



COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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

Markup of: H.R. 3286, H.R. 1501, H.R. 3224, H.R. 3208, and H.R. 3254

May 17, 2023

Over the past twenty years, the Committee on Homeland Security has forged a reputation as a serious, thoughtful panel that comes together to tackle challenging homeland security issues in a bipartisan manner. The hyper-partisan way the Committee has been operating this Congress runs counter to that reputation.

With last month's nearly 17-hour markup—in which all 43 Democratic amendments were defeated—still fresh in our collective memory, I am hopeful that we can find some areas for common ground today. For my part, I stand ready to support all five noticed measures.

I am pleased that we are considering legislation authored by the gentlewoman from Houston, Rep. Jackson Lee, to nurture talent within DHS to help address chronic cyber staffing shortages. According to CyberSeek, a national nonprofit that maintains a cybersecurity jobs heat map, there were over 750,000 cybersecurity job openings in 2022, including more than over 45,000 in the public sector. Over 30 percent of the Federal cyber workforce is over the age of 55.

Last year, the “State of the Federal Cyber Workforce” report raised alarm bells about how expected retirements, the lack of entry-level and diverse talent, turnover, and the growing need for new skill sets pose a significant risk to the effectiveness of our cyber mission. With cybersecurity threats continuing to grow, the need for more trained cyber specialists will only increase. Enactment of Rep. Jackson Lee's legislation will help enhance efforts to get current DHS personnel trained to fill cybersecurity vacancies.

I am also pleased that we are also considering the “First Responder Access to Innovative Technologies Act” as introduced by Rep. Donald Payne, Jr. H.R. 3254 directs the Federal Emergency Management Agency to maintain a uniform, predictable, and transparent process for DHS grantees to seek authorization to purchase innovative technologies.

As someone who served in my community for 27 years as a volunteer firefighter, I commend Mr. Payne for authoring this legislation to help first responders access the tools to carry out their mission safely and effectively.

I look forward to participating in debate on these two measures, along with the three measures sponsored by Committee Republicans, on the House floor in the coming days. More broadly, I stand ready to work with the Chairman to ensure that a representative number of bills sponsored by Democrats get the consideration they deserve by the full House.

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