



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS)
Full Committee Markup
December 13, 2017**

I would first like to extend my thoughts and prayers to the people of New York City and those affected by the Port Authority Bus Terminal explosion this past Monday. I thank the first responders and law enforcement officers who quickly identified the suspect and took him into custody. The attack underscores the need for continued vigilance against acts of terrorism on U.S. soil and to redouble our efforts to bolster security for surface transportation and other critical infrastructure.

I expect that today will be the last markup for this year. Despite our jurisdictional limitations, we have managed to be productive legislatively this Congress. We have advanced about seventy timely and important measures, including a bill to authorize DHS and, this week, a bill to reorganize and rebrand NPPD.

There is still work to be done though. Certainly, in light of the attack on public transportation in New York earlier this week, we should be considering Vice Ranking Member Watson Coleman's "Surface Transportation and Public Area Security Act of 2017".

We also should be considering H.R. 2514, a bill I worked with Representative DeFazio, a former member of this panel, to introduce to restore sorely-needed monies from the passenger security fee to TSA to address emerging terrorist threats. In the days to come, I hope we can work together to prioritize consideration of these and other measures that have the potential of making a big impact on our nation's security.

Turning to today's markup, on the roster are 12 bills that address a wide range of homeland security concerns. Several of the bills on the roster codify activities that the Department of Homeland Security is currently engaging, while others seek to advance the Department's operations, including an area that has been of great interest to me-- DHS' overseas operations.

I understand that many of the bills are the outgrowth of the Committee's taskforce to prevent terrorists from entering the United States. Regardless of whether, in the end, Members issue a bipartisan report, we are able to support these bills.

I am particularly pleased that H.R. 1486 – the "Securing American Non-Profit Organizations Against Terrorism Act of 2017" is included on the roster. I introduced

H.R. 1486 to authorize the non-profit grant program to provide needed support to non-profit organizations that are at risk of a terrorist attack. The recent uptick in threats and incidents against non-profit organizations this year reflects a disturbing trend of ideologically-based threats of violence against non-profit organizations, and substantiates the need for legislation to ensure that these communities are secure. H.R. 1486 seeks to do just that.

If enacted, for the first time, at-risk organizations outside of Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) jurisdictions would be eligible for these terrorism preparedness and protection grants. The “Securing American Non-Profit Organizations Against Terrorism Act of 2017,” is endorsed by the Jewish Federations who sent a letter to this Committee in support of this legislation.

I also want to thank you Chairman McCaul for working with me on including language to formally authorize the Non-profit Security Grant Program in the DHS Authorization Act, and for considering this important measure again today as a standalone bill in order to facilitate passage in the Senate. I am pleased that this has been a bipartisan effort.

As such, I urge President Trump to join us in our efforts to secure non-profit organizations and places of worship and reject the hatred and extremism fueling the violent threats against – NOT embrace and incite it – as his recent re-tweeting of anti-Muslim videos and his inciting rhetoric has done.

Finally, there are two other bills introduced by Democratic Members that we will be considering today. I support H.R. 4578 the “Counter Terrorist Network Act,” introduced by Representative Vela, a strong proponent of the Customs and Border Protection’s National Targeting Center. It would codify the activities currently carried out by the National Targeting Center’s Counter Networks Division.

I also support H.R. 4433, the “Securing DHS Firearms Act of 2017,” authored by Representative Correa to direct DHS to step up its efforts to safeguard Department-issued firearms and other sensitive assets. Both measures are steps in the right direction of enhancing the effectiveness of DHS in fulfilling its mission to safeguard the homeland and the American people.

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