



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson

***Unlocking the SAFETY Act's Potential to Promote
Technology and Combat Terrorism***

May 26, 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 “Unlocking the SAFETY Act’s Potential to Promote Technology and Combat Terrorism”:

“The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Science and Technology Directorate is responsible for implementing and overseeing the SAFETY Act.

We are going to hear testimony today detailing the application process for companies interested in having technologies designated as qualified anti-terrorism technologies under the SAFETY Act.

Through this important program, the government provides immunity from liability to any product or service approved under the SAFETY Act.

Congress allowed this kind of liability protection to encourage innovation in the development of products and technologies that would help protect us from the terrorist threat.

I should mention that unlike a patent, trademark or other license provided by the government, the government does not charge a penny to thoroughly review each product for SAFETY Act approval.

Mr. Chairman, I am wondering whether in our current fiscal situation, the Congress should consider requesting a small fee for this valuable service.

But after we consider the fee question, we should focus on the number of businesses that have used this program, the outreach the Department has done to attract small, minority and disadvantaged businesses and the effectiveness of the SAFETY Act approval process.

As we all know, small businesses create most of the jobs in America.

In this downturn of the economy, a SAFETY Act designation can improve a company’s bottom line and help small, savvy companies create jobs.

Having read the Department’s statistics, I have some hope that the SAFETY Act is living up to its mission- that products and technologies enter the process, are quickly reviewed and provided designations and certifications in a timely manner.

I hope the testimony reveals that small, disadvantaged and minority owned companies can access the SAFETY Act process without the help of four hundred dollar an hour consultants.

Companies must be able to navigate the process with assurance that their information is being rigorously reviewed, their proprietary information carefully guarded, and their applications are handled expeditiously.

It’s disturbing to me that the latest proposed FY12 budget level of \$398M for the Science and Technology Directorate, as introduced in the House Appropriations mark, would eliminate two thirds of Research and Development funding for the Department. I have serious concerns about how these reductions in funding will affect this free SAFETY Act service.”

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