



One Hundred Twelfth Congress  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Committee on Homeland Security  
Washington, DC 20515

May 24, 2011

The Honorable Peter T. King  
Chairman  
Committee on Homeland Security  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman King:

We are writing to request that the Committee on Homeland Security conduct oversight hearings to examine the cuts to homeland security grant programs for fiscal years (FY) 2011 and 2012 and the preparedness and response gaps that are likely to result on the State, local, and tribal levels.

Since the beginning of the 112<sup>th</sup> Congress, we have vigorously opposed reductions, as proposed by the Republican leadership, to vital homeland security programs, most especially grant funding to first responders. First, in February 2011, the House passed H.R. 1, the "*Full-Year Continuing Appropriations Act of 2011*," which called for cutting homeland security grant funding for FY 2011 by approximately \$900 million. Then, in March, Congress passed the *Further Continuing Appropriations Amendments of 2011* (P.L. 112-4) that cut first responder grants funding for FY 2011 by \$125 million. Finally, Congress passed the last continuing resolution for FY 2011, the "*Department of Defense and Full-Year Continuing Appropriations Act of 2011*" (P.L. 112-10), which will result in preparedness and response grants being cut by at least twenty percent. We opposed each of these reductions. Of further concern is the forthcoming FY 2012 Department of Homeland Security (DHS) appropriations bill that was recently approved by the House Homeland Security Appropriations Subcommittee. It would reduce homeland security grant programs by \$2.1 billion below the FY 2011 level. Taken together, these cuts undermine critical preparedness and response capabilities throughout the Nation.

This Committee has steadfastly supported the Nation's capability, capacity, and preparedness for catastrophic incidents, both terrorism-related and natural disasters. Because of our record on these issues we cannot remain silent. First responders and the grant programs that allow them to serve must become a part of the decision-making process.

To bring into focus the capabilities that may be lost as a result of these cuts, we would like to present you with a few specific examples of the diversity of the homeland security risk.

- A recent “lone wolf” scenario that is worth noting occurred in February of this year, when Khalid Ali-M Aldawsari, a resident of Lubbock, Texas, was arrested by the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) in Lubbock for purchasing materials to make an improvised explosive device with the intention of bombing potential U.S. targets. Lubbock is not an Urban Areas Security Initiative (UASI) jurisdiction and therefore relies heavily on the State Homeland Security Grant Program (SHSGP) funding for preparedness and response capabilities.
- Preparedness funding under the Transit Security Grant Program (TSGP) is essential to help secure our mass transit systems and potentially prevent a domestic attack, as occurred in Moscow in March of 2010, when terrorists bombed multiple targets within the Moscow subway system in quick succession. Accordingly, the \$53 million reduction in TSGP funding in FY 2011 could not come at a worse time, given that the threat to our Nation’s mass transit and rail systems is at its highest level.
- Buffalo, a community that is slated to be cut from the UASI program, was the site of the “Lackawanna Six” prosecution in 2002. The elimination of funding of over thirty jurisdictions from this critical program, including Buffalo, is shortsighted and fails to recognize the geographically diverse nature of the terrorism risk.

While we have limited the above examples to SHSGP, TSGP, and UASI, we would also like to highlight that the Assistance to Firefighter grants program and Port Security Grant Program are slated for significant reductions under the proposed FY 2012 DHS appropriations bill.

It is imperative that our State, local and tribal first responders maintain a heightened state of readiness and vigilance towards man-made and natural threats. This requires that they have a full partner at the Federal level through grant programs such as UASI, SHSGP, and TSGP. Yet the grant guidance for FY 2011, as recently released by the Federal Emergency Management Agency, would reduce the number of eligible jurisdictions to participate in UASI significantly, even as al-Qaida recently vowed to carry out attacks in retaliation in the killing of Osama Bin Laden.

