



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson

***An Examination of the President's FY 2013 Budget Request
for the Department of Homeland Security***

February 15, 2012 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the full Committee hearing entitled “An Examination of the President's FY 2013 Budget Request for the Department of Homeland Security”:

“Madame Secretary, it is good to have you back before the Committee. It has been a while.

I expect that you will answer a wide range of questions today about your Fiscal Year 2013 budget request. I certainly have quite a few questions.

But before we turn to the FY 2013 request, I think it is important that we take a moment to acknowledge your starting point-- the FY 2012 appropriations law. That measure, which many of us opposed, shortchanged homeland security in a number of troubling ways.

It was predicated on the belief that we can demand that DHS carry out a wide range of homeland security and non-homeland security missions without providing the resources. From my perspective, it was tantamount to Congress running up a long tab, ordering more robust homeland security efforts—particularly with respect to border security, aviation security, and immigration enforcement—and, then, stiffing you when the bill arrived.

With this backdrop and the prospect of an even less favorable budget environment for FY 2013, I can understand your desire to submit a proposal that comes in \$1.3 billion less than last year's budget. The fact that you were able to do so and, for the first time, fund the Disaster Relief Fund at \$6 billion is really remarkable. I do not imagine that doing so was an easy task.

I also expect that getting all the components on the same page about cutting back on expenses and leveraging resources was not easy either. It seems unlikely, however, that “efficiency savings” account for the full \$1.6 billion reduction.

We need to know which programs will be losing capacity or even capabilities, under your request. If you are not going to have the resources under this budget to fully implement certain programs within the mandated period, you need to tell us.

We are your authorizing Committee. We have a stake in seeing programs like CFATS, TWIC, US-VISIT, and the Coast Guard's fleet modernization implemented. We need to know if timelines will have to be adjusted or more resources will be necessary from the appropriations process.

I am concerned that this budget does not seek enough for Coast Guard's fleet acquisitions to keep pace with its decommissionings.

I am concerned that the budget seeks to consolidate 16 state and local grant programs into one

small pot. I have trouble understanding how \$1.5 billion will stretch to sustain and develop new core capabilities.

I am concerned that while new resources are appropriately being provided to NPPD for cybersecurity, the other side of the house—the Infrastructure Protection side—seems to be shortchanged. Given that the problems at CFATS have only begun to be understood, it is troubling to see that the budget is asking for less money in FY 2013.

Before I close, I have to acknowledge that the budget proposes a number of organizational changes.

While the rationale behind some of these changes is not, as of yet, clear, I must commend you for taking this Committee's advice and finally transferring the US-VISIT program out of NPPD. It floundered there. At CBP and ICE, I believe that this border program may actually be positioned to achieve its mission and finally allow us to identify and prevent overstays.

Again, Madame Secretary, thank you for appearing today. I look forward to discussing the budget proposal and working with you to ensure that we keep our Nation secure during these difficult economic times."

#

FOR MORE INFORMATION: 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>