

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson*****Federal Government Intelligence Sharing with State, Local and Tribal Law Enforcement: An Assessment Ten Years After 9/11***

February 28, 2012 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the Counterterrorism and Intelligence Subcommittee hearing entitled “Federal Government Intelligence Sharing with State, Local and Tribal Law Enforcement: An Assessment Ten Years After 9/11”:

“Information sharing is absolutely critical to our nation’s security. Yet, information sharing is not a complex concept. It is like solving a puzzle. Officials must gather and analyze pieces of diverse and sometimes inconsistent information to create a coherent picture. That picture is then shared with other officials who use the information to keep this nation safe.

The tragedy of September 11th was caused by both the failure to analyze and the failure to share. Congress and the Executive Branch have attempted to address those failures by requiring that agencies talk to each other and talk to their colleagues in state, local and tribal governments.

But this has not been a simple process. Many agencies had cultures which stove-piped information within the agency and prevented external sharing. Those agencies have had to undergo a cultural shift. Some are still struggling with shifting from a need-to-know culture to a need-to-share environment.

However, because we know the price of failure, Congress must continue to insist upon and oversee this cultural shift. We have seen some progress in information sharing among federal agencies. Yet the Federal government must do more to assure that state and local fusion centers can fully assist in the homeland security mission. Congress has funded 72 fusion centers, controlled by state and local governments. These centers form the backbone of an information-sharing infrastructure.

According to the GAO, while DHS and FBI are helping fusion centers build analytical and operational capabilities, they must also help these centers measure their homeland security value. GAO also found that I&A still has not defined how it plans to meet its state and local mission by identifying and documenting the specific programs and activities that are most important for executing its mission.

I&A must identify and document specific programs and activities that are most helpful to the homeland security mission for state and local governments. This kind of guidance has several benefits. It is likely to increase the effectiveness of each fusion center, will assure that the Federal tax dollar is being spent wisely, and most importantly, it will provide clear rules that will ensure that civil rights and civil liberties are safeguarded.

State and locals must get the assistance they need to be helpful in doing their part to keep this nation safe. Yet, I am told by my friends on the other side of the aisle, that there are many programs this nation can no longer afford. As we consider the challenges we face, I look forward to hearing the assessment of each of our witnesses about the challenges that lie ahead for the information sharing environment.”

#

FOR MORE INFORMATION: Please contact Adam Comis at (202) 225-9978