

Ranking Member Higgins Opening Statement

Hearing: "State and Local Perspectives on Federal Information Sharing"

Subcommittee on Counterterrorism and Intelligence

Thursday, September 8, 2016

Today, only a few days from the fifteenth anniversary of the attacks on September 11, 2001, we now know, unfortunately, that information sharing is an integral part of our nation's security.

The idea and the practice of information sharing between Federal, state, and local law enforcement have been firmly engrained in our homeland security policies since 9/11.

Our lessons learned have pushed the Federal government to develop many initiatives expanding efforts at information sharing with state and local partners.

Today, we have many examples of successful partnerships, such as Fusion Centers and the National Joint Terrorism Task Force, however, our work in this area is not complete.

The primary intelligence mission remains collecting information and providing accurate analyses in a timely manner.

The challenge becomes balancing an environment where competitive information sharing thrives while eliminating unnecessary duplication.

That has and remains the challenge for law enforcement officials and its partners.

As Members of Congress we have an important role today. When we met here in February of 2015, we were recovering from a historical government shut down.

Now, one-and-a-half-years later we are days away from another government shutdown with DHS funding and ultimately the funding of our state and locals looming in the balance.

So while I applaud an open and candid dialogue, funding uncertainty trickles down and impacts all of the issues we have gathered to discuss today.

More, the recent and ongoing attacks against law enforcement highlight the fact that the true value of information sharing will never be realized if state and local law enforcement cannot respond and protect their own communities.

At our last meeting I encouraged intelligence and law enforcement officers to integrate themselves into the jurisdictions and communities they are assigned, in order to know and understand geographical and cultural sensitivities. Today I would again encourage the same thing.

So while today's hearing topics are not new, they present issues we cannot afford to ignore.

This type of open dialogue is beneficial to all parties involved and helps to inform the decisions that we make as a collective body.