

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson*****Full Committee Markup***

May 20, 2015 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the full Committee markup:

“I am pleased we are here to consider a number of bills that address discrete administrative and security challenges at the Department of Homeland Security. Individually, each of these measures has some merit and warrants timely consideration.

That said, I would put on the record my disappointment that, with the exception of the bill to authorize the Integrated Public Alerts and Warning system, none of these measures provide new funding to the Department to carry out additional, unbudgeted activities. Though I am generally supportive of all the measures to be considered today, I will offer my comments on the bills authored by Committee Democrats.

H.R. 1646, the “Homeland Security Drone Assessment and Analysis Act,” was authored by the Ranking Member of the Oversight Subcommittee, the gentlelady from New Jersey, Representative Watson Coleman. It speaks to an emerging homeland security concern—the risk of drones being used to execute a terrorist act.

Today, an off-the-shelf, small or medium-sized drone, in the wrong hands, can jam law enforcement signals, take surveillance imagery, and even be weaponized. As such, there is an urgent need for a thorough assessment of the security risks posed by drones utilized by terrorists and other malicious actors in U.S. airspace. I commend the gentlelady for her timely and important legislation.

The second measure was introduced by the Ranking Member of the Emergency Preparedness Subcommittee, the gentleman from New Jersey, Representative Payne. H.R. 2206, the “State Wide Interoperable Communications Enhancement Act,” seeks to ensure that the Federal and State partnership to achieve interoperable communications continues.

Finally, there is the measure I introduced with the Ranking Member of the Cybersecurity Subcommittee, Representative Richmond, H.R. 2390, the “Homeland Security University-based Review Act.” This bill calls for a comprehensive look at the Department’s R&D efforts with universities in the Centers of Excellence network and directs the Department to provide more detail on their designation, tasking, and support for these institutions in a report to Congress. This measure is a good compliment to H.R. 1637, which looks at the utilization of Federally-Funded Research and Development Centers.

I understand that the Committee is expected to move more legislation next month. I look forward to working with you to ensure that other important Democratic bills get due consideration. With that, I look forward to a robust debate on the measures under consideration today and yield back the balance of my time.”

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