May 25, 2017

The Honorable John F. Kelly
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
245 Murray Lane SW
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Secretary Kelly:

We write to express our serious concern about Sheriff David A. Clarke Jr.'s recent announcement that he has been selected to serve as Assistant Secretary for the Department of Homeland Security’s (DHS) Office of Partnership and Engagement (OPE), which coordinates DHS outreach efforts with critical stakeholders nationwide, including state, local, tribal, and territorial governments, elected officials, law enforcement, the private sector, and academia. We understand the Department has yet to make an announcement about this position and strongly urge you not to consider Sheriff Clarke as a candidate for this important office or any other within DHS.

Sheriff Clarke’s troubling record as Milwaukee County Sheriff is well documented. His oversight of the Milwaukee County Jail has been scrutinized after multiple inmate deaths, including an infant who passed away after being born inside a cell and a man who died of dehydration after going seven days without water.1 He derided the Black Lives Matter movement, even alleging it would join forces with ISIS.2 He stated that rather than work with Democrats, he would only reach across the aisle to “grab one of them by the throat.”3 Most recently, it has been reported that he plagiarized his 2013 Master’s thesis on U.S. security.4

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2 Id.
Any one of these actions would make Sheriff Clarke unsuitable for the position of Assistant Secretary of an office charged with being a conduit for the Secretary to engage with a diverse group of stakeholders from around the Nation. Taken together, they warrant not only his immediate disqualification from consideration, but an unequivocal response from the Department stating that neither Sheriff Clarke nor anyone with a similar record would be considered for a Secretarial appointment within DHS. We urge you to take such action for the good of your Department and in the interest of the homeland security of the United States.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

BENNIE G. THOMPSON
Ranking Member
House Committee on Homeland Security

SHEILA JACKSON LEE
Member
House Committee on Homeland Security

JAMES R. LANGEVIN
Member
House Committee on Homeland Security

CEDRIC L. RICHMOND
Member
House Committee on Homeland Security

WILLIAM R. KEATING
Member
House Committee on Homeland Security

DONALD M. PAYNE, JR.
Member
House Committee on Homeland Security

FILEMON VELA
Member
House Committee on Homeland Security

BONNIE WATSON COLEMAN
Member
House Committee on Homeland Security
KATHLEEN M. RICE
Member
House Committee on Homeland Security

J. LUIS CORREA
Member
House Committee on Homeland Security

VAL B. DEMINGS
Member
House Committee on Homeland Security

NANETTE D. BARRAGAN
Member
House Committee on Homeland Security