analysis, and dissemination of homeland security information.

Moreover, the Committee's narrow statement has encumbered the House's ability to advance a reauthorization bill for the Department. DHS has not been reauthorized since its establishment in 2003 and, without an authorization, Congress has largely ceded the shaping of the Department's policies and programs to the Executive Branch. To reassert itself, Congress needs to have a standing House Committee that is focused on DHS to produce and advance an authorization bill that guides the Department into the future. For CHS to do so, it needs a robust Rule X jurisdictional statement.

From port, border, transportation, and cyber security to countering the rise of domestic terrorism to responding to disasters, DHS is tasked with a broad and challenging range of mission. Sixteen years ago, the 9/11 Commission expressed concern that the way Congress was organized would hinder DHS' development and bog down critical reform legislation in a web of referrals. Over the past sixteen years, we have had some successes but the promise of a standing House committee over DHS has not been fully realized. We strongly urge you, on the eve of the twentieth anniversary of the September 11th attacks, to expand the Rule X jurisdictional statement for the Committee.

Thank you for your consideration.



Bennie G. Thompson
Chairman
110th, 111th, 116th
Congresses



Peter T. King
Chairman
109th and 111th
Congresses



Michael T. McCaul
Chairman
113th, 114th, 115th
Congresses

(D) Domestic preparedness for and collective response to terrorism.
(E) Research and development.
(F) Transportation security.