



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS)  
Full Committee Markup  
May 3, 2017**

This weekend marked the 100th day of the Trump Administration. As much as we would like there to be a sense of normalcy – like holding today’s markup - we cannot ignore that there is nothing normal about the state of our nation.

It is not normal for the President’s advisors to be the subjects of a FBI counterintelligence investigation. It is not normal for the President to withhold White House visitor logs or his tax returns. It is not normal for the President to compliment dictators, benefit financially from foreign business deals, or profit from foreign customers. And it is not normal for the President to submit just 41 nominations to the Senate at this point in an Administration.

Today, there are *only two* Senate-confirmed appointees at DHS—the Secretary and the Deputy Secretary. I ask my colleagues on the other side of the aisle--- How can we accept this as the “new normal”? Moreover, how can we expect DHS to effectively secure our homeland amidst such dysfunction? Chronic understaffing, the recurrent threat of government shutdowns, and the absence of permanent political leadership compound DHS’ well-documented morale challenges.

Today, we will consider H.R. 2283, the “DHS MORALE Act”, a positive step forward for the 240,000 men and women who dedicate their lives to protecting us. Cosponsored by all Committee Democrats and endorsed by AFGE, the National Border Patrol Council, and NTEU, H.R. 2283 authorizes DHS-wide employee engagement, leadership development, rotational opportunities as well as an employee engagement steering committee. My bill also authorizes an annual employee award program to recognize employees who make significant contributions to the Department’s operations.

Finally, H.R. 2283 adds transparency and fairness to DHS’ disciplinary process by directing an independent, Department-wide review of how it is applied by components. The “DHS MORALE Act” sends a positive message to the Department’s workforce as it endures the abnormal situation created by President Trump.

We will also be considering H.R. 2131, which should help foster predictability by codifying a recent DHS management directive on the disciplinary process. There are eight other bills on the roster; seven have my full support.

I support, H.R. 2281, the “BEST Reauthorization Act of 2017,” authored by Representative Vela, that seeks to enhance DHS’ ability to tackle cross-border threats, including those posed by transnational criminal organizations.

I also support H.R. 625, a collaboration between Representative Rice and Representative Aguilar that addresses “lessons learned” from the San Bernardino attack and seeks to improve the quality of information sharing with Congress about such acts of terrorism.

I cannot, however, support H.R. 1351, which smears one of the largest, most dedicated, and most visible segments of the DHS workforce –Transportation Security Officers. I am deeply disappointed by the Majority’s decision to advance this ill-conceived measure, which requires TSA to undertake an entirely-new, costly, and likely ineffective inspections regime.

Amazingly, the bill overtly states no new resources would be provided to TSA, even though the new inspections regime could add upwards of \$7 million to TSA operating costs. Insulting the TSA workforce while driving up costs is not something we should be doing.

I urge Members to vote “NO” on H.R. 1351, and instead join me and Representative Lowey in supporting the “Rights for Transportation Security Officers Act of 2017”. Today, we will be reintroducing this bill to better align TSA with the rest of the DHS workforce by providing Federal protections to the TSA workforce.

Overall, I believe that this Committee, by acting on the DHS MORALE Act and the DHS FIRM Act, is poised to take positive steps forward on behalf of the DHS workforce. I hope we can stand together and reject H.R. 1351, which would be detrimental to TSA and its workforce.

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Media contact: Adam Comis at (202) 225-9978

