



# COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Opening Statement of Chairman Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS)**

**Markup of H.R. 2932, 3469, 3787, 4237, 4402, 4713, 4727, 4737, 4739, 4753, 4761, & 4782**

**October 23, 2019**

Last week, we lost a great leader and inspiring colleague – Chairman Elijah Cummings. Chairman Cummings dedicated his life to fighting for justice, democracy, his constituents and the American people. I am grateful to have had the opportunity to serve with him for more than two decades. In the days to come, the House, as an institution, will feel the absence of his great leadership. For my part, I will also miss his friendship and good counsel.

Today, we will honor his legacy in a small but appropriate way, by considering a bill he authored to make concrete improvements to our government. H.R. 3469, the “Covert Testing and Risk Mitigation Improvement Act” focuses on improving the effectiveness and integrity of the covert tests TSA conducts to identify vulnerabilities in airport security operations. The bill directs TSA to not only carry out and refine its covert testing programs, but also to use the information gathered to improve the agency’s security operations. I thank my colleagues for their support of this important bill and for helping to carry forward Chairman Cummings’ work.

Today, we will also be considering H.R. 4782, the “National Commission on Online Platforms and Homeland Security Act,” which addresses the Committee’s oversight regarding terrorism-related content on social media platforms. The bill establishes a bipartisan commission to consider how terrorists and other nefarious actors have used online platforms. The commission will be charged with looking at past terrorist incidents and coming up with voluntary mechanisms that the online platforms could use to make their sites safer.

Through our oversight of the social media companies, it is evident that this is one of those areas where the private sector needs the government to be a convener. We have been working on this legislation for some time and, over the past month, we intensified our bipartisan stakeholder engagement on the bill. As a result of that engagement, the measure has improved significantly and is much more privacy-forward. I sincerely thank my colleagues and all the groups we engaged with to help make sure we get this right – and I look forward to continued engagement on this effort. Turning to other business before us today, the Committee is considering ten other timely bills, that address timely issues like drones, opioid trafficking, civil rights and civil liberties, and climate change. I am pleased that the Committee has worked in a bipartisan manner to get to this day and is poised to advance bills that will make the country more secure.

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