



COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Opening Statement of Chairman Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS)

Full Committee Markup of H.R. 542, 1158, 2083, 2383, 2476, 2539, 2589, 2590, 2609, and 2621

May 15, 2019

This week, we are fortunate to have law enforcement officers from our districts in town for Police Week. Nearly eighteen years ago, the September 11th terrorist attacks brought into sharp focus the criticality of local law enforcement, who serve on the frontlines to protect our homeland. Today, this Committee is poised to continue its record of listening to the needs of first responders while tackling emerging terrorist threats and tactics. Specifically, we will be considering H.R. 2621, the “Homeland Security Assessment of Terrorists’ Use of Ghost Guns Act.”

Advancements in digital printing which have the potential of producing 3D plastic guns together with the growth of on-line sales of gun assembly kits demands attention. I commend the gentleman from New York, Mr. Rose, for introducing this measure to direct DHS to produce annual ghost guns threat assessments. I am pleased to hear that H.R. 2621 has the support of the International Association of Chiefs of Police.

Another bill that should be of interest to our friends in law enforcement is H.R. 2539, the “Strengthening Local Transportation Security Capabilities Act of 2019.” This legislation, authored by Rep. Barragan, would improve timely information sharing and make training available for State and local law enforcement responsible for protecting surface transportation.

Additionally, we will be taking up the “Secure Communities and Safe Schools Act,” a measure introduced by Rep. Demings, to codify FEMA’s longstanding prohibition on the purchase of firearms and firearm accessories with counter-terrorism grant funding. The State Homeland Security Grant Program and Urban Area Security Initiative programs are tailored to help jurisdictions achieve and maintain core terrorism preparedness and response capabilities. I agree with Chief Demings and just about every other major teacher and school group--- allowing counter-terrorism grant funds to be used to purchase guns for teachers is just wrong.

First responders look to DHS for guidance on technologies to help them do their jobs more effectively and safely. The “Supporting Research and Development for First Responders Act,” as introduced by Rep. Rice, will help ensure that vital first responder technology research continues.

Two other measures that are of special interest are H.R. 2083, “the Homeland Procurement Reform Act” and H.R. 2476, the “Securing Non-Profit Organizations Against Terrorism Act.” H.R. 2083 zeros in on vulnerabilities around DHS uniforms manufactured outside the U.S. and directs DHS to put in place robust new protections, even as it prioritizes working with American small business suppliers. The second measure, H.R. 2476, is a bill I reintroduced to authorize the Nonprofit Security Grant program to provide funding to at-risk churches, synagogues, and mosques in both UASI and non-UASI areas. To date, this bill that I introduced with Mr. King and Mr. Rose, has over 100 bipartisan cosponsors. It is supported by the Jewish Federation of North America and I ask unanimous consent to place a letter of support for H.R. 2476 in the record. Increasingly, there is awareness that nonprofit organizations everywhere are under threat of attack. Enactment of my legislation will ensure that assistance from the Federal government keeps pace with the realities of the ever-evolving threat climate.

In addition to the measures I highlighted here, there is bipartisan agreement on bills to enhance DHS acquisitions, deployments of personnel overseas, cyber technical assistance, and intelligence operation.

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