

**NEWS ALERT**



U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

**Homeland Security Committee**

*Rep. Bennie G. Thompson, Ranking Member*



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson**

### ***Full Committee Markup***

September 20, 2011 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the full Committee markup of H.Res. 255, HR 915, HR 1165, HR 1299, HR 1447, HR 1801:

“In recent weeks, we have come together, not as Republicans or Democrats, but as Americans to recommit ourselves to keeping the Nation secure and fostering greater resilience. On this Committee, there is general bipartisan agreement in a number of areas about how to achieve these critical goals. Unfortunately, those areas of agreement receive little attention from a public that has come to expect discord and disagreement from this Congress.

Today is a perfect opportunity to turn the page and work together to enhance border and transportation security. I do not need to tell you, Mr. Chairman, that even as we meet to consider these targeted bills, the failure of House Leadership to consolidate jurisdiction over homeland security remains an impediment to this Committee’s ability to move legislation.

Certainly, as we turn our attention to producing a DHS authorization bill, the jurisdictional limitations are a major concern. Today marks the second time in the 112th Congress that the Full Committee has considered legislation and the first time that measures introduced by Democratic Members will be considered by the Full Committee. It is no secret that the Committee has gotten off to a slow start on moving legislation this Congress. In fact, to date, no CHS bills have been considered on the House floor. Hopefully, the bills we are considering today will get the consideration of the Full House in short order.

Looking down the road, I also hope that today is the beginning of a more active period in which more commonsense bills, authored by Democratic Members, are moved. I am pleased that we are considering legislation authored by Ms. Jackson Lee, the Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Transportation Security, to strengthen TSA’s Ombudsman office. The bipartisan oversight work of the Committee identified some organizational weaknesses in the office that need to be addressed. This bill addresses those weaknesses and seeks to provide the TSA workforce with access to an effective and reliable ombudsman. I commend the gentlewoman from Texas for her work on this and other important transportation security related issues.

I am also pleased that we are marking up a bill authored by our other esteemed Texas Member, Mr. Cuellar, the Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Border and Maritime Security, to authorize Immigration and Customs Enforcement’s “BEST” program for the first time. The BEST program has proven a valuable asset in our efforts to secure the Nation’s borders and I commend the gentleman from Texas for his work on this important legislation and leadership on the border subcommittee.

I would also like to commend Mr. King, Mrs. Miller and Mr. Cravaack for advancing measures that

address three key bipartisan priorities. Maintaining robust “Passenger Name Record” agreements for international travelers, achieving operational control of our land borders, and providing risk-based screening for U.S. military personnel traveling through our Nation’s airports.

Finally, I thank the Chairman for including a bill I introduced to re-authorize the “Aviation Security Advisory Committee”. Before its authorization lapsed, this advisory committee played an integral role in the development of TSA’s security policies and protocols for many years. I am pleased that after I introduced my bill, TSA came to realize the vacuum that existed in its policy-making and re-established this advisory group, comprised of a diverse group of stakeholders.

It is important that we codify the advisory committee to ensure predictability. Underscoring this point, Mr. Chairman, I ask unanimous consent to submit for the record letters of support from Airports Council International, the Cargo Airlines Association, and the U.S. Travel Association.

With that Mr. Chairman, I urge Members to support all the measures to be considered today.”

# # #

For press inquiries, please contact Adam Comis at (202) 225-9978

United States House of Representatives  
Committee on Homeland Security  
H2-117, Ford House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515  
Phone: (202) 226-2616 | Fax: (202) 226-4499  
<http://chsdemocrats.house.gov>  
[@homelanddems](https://twitter.com/homelanddems)