



COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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

Full Committee Markup of H.R. 2203, 3106, 3246, 3318, 3320, 3356, 3413, 3525, 3526, 3669, 3670, 3675, 3691, 3694, 3699, 3710, 3722

July 17, 2019

Today, the Committee is meeting to consider 17 bills addressing important homeland security matters spanning the Committee's jurisdiction. At the outset, I would like to thank Ranking Member Rogers for his understanding and cooperation ahead of today's markup. As Members know, with the August work period days away, this is a very busy time. Ahead of today's markup, we appreciate all that Mat Eckstein, our partner in the Office of Legislative Counsel, did to get us to this point, particularly given the resource constraints within his office this week.

Turning to the business before us, I am pleased that we appear to have bipartisan agreement on all but three of the measures being considered today. The three measures all relate, in one way or another, to the current humanitarian crisis on the southern border. By all accounts, the Department of Homeland Security has struggled to respond in a timely, effective manner to the recent surge in children and migrant families apprehended on the southern border. We will be considering legislation that the gentlelady from El Paso, Ms. Escobar, introduced to foster greater accountability regarding the handling of children and migrant families at all levels within DHS. The Vice Chair, Ms. Underwood, has applied her extensive background in health care to produce a bill to help ensure that apprehended children and migrant families get necessary health screening. Finally, the gentlelady from Michigan, Ms. Slotkin, has a bill that speaks to the DHS Inspector General's findings that children and families are not being provided with safe temporary shelter, water, appropriate food, sanitation needs, and other necessities. I look forward to a robust debate on these measures.

Finally, I want to take a moment to thank Mr. King for working with me to advance the "Domestic Terrorism DATA Act." It is the product of months of engagement with current and former law enforcement officials, counterterrorism experts, and civil rights groups. It seeks to answer two fundamental questions about domestic terrorism: What threat does it pose to our communities? And what is the government doing to confront it?

The FBI used to publish some of this information in reports, but they stopped doing so in 2005. For the past 14 years, Federal data regarding investigations of crimes associated with domestic terrorism have been largely out of public view. Having information on what the government is doing to address this threat should help inform the Committee's domestic terrorism oversight agenda, which has been one of my priorities as Chairman. We know that individuals can be radicalized to violent racist, anti-government, or sovereign citizen movements just as they can be radicalized to join ISIL.

In thinking over the events of this past week, I just have to say that, as public officials, we all have an obligation to refrain from characterizing our fellow citizens in ways that those who want to sow discord could exploit.

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