

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Statement of Chairman Bennie G. Thompson*****The President's FY 2010 Budget Request for the Department of Homeland Security***

May 13, 2009 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Chairman Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the full Committee hearing entitled “The President’s FY 2010 Budget Request for the Department of Homeland Security”:

“I want to thank Secretary Napolitano for being here today to testify in support of the President’s Fiscal Year 2010 Budget Request for the Department of Homeland Security. The transition period for the Obama Administration has been very busy on many fronts. From border violence to the recent flu outbreak, the Department has had a lot on its plate. Yet, you have still managed to submit a very comprehensive budget that answers a lot of the questions we’ve had about where the Department wants to go.

Last week, in the President’s budget, just over \$55 billion was requested for the Department of Homeland Security. This is an increase of \$2.6 billion over last year. Within that request, the President is seeking about \$43 billion in appropriations. This represents an increase of 6.6% over last year and will cover key investments in homeland security in a range of areas including the following:

- \$121 million in funding for explosives detection;
- an additional \$96 million for southbound firearms and currency smuggling enforcement;
- \$420 million for SAFER firefighter grant program; and
- An additional \$75 million for the DHS headquarters project.

I believe that funding sought for the Department will benefit this vital agency. Additionally, the budget includes a number of critical programmatic changes that I support and would like highlight here. The transfer the Office of Intergovernmental Programs to the Office of the Secretary is a long time in coming and will surely enhance DHS’s ability to coordinate with State, local and tribal governments. I also support moving the Federal Protective Service from ICE to the National Protection and Programs Directorate--- the center of gravity for infrastructure protection at DHS. The \$75 million increase slated for the Comprehensive National Cybersecurity Initiative is another step in the right direction.

Although I agree overall with the President’s request for the Department, I do have some concerns. In previous years, over 40% of DHS’s budget went out the door to contractors to perform a host of functions including policymaking. This over-reliance on contractors has undermined DHS’ ability to execute its missions. I am hopeful that through your Efficiency Review, we will start to see some progress in this area. While

overall funding for grant programs seems in line with past budgets, I am concerned about the significant decrease planned for the FIRE Grant Program. As a volunteer firefighter, I know how much communities rely on this critical program.

In these tough economic times, I am committed to working to help secure a budget for the Department that keeps on our commitment to fiscal responsibility while strengthening the security of our Nation. I am also committed to executing my legislative responsibilities and producing authorization legislation to give DHS the resources and authorities it needs to execute all its missions. Tomorrow, the Committee is moving its first piece of authorization legislation for FY 2010. The TSA Authorization Act is the product of extensive bipartisan discussions. It reflects input from Members, GAO, the Inspector General, and transportation stakeholders from across the spectrum. Regrettably, input from TSA was hard to come by. With no Senate-confirmed leader at the head of TSA, the agency has not been the partner that we had hoped to have.

Madame Secretary, I appreciate the challenges that this vacancy creates for you on an operational level and am eager to see a strong manager installed in this critical position soon. Please keep in mind that the delays in filling key positions throughout the Department not only makes things difficult for you but also complicate this Committee's ability to carry out its oversight and legislative responsibilities. I look forward to forging a collaborative relationship with you and the new leadership in DHS. This Committee has years of knowledge and experience on a range of issues that you face. Please look to us as a resource as you consider homeland security challenges.

In closing, I look forward to working with you Madam Secretary to ensure that the Department has the resources it needs to execute all its missions—including to prevent and respond to the threat of terrorism.

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