In closing, while we all agree on the need to be fiscally responsible, we cannot afford to shortchange the Nation’s preparedness by making arbitrary funding cuts. To that end, we request a Full Committee hearing that brings together leaders from States, urban areas, and first responder groups and provides an opportunity to hear from those on the frontlines. Additionally, we strongly believe that the Committee would benefit from conducting a series of field hearings in jurisdictions that were eliminated from the UASI program under the FY 2011 grant guidance, such as San Antonio, Buffalo, Sacramento, New Orleans, Kansas City, and Tucson. At these hearings we can see firsthand the security challenges these grant cuts will create across a diverse range of communities.

If you have any questions, please contact Lanier Avant, Democratic Staff Director, Committee on Homeland Security.

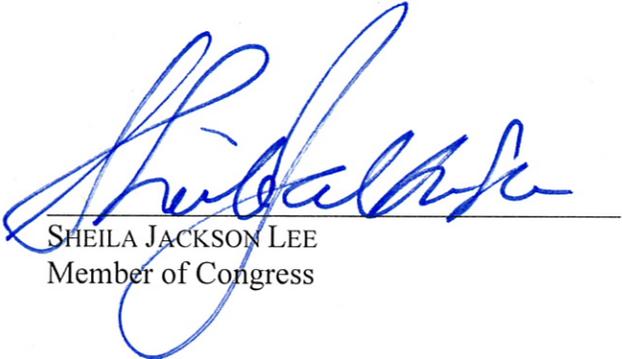
Sincerely,



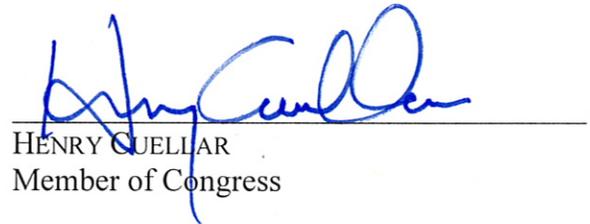
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Ranking Member



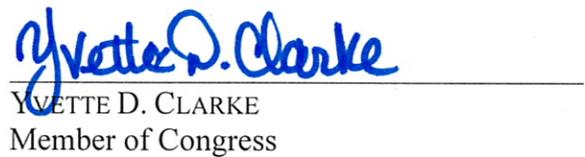
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SHEILA JACKSON LEE  
Member of Congress



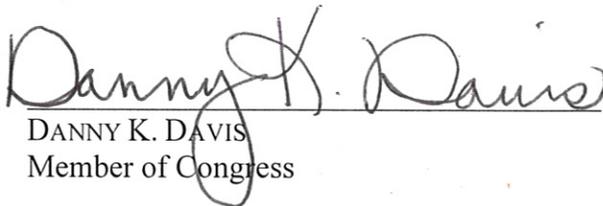
HENRY CUELLAR  
Member of Congress



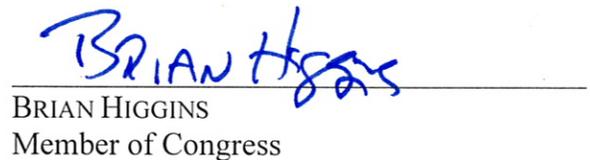
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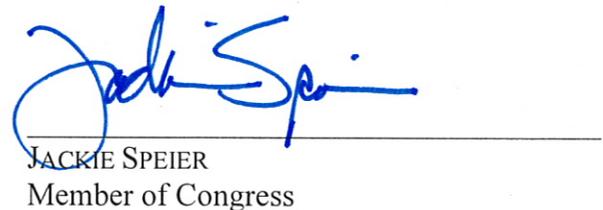
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Member of Congress



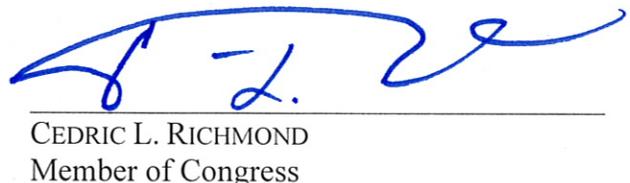
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