

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson*****Preventing Chemical Terrorism: Building A Foundation of Security At Our Nation's Chemical Facilities***

February 11, 2011 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the Cybersecurity, Infrastructure Protection, and Security Technologies subcommittee hearing entitled “Preventing Chemical Terrorism: Building A Foundation of Security At Our Nation's Chemical Facilities”:

“As you know, Mr. Chairman, enhancing security of the chemical sector is a major interest of mine. Over the years, you and I have both worked together effectively on this important homeland security issue. I was disappointed that last year, when we finally were able to get the House to approve a comprehensive chemical security bill, you chose not to support it.

I hope that we can recapture the bipartisan spirit that we had in the 109th and 110th, and most of the 111th Congress on this Committee to bring an equally strong chemical security bill to the House floor. Today, we are meeting to get a progress report from Undersecretary Beers on the “Chemical Facility Anti-Terrorism Standards” or “CFATS” program.

DHS, in the four years since it was given authority to regulate the chemical sector for security, has not only moved forward expeditiously but thoughtfully with the CFATS regulations. As a result, all across the country, the level of risk posed by chemical facilities to their surrounding communities has declined, as more and more operators have chosen to reduce or even eliminate their holding of certain chemicals of interest.

Operators have come to realize that simple changes to chemical holdings not only make security sense but business sense. The Department deserves credit for all it has done to promulgate and carry out the CFATS process.

Equal credit is due to the companies that make up the chemical sector for their positive response and willingness to work with DHS to make our country more secure. There have of course been a few missteps, but the Department and the Sector have adapted quickly and made adjustments as necessary.

As the CFATS process moves forward, there continue to be some statutory gaps that must be addressed. These gaps include: the exemption of drinking water, wastewater, and port facilities; the lack of strong whistleblower protections; and the absence of methods to reduce consequences of terrorist attacks in this risk-based program.

The bill that passed the House last year closed all these and would have given CFATS permanent status. I hope, Mr. Chairman, that we can use last year's bill as a starting point to continue discussions and ultimately reach a bipartisan solution. I know we have some jurisdictional obstacles to the House floor. Certainly, the failure of the new House Leadership to fix jurisdiction remains a problem but the work goes on.

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