



# COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Joint Subcommittee Hearing Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS)**

***Protecting the Homeland: An Examination of Federal Efforts to Support State and Local Law Enforcement***

**May 16, 2023**

Before I begin, I want to condemn the hateful violence we saw yesterday when two congressional staffers, one of them an intern on her first day at work, were beaten with a baseball bat while at work in Virginia for Congressman Gerry Connolly. I pray they recover quickly.

Protecting the homeland ultimately means protecting the people who live here, which is what the brave men and women who serve in law enforcement do every day. We thank them for their service as we commemorate National Police Week.

I welcome today's discussion about how the Federal government can support State and local law enforcement in their efforts to protect our communities. Tragically, in the days and weeks leading up to this hearing, there has been a series of mass killings inspired by those who hold extremist views. My heart goes out to the victims and families of those murdered in an apparent right-wing extremist shooting in Allen, Texas. My heart also goes out to the victims and families of those killed after a driver rammed his SUV into people waiting outside near a shelter in Brownsville, Texas, after he reportedly shouted anti-immigrant rhetoric.

When we talk about protecting the homeland and supporting State and local law enforcement, we must acknowledge that extremist views coupled with weak gun laws is driving violence across the United States. Moreover, weak gun laws are making our law enforcement officers less safe. The United States is facing a crisis of epic proportions when it comes to gun violence. Children are not safe at school. Shoppers are not safe at stores. Worshippers are not safe at church. Journalists are not safe in the newsroom.

Gun massacres are happening more often, and they are deadlier than ever before. If we want to protect the homeland and support law enforcement, we must reform the laws that let dangerous people obtain weapons and turn them on our communities and those who are sworn to serve and protect. And when we talk about protecting the homeland, we must acknowledge the very real threat from heavily weaponized domestic terrorists, including white supremacists and anti-government extremists. As FBI Director Christopher Wray has said, domestic terrorism, particularly white supremacist extremism, is the "most persistent and lethal threat" to the country.

It is unfortunate that my colleagues across the aisle refused to include domestic terrorism as part of this Committee's Oversight Plan, as we cannot properly examine how to protect the homeland and support law enforcement without acknowledging the most persistent terrorism threat we face as a country. It is my hope that, moving forward, the Members of this Committee can find common ground on combating violence and protecting the homeland.

When it comes to protecting our communities from violence, the Department of Homeland Security's grant programs are key. For example, the Urban Areas Security Initiative (UASI) and State Homeland Security Grant Program (SHSP) help ensure that local law enforcement have the training and equipment they need to protect against terrorist threats.

The Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NSGP) provides nonprofit organizations at high risk of a terrorist attack with funding to help bolster their security, which is especially important, given the rise in right-wing extremist attacks against nonprofits such as faith-based communities. Even though Congress has increased funding for the program, there is a growing need for organizations to access this funding.

The Nonprofit Security Grant Program Improvement Act, which I authored, makes improvements to the program and will provide support to nonprofits, with particular attention to nonprofits in underserved communities. As we work to ensure that law enforcement has the resources to protect our communities, we must remain steadfast and provide DHS with full and robust funding for critical grants programs.

I hope to hear from our witnesses on how we can better support our law enforcement and public safety by passing common-sense gun reform, combating domestic terrorism, and supporting DHS grant funding, including UASI and the Nonprofit Security Grant Program.

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