



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS)**

**Markup: *H.R. 2825, the Department of Homeland Security Authorization Act of 2017***

**June 14, 2017**

This September will be the sixteenth anniversary of the 2001 terrorist attacks that prompted Congress to establish the Department of Homeland Security.

Today's markup comes at a critical time for the Department whose mission includes preventing terrorism, managing our borders, and ensuring resilience.

President Trump has placed DHS on a backburner.

He has been slow to nominate the Department's senior leadership, and as of today, Secretary Kelly and Deputy Secretary Duke are the only Senate confirmed principals at the Department.

Even though it is peak travel season, there is no permanent leadership at the Transportation Security Administration. Hurricane season has begun without a FEMA Administrator, and despite there being an ongoing threat to our nation's cybersecurity there is no leader at the National Protection and Programs Directorate.

This is a big problem.

While I share the Chairman's view that providing regular guidance and support to the Department through a regular authorization process is a good thing, ultimately DHS needs leaders in place to drive it in a positive direction.

DHS also needs adequate resources to carry out its diverse mission and support capabilities at the State and local level.

While President Trump, through his budget that prioritizes keeping a campaign promise to build a mythical wall along our Southern border, leaves first responders on their own and vital security programs with little to build upon, the Democratic members of this Committee remain committed to raising the level of security and preparedness across the nation.

Recently, Secretary Kelly acknowledged the diverse and ever evolving threat. The Secretary stated: "The threat to our nation and our American way of life has not

diminished. In fact, the threat has metastasized and decentralized, and the risk is as threatening today as it was that September morning almost 16 years ago.”

Today, Democrats will be offering a number of amendments that underscore a continued commitment to first responders and to protecting infrastructure that terrorists have been known to target—ports and mass transit.

I would note that bipartisan agreement was reached on a number of amendments to be considered today but that some major open issues remain.

Democrats plan to offer amendments to--

- Prevent the DHS workforce from ever being left hung out to dry like they were when President Trump issued his Travel Ban;
- Prevent DHS from taking land from law-abiding Americans to build Trump’s wall; and
- Prevent hardworking Americans from lining the pockets of President Trump with their taxpayer dollars.

We have an obligation to provide guidance to DHS. Enactment of these Democratic Amendments would do just that.

Before I close, I would like to express support for one of the amendments that the Majority has proposed.

It would strike Sec. 872 from the Homeland Security Act, thereby preventing the Secretary of Homeland Security from unilaterally reorganizing components within the Department.

Adoption of this amendment would ensure that reorganizations within DHS are within the purview of this Committee, as lead authorizer for the Department.

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