

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson*****Full Committee Markup***

June 25, 2015 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the full Committee markup:

“I am pleased that the Committee is meeting to consider a roster of amendments that address the Committee’s oversight findings, particularly with respect to border and transportation security. While many of the bills on the roster today are probably very familiar to the panel, there are some new bills.

H.R. 2770, the “Keeping our Travelers Safe and Secure Act,” was introduced by Representative Rice, the Ranking Member of the Transportation Security Subcommittee, in response to a disturbing Inspector General report on the maintenance of TSA’s checkpoint equipment. In May, the Inspector General reported that because TSA “did not properly manage the maintenance of its security-related technology deployed to airports, it cannot be assured that routine preventive maintenance is performed or that equipment is repaired and ready for operational use.” Ranking Member Rice is to be commended for acting swiftly and introducing legislation to direct TSA to develop and implement a validation process for tracking preventative maintenance of checkpoint equipment.

Another new bill that we are considering today would address troubling oversight findings about gaps in the scanning of high-risk rail cargo that crosses the border. In March, the Inspector General reported that Customs and Border Protection was not appropriately scanning cargo that through its own targeting was deemed “high risk”. In response, Representative Vela, the Ranking Member of the Border Security Subcommittee, introduced H.R. 2786, the “Cross-Border Rail Security Act of 2015.” Consideration of H.R. 2786 is particularly timely, given heightened concern about rail safety and security.

The last new bill that I will highlight is one that I introduced with the Chairman of the Transportation Security Subcommittee, Mr. Katko, in response to a mountain of evidence about vulnerabilities in the systems that TSA uses to decide who should get expedited screening. TSA, which has a goal of providing expedited screening to half of the flying public, has come to rely on Managed Inclusion and other processes to drive traffic to expedited screening lanes. However, we have learned, through multiple GAO and Inspector General reports, that these approaches are inherently risky. As such, the time has come to wind them down.

I support the PreCheck program to provide known and vetted travelers alternate screening so more attention can be focused on unknown travelers. With 1.8 million Americans flying every day, TSA needs to do more to promote participation in the PreCheck program. Today, we will have the opportunity to send that message to TSA when we consider H.R. 2843, legislation introduced a few days ago by Mr. Katko. These four measures join the other six bills we will be considering today in helping to further this Committee’s record of legislative action on our oversight findings.”

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