



COMMITTEE ON
**HOMELAND
SECURITY**
DEMOCRATS

Rep. Bennie G. Thompson, *Ranking member*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS)
State and Local Perspectives on Federal Information Sharing
Subcommittee on Counterterrorism and Intelligence
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Information sharing is critical to our nation's security. On Sunday, we will commemorate the fifteenth year since the September 11 attacks of 2001. I cannot help but to reflect on how successful we have been when it comes to piecing the puzzle pieces together to create better information sharing within the Intelligence Community and the law enforcement community.

While the puzzle is still evolving, the final picture is much clearer today than it was fifteen years ago. Officials have become better at not only gathering information, but also analyzing these pieces of diverse and sometimes inconsistent information to create a single coherent picture. That picture is then shared with other officials, all of whom are working to keep our nation safe.

The progress that has been made in both Congress and the Executive Branch have strategically addressed systematic problems caused by both the failure to analyze and the failure to share information between law enforcement officials and first responders. Some of those failures have been remedied by simply requiring agencies to talk to each other and their colleagues within state, local and tribal governments.

However, this has not been an easy process. As Members of Congress, we have pushed to eliminate cultures, which promoted stove-piped information and prevented external sharing. Our goal has become shifting away from a need-to-know culture to a need-to-share environment. Our insistence must be shown by not only pushing for better information sharing, but also by providing the tools and funding necessary to achieve a high and concise level of sharing.

Congress and the Federal government must do more to assure that state and local fusion centers can fully assist in the homeland security mission. These centers remain our most useful piece of information-sharing infrastructure.

While DHS and FBI are helping fusion centers to build analytical and operational capabilities, they must also help these centers measure and increase their homeland security value.

However, as we convene here today, the funding of our Federal government, including the Department of Homeland Security, is unknown beyond the end of this month. The end of fiscal year 2016 will be here on September 30. Unless Congress acts, our law enforcement agencies will lose their ability to fund many of the operations that we need to ensure that our country is safe.

So this hearing cannot be held in a vacuum. The needs of our state and local law enforcement groups cannot be balanced on the divides of political party lines. Continuous breaks in funding and the anxiety created from “not knowing” until hours before or after a deadline are not appropriate ways to run our government and protect our country.

So it is irresponsible for us to charge our witnesses today, all of whom are partners within DHS, to continue fighting the good fight if we are not even willing to provide continuous funding.

While I look forward to revisiting the challenges that our state, local and tribal law enforcements groups face in sharing and receiving information with the Federal government, I also look forward to hearing an honest assessment from each of our witnesses about the information sharing challenges that continue to persist in this uncertain budgetary environment.

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