

Statement of Ranking Member J. Luis Correa (D-CA)

Subcommittee on Oversight and Management Efficiency Hearing

“Doing Business with DHS: Industry Recommendations to Improve Contractor Employee Vetting”

Tuesday, February 27, 2018

The Federal government is one of the world’s largest marketplaces. In FY2017, DHS service contractors reported that more than 54,000 FTE were employed under DHS contracts.

Given the vast nature of the DHS mission, the Department must use contractors throughout the components to fulfill critical needs.

With vacancies in the Trump Administration at such a high level, it goes without saying that DHS should have in place transparent, practical policies designed to get contractors onboard in a reasonable amount of time.

Contracting companies have indicated DHS is not transparent with its fitness criteria, hindering firms’ ability to understand the personnel needs of DHS components. Companies have also indicated that fitness standards vary across DHS components, precluding reciprocity of favorable fitness assessments when a contractor joins a contract with a different DHS component.

These areas require proper oversight and management and can certainly be corrected by eliminating unnecessary redundancy in the fitness adjudication process, setting up consistent criteria Department-wide, and effectively communicating with contractor employees.

Unfortunately, these administrative remedies have fallen low on the Department’s priority list, namely because of misplaced focus on ineffective, costly campaign promises, such as a billion-dollar border wall.

At a time when DHS resources are already spread thin, effective use of tax payer dollars should be centered on ways the Department can operate and fulfill its mission in the most suitable, efficient manner.

I certainly understand the importance of contractors to the DHS mission.

My district is home to several companies with contract work at DHS, particularly small businesses in the information technology and service fields.

During my time in the California legislature and my time in Congress, I have worked hard to develop solutions to help keep California's small businesses competitive and thriving, so that we can create more good jobs and grow our economy.

I look forward to speaking with witnesses today about their interactions with DHS and how we can move the Department’s contracting practices in a more positive direction across the board, not only just in contractor vetting, but also with how DHS manages and develops opportunities for small businesses.