

MEDIA INFORMATION



Congresswoman

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Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee Working to Secure Our Nations Crucial Infrastructure

Partnering With the Private Sector and Holding the Homeland Security

Washington, DC- Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee, Chair of the House Homeland Security Subcommittee on Transportation Security and Infrastructure Protection released the following statement at a hearing entitled, "Partnering with the Private Sector to Secure Critical Infrastructure: Has the Department of Homeland Security Abandoned the Resilience-Based Approach?"

"I am proud to convene today's hearing, which will focus on private sector participation in securing our nation's critical infrastructure. Among our goals today is to determine the applicability of resilience to this mission; to what extent the Department is promoting it, and what we, as a Congress, can do to support these efforts.

"At the outset, I wish to thank Chairman Thompson for declaring May "Resilience Month" for our Committee.

"In support of 'Resilience Month,' today's hearing will focus on an area ripe with resilience-related issues. Perhaps nowhere is resilience more relevant to homeland security than the area of 'critical infrastructure protection,' which—I think could be more accurately termed—"critical infrastructure protection and resilience."

"After the attacks on September 11, most of the record \$80 billion in economic losses was suffered by the private sector. The consequences of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita caused extraordinary damage as well. The magnitude of the hurricanes' actual impact was rivaled only by the catastrophic failure of the federal government to adequately respond to the resulting suffering.

"I am proud to be focusing on critical infrastructure resilience, but I know that others have also advocated this position for some time. A task force of the Homeland Security Advisory Council on critical infrastructure released a report in 2006 stating that the focus should be shifted from protection to resilience because it made a more convincing business case to companies. The Report said that resilience offers an effective metric:

time. Companies can measure how long they will be 'down' in the wake of a particular disaster and can work to minimize that time.

"Resilience, I must say, is not capitulation. We—in no way—are saying that our guard should be taken down. To assert that we are is mere political theatre. Instead, we are honestly saying to the American people that we cannot protect everything all of the time; so, if we are hit—or one of our suppliers is it—we plan to ensure that we can recover quickly so grave damage is not done to our economy.

"It is my belief that that the Department should utilize resilience as the means by which to encourage private owners and operators to secure their infrastructure for three reasons:

"It requires the provision of information that demonstrates to companies that there is an actionable threat to their infrastructure—most of the time this information is not available and, as a result, companies do not see the justification of these expenditures in the absence of a threat;

"And, related to the first, companies have been trained by this economy to have no expenditures that do not produce profit within a few months—a protective and preventive measure to defend against a terrorist attack likely does not generate such profit; a focus on protection and prevention is not measurable. We have no metric for quantifying whether something is 'protected.' Without being able to quantify when "enough is enough," industry is more reluctant to act.

"A strategy based upon resilience is not a silver bullet, but it does support the critical infrastructure security objective. Beyond encouraging preventative and protective measures, it asks companies to ensure that they can "bounce back" due to a disruption, which may include a terrorist attack. This will support communities, supply chains, and our national psyche.

"Furthermore, a focus on resilience can increase the profitability of our companies. For example, a 2007 report by the Council on Competitiveness entitled, "The Resilient Economy: Integrating Competitiveness and Security," asserted that the 835 companies that announced a supply chain disruption between 1989 and 2000 experienced 33 percent to nearly 40 percent lower stock returns than their industry peers. Those companies that were resilient and, thus, able to effectively deal with—and bounce back from—disruptions were the ones which grew in market share and saw increased returns.

"In many ways, last week's Full Committee hearing was eye-opening. I do believe that the Department is doing more with resilience than was mentioned at the hearing. I look forward to hearing from Assistant Secretary Stephan about those programs under his auspices and where, why—, and why not—he sees resilience as being effective. This Committee has not shied away from promoting private sector security. The 9/11 Bill passed last August included a "Voluntary Private Sector Preparedness Accreditation and Certification Program." By no means is this program regulatory; but it does provide for a conversation between the Department and the private sector about security. Led by Chairman Thompson, we included language that calls upon the Department to work with the Sector Coordinating Councils under Assistant Secretary Stephan to develop the standards for the voluntary program. I look forward to hearing more about this program today and hearing whether the contemplated standards will include an element of resilience.

“This Subcommittee is not interested in blame or bashing. This Subcommittee cares only for securing our critical infrastructure and having a constructive dialogue with the Department. We believe that this hearing is a part of that dialogue and look forward to learning from Assistant Secretary Stephan and our other witnesses. Resilience may not be the silver bullet, but a real discussion about it may make us more secure in the days, weeks, months, and years ahead.”

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