

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson*****Eliminating Waste, Fraud, Abuse and Duplication in the Department of Homeland Security***

March 8, 2012 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the Oversight, Investigations, and Management subcommittee hearing entitled “Eliminating Waste, Fraud, Abuse and Duplication in the Department of Homeland Security”:

“These are very difficult financial times and every aspect of the Government – Federal, State and local -- must do its part to eliminate wasteful spending, weed out unnecessary duplication and cut costs where possible.

Reducing Government spending by eliminating overlapping and duplicative programs is a common sense approach to saving scarce Federal funds and enhancing revenue.

This approach, however, should be achieved with a careful examination of what works, what does not work, what should be consolidated and what should be left alone.

For example, it has been proposed that the Department of Homeland Security reduce sixteen individually-authorized preparedness grant programs into a single pool of money.

This proposal causes me grave concern.

Although I recognize it is prudent to re-evaluate and streamline programs to promote efficiency and reduce costs in the wake of the current fiscal climate, I am concerned that the end result will be hamstrung first responders facing unprecedented natural disasters.

As required by law, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) has conducted an examination of duplication, overlap and fragmentation across Federal government programs and has recommended actions for improvement.

The result of this examination is a 426-page report, the size of which; is an indication that extensive work is required.

In the report, GAO identifies 51 areas where programs may be able to achieve greater efficiencies or become more effective in providing government services and 32 areas with evidence of duplication, overlap, or fragmentation.

Due to its size, mission, and inherent overlapping authority, the Department of Homeland Security is named in more areas of overlap than any other agency.

The report also contained 176 actions that either the Executive Branch or Congress should take to improve this Country’s fiscal outlook.

While it is convenient for my colleagues to point the finger at the Executive Branch, in this instance, the numbers indicate that the Executive Branch is ahead of the game while Congress, with a Republican controlled House, lags behind.

In fact, in a follow-up status report on the 176 recommended actions, GAO determined that nearly 80 percent of the issues identified that required Executive Branch action have been addressed.

On the other hand, this Congress has addressed less than 40 percent of the GAO recommendations that

required Congressional action.

Many of the recommended Congressional actions could have been achieved by now, if the Majority would stop putting politics first and bring common-sense, cost-savings bills – even if introduced by Democrats -- to the House floor.

As the Ranking Member of a Committee that shares its oversight jurisdiction with over 100 Congressional Committees and Subcommittees, watching my colleagues put politics first comes as no surprise.

To illustrate this point, the Homeland Security Authorization Act that this Committee ordered reported last October has yet to be considered by the House because, in party, the report has been held up due to jurisdictional challenges.

Of relevance to this hearing, that measure contains a section that would require the Department to “identify redundant, wasteful or unnecessary capabilities and capacities where resources can be redirected.”

Unless we get our House in order and reduce duplicative homeland security jurisdiction, good intentioned provisions like this one that would result in efficiencies at the Department of Homeland Security, are unlikely to ever be enacted into law.”

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