

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson*****Does Administrative Amnesty Harm our Efforts to Gain and Maintain Operational Control of the Border?***

October 4, 2011 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the Border and Maritime Security subcommittee hearing entitled “Does Administrative Amnesty Harm our Efforts to Gain and Maintain Operational Control of the Border?”

“Let me start by addressing the title of today’s hearing: ‘Does Administrative Amnesty Harm our Efforts to Gain and Maintain Operational Control of the Border?’ I find it curious that a practical, risk-based approach to the removal of undocumented aliens would be characterized by my friends across the aisle as ‘administrative amnesty’. That’s not a legal term, but a political one.

Typically the smart and efficient use of government resources garners bipartisan praise and support in this town. What is ICE doing under the Obama Administration that is different than what it, or its predecessor agency INS, did under previous Administrations?

ICE is prioritizing its limited resources to ensure the agency removes undocumented aliens who pose a danger to national security or a risk to public safety, along with recent illegal entrants.

Currently, ICE only has the resources necessary to remove approximately 400,000 undocumented aliens per year. That constitutes less than four percent of the estimated illegal alien population in the United States.

Unless and until Congress appropriates sufficient funds for ICE to apprehend and remove every undocumented alien in the country, we should support the agency’s efforts to focus its limited resources on removing those undocumented aliens who pose the greatest threat to our nation. Indeed, on the topic of appropriations, the Republican Homeland Security Appropriations bill approved by the House this session cuts rather than increases ICE’s budget. All but one of our Republican colleagues on this Subcommittee voted in favor of those cuts. As I have said before, Madam Chairman, our Republican colleagues tend to talk tough when it comes to homeland security and immigration enforcement, but rarely do they put their money where their mouth is.

Also, it is worth noting that under the current Administration, ICE has removed more criminal aliens, and more aliens total, than under the Bush Administration or any other prior administration, Democratic or Republican.

Only in Washington, DC could those kinds of figures somehow be spun as ‘amnesty’. Ironically, the last real ‘amnesty’ was championed by President Ronald Reagan, a hero to many of my Republican colleagues. And yet today, it appears that even the largest number of removals of undocumented immigrants in our Nation’s history is not enough to satisfy some.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today and am certain they will provide the Members of this Subcommittee valuable insight into the complex issue of immigration enforcement.”

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