

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson*****Ensuring the Transparency, Efficiency, and Effectiveness of Homeland Security Grants***

March 20, 2012 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the Emergency Preparedness, Response and Communications subcommittee hearing entitled “Ensuring the Transparency, Efficiency, and Effectiveness of Homeland Security Grants”:

“In Fiscal Year 2012, Congress passed a bill mandating funding cuts in important homeland security grant programs. As a part of that reduction in funding, grant programs were merged and the Secretary was empowered to pick winners and losers. Transit security, Port Security, and Assistance to Firefighters were cut. Programs like Citizen Corps, and the Metropolitan Medical Response System were eliminated.

In March of this year, the Administration released its FY2013 budget request. In that request, the Administration seeks to codify the grant program consolidations first carried out in the FY2012 Appropriations.

As the Ranking Member of the authorizing Committee for the Department of Homeland Security, I urge my colleagues to take a serious look at this effort to authorize a consolidation of needed homeland security grants. This Committee, which possesses both oversight and authorization responsibility over the Department, has a duty to fully examine any and every effort to drastically cut and permanently merge these programs.

Before this government undertakes such a radical change in funding for these vital programs, Congress must ask some questions. Members must ask about the wisdom of forcing port and transit officials to compete for the same grant money. Members must examine the effect of asking public health providers and local law enforcement to vie for a shrinking pot of grant money. State and local officials, first responders and first preventers must have an opportunity to tell how they will be affected by these cuts. We need to hear what projects will be put on hold and what projects will be abandoned.

Members must ask how these funding decisions will affect the long-term and short-term security posture of our nation. In other words, we need to do oversight. I understand that we are in austere times and an election year. I know that for some it is beneficial to be seen as a government cost-cutter. But what good is cutting costs if we reduce our preparedness and sacrifice our security?

I guarantee you—in this game, a penny saved is not a penny earned. It could be a life lost. Mr. Chairman, these grants are not merely about money. These grants play a big role in how people out in the rest of the United States prepare for the unthinkable. We must not be afraid to ask the questions.”

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