

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson*****Striking the Right Balance: Protecting Our Nation's Critical Infrastructure from Cyber Attack and Ensuring Privacy and Civil Liberties***

April 24, 2013 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the Cybersecurity, Infrastructure Protection, and Security Technologies subcommittee hearing entitled “Striking the Right Balance: Protecting Our Nation’s Critical Infrastructure from Cyber Attack and Ensuring Privacy and Civil Liberties”:

“We are here to discuss ways to secure cyberspace and critical infrastructure from hackers while assuring that Constitutionally-guaranteed privacy and civil liberties are safeguarded.

In the last ten years, our society has become increasingly connected by computer networks. Networking technologies have changed our traditional notions of time and space. Our ability to reach the farthest corner of the earth has grown while the distance between us has shrunk. The world and all it has to offer is a click away and can be viewed on a screen in front of us.

But this unprecedented connectivity and convenience has not come without a price. We face new kinds of dangers that may come for us at any time from any corner of the globe. Destruction can be delivered with a keystroke.

Unfortunately, cyber attacks are increasing. This nation cannot unnecessarily delay implementation of cybersecurity programs to combat these threats. Those efforts must include responsible collaboration between private industry and the government to ensure the greatest care is given to our citizens’ private data. The protections we put in place and the information we share to combat the threats must not undermine the privacy that each American rightfully regards as a fundamental freedom.

Working together, we can create a legal framework which encourages businesses to share enough information to reduce the likelihood of intrusions and prevent future harm without compromising privacy.

But, Mr. Chairman, perhaps the most important weapon in our arsenal to protect privacy is ensuring that the government’s efforts are led by a civilian agency. Information sharing with Federal civilian agencies will provide the public with a sense of increased transparency and accountability because Congressional oversight and public information requests will enable Members of this body and members of the public to peek behind the curtain, ask questions and find out what is happening.

That is why I was proud to sponsor, with Chairman McCaul, an amendment to the Cyber Intelligence Sharing and Protection Act, which firmly established a center at the Department of Homeland Security to serve as the hub for cyber threat information sharing. As you know, this amendment was approved.

Mr. Chairman, I thank you for holding today’s hearing to bring the privacy question into sharp focus. In the coming months, I look forward to introducing legislation to further improve our Nation’s cybersecurity posture, with a special emphasis on privacy implications. I would like to thank our witnesses for joining us today. I look forward to hearing the testimony.”

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