



HOMELAND SECURITY COMMITTEE

Statement of Chairman Michael McCaul (R-TX) Homeland Security Committee

“Markup of H.R. 2825: The Department of Homeland Security Authorization Act of 2017”

June 14, 2017

Remarks as Prepared

Before we begin, I would like to extend my thoughts and prayers to all of those affected by the shooting this morning in Virginia. I am very grateful for the heroic actions taken by members of the Capitol Police and I am hopeful that my colleague and good friend, Majority Whip Steve Scalise, and the others who were shot will make a full and speedy recovery.

The United States constantly faces national security challenges brought forth by Islamist terrorists, human traffickers, drug smugglers, and nation-states waging a silent war on our cybersecurity, among others. These adversaries are constantly looking for ways to inflict as much damage as possible, and over the tenure of this Committee we’ve sadly had too many wakeup calls.

After the 9/11 attacks, our national leaders decided that one of the best ways to protect our country was with the creation of a Department of Homeland Security (DHS). While we are stronger and better prepared today, America’s enemies have proven to be very agile. However, we can stay ahead of these ever-evolving threats by reforming and improving our DHS through a first ever reauthorization.

Specifically, a reauthorization will better protect America by:

- Mandating new homeland threat assessments
- Strengthening information and intelligence sharing among federal, state, and local authorities
- Supporting our front-line defenders and first responders
- Bolstering cybersecurity at America’s ports
- Enhancing cargo security
- Increasing TSA’s use of canine teams for explosive detection
- Protecting taxpayers with new cost efficiencies to cut waste, and
- Ensuring better security at last point of departure points

Many may wonder if this legislation is necessary to achieve these goals. The truth is a full and bipartisan reauthorization offers a number of key changes to DHS. Many people do not grasp the jurisdiction and realities of our Committee, and I’m sure all Members here have more than one example of this frustration. This reality has helped push reauthorization out of our grasp. But earlier this year, under the signature of the Speaker, Chairmen of eight different Committees came together to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to do just that.

This MOU states that all Committees of Jurisdiction agree to reauthorize DHS HQs and its components on a regular basis. This is not a one-time deal. It is the establishment of a regular process that will ensure robust oversight and improve the operation of the Department for the benefit of the American people. This legislation will also re-assert Congress's Article I authority to write laws and give direction to the Department.

Congress has simply abdicated its role in providing comprehensive legislative direction and as a result, ceded power to the Executive Branch. This legislation will codify agencies like the TSA which are essential to our national security. As I previously stated, this effort will strengthen and support our front-line defenders and first responders. When a national tragedy occurs, the heroism of these men and women is on display.

This bill reauthorizes important grant programs significantly above the President's FY 18 budget request and currently appropriated levels. The grants will provide critical resources to first responders and others in our cities, counties, and states for terrorism prevention and response efforts and bolster transit and port security. A full reauthorization will also protect taxpayer dollars and hold DHS more accountable by providing greater oversight of the acquisition process to ensure that cost, schedule, and performance requirements are met.

Finally, it will make DHS more efficient by consolidating and eliminating unnecessary programs and offices. This will be made possible by streamlining offices with overlapping duties, cutting unnecessary positions, and better outlining respective responsibilities. I'd also like to stress that a vast majority of this bill has already been considered by this Committee. As we go forward in getting this to the floor, we'll combine this legislation with measures from other Committees.

Secretary Kelly sat before us on two separate occasions and stated how meaningful this reauthorization truly is. In February he stated that, "The threats and challenges have changed since Congress created DHS some 15 years ago. We need to update the authorities to successfully complete our mission today." And just last week he stated that, "This is an important endeavor which will provide the Department with the authorities it needs to carry out its mission."

I am proud to say that this reauthorization has been a strong bipartisan and collective effort like many in our recent past. Of note, the Cybersecurity Act, enhancements to aviation security, the authorization of CBP, increased support for first responders, improved counterterrorism information sharing, and various taxpayer dollar saving efforts. Passing this reauthorization will be another major bipartisan accomplishment.

We simply would not be here today if it weren't for the efforts of former Chairmen Bennie Thompson and Peter King. Both of these men helped lead the charge to make this reauthorization possible. It is because of their hard work that we are well on the path of getting it done. I'd like to thank all Members on this Committee, as well as many of the hardworking Congressional and DHS staffers who have worked tirelessly on this legislation, and I look forward to taking a big step today to get it across the finish line.

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