



COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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

Markup of: H.Res. 1236, H.Res. 1328, H.R. 3756, H.R. 8610 and H.R. 8801

September 13, 2022

This past weekend, we marked the 21st anniversary of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. As we think back to the days that followed 9/11, many of us remember how Americans put aside their differences to stand together in defense of this great country. We saw our friends and neighbors put protecting this country, this democracy, ahead of party and their own well-being. Americans enlisted in our armed forces in significant numbers. Many went to work to protect domestic aviation at the newly established Transportation Security Administration. Others became first responders to protect their neighbors and friends or took positions in the Intelligence Community to join in the 10-year hunt for Osama bin Laden.

Unfortunately, in the 20-plus years since the attack, the unity and “love of country” that was so prominent in the days and weeks that followed 9/11 have faded into memory as rancorous divisions have become a troubling and destabilizing feature of our national life. Even before the January 6th attack on the U.S. Capitol, intelligence and homeland security analysts warned about a complex and diffuse terrorism threat picture — dominated by traditional foreign terrorist organizations, cyber attackers, hostile state actors and their proxies, and domestic violent extremists.

Today, the Department of Homeland Security—which was established in response to 9/11—is charged with such attacks and violence but also detecting, preventing, and mitigating chemical, biological, nuclear, and radioactive threats even as it contributes to “whole of government” effort to contain COVID-19, protect our borders, and maintain a strained Federal disaster management system. The magnitude and complexity of the missions DHS manages is compelling. We have the opportunity today to do our part to support DHS and the 240,000 men and women that work, every day, to keep us safe in carrying out those missions.

First on today’s agenda is H.R. 8610 – timely authorization legislation introduced by the gentlewoman from Florida, Representative Demings, which seeks to ensure that the vital work of the Department’s Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction Office and the Office of Health Security continues.

Next, we will consider H.R. 8801, a bipartisan bill introduced by Representatives Correa and Gimenez that would ensure that the Department’s joint task force operating in Florida can continue its critical work to prevent the exploitation of the maritime domain by transnational criminal organizations and other bad actors to smuggle drugs and engage in other illicit activity.

The third measure on our agenda is H.R. 3756, a bill that passed the House last Congress and was reintroduced by Representative Clarke to help DHS—which includes the U.S. Coast Guard, FEMA, and Customs and Border Protection—benefit from Federal research findings regarding climate change-driven impacts that may have homeland security implications.

Together, these three bills support DHS in critical ways as it carries out its diverse missions. Additionally, we will consider a pair of “resolutions of inquiry” that were introduced recently by Representative Meijer and a minority member that does not sit on this panel. Pursuant to clause 7 of House Rule 13, the Committee is considering these resolutions today to ensure the timely filing of their reports in the House and not disturb other business on the House floor.

As I will discuss later, the measures seek to compel the Department of Homeland Security to produce information to the Committee that has already been provided to the Committee, and in some cases, to the public. The aggressive approach taken in these resolutions seems is unwarranted given how forthright DHS has been on the matters raised in the resolutions. As such, I will ask Members to join me in adversely reporting the two resolutions of inquiry to the full House. Since it rarely happens in committees, I will note that adverse reporting does not affect the resolutions’ status in the House. It only means that the Committee has fulfilled its obligation under House Rules.

The willingness of the Biden Administration to engage with Congress in often uncomfortable conversations about topics where there may be strong differences of opinion is very welcome, and it stands in stark contrast to the previous administration’s years of deflection and outright hostility. Today, with the debate on the two resolutions, we will get a rare opportunity to shine a positive light on that engagement.

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