

Opening Statement by Chairman David Price (D-NC)

FY 2011 Budget Hearing for U.S. Secret Service

March 18, 2010

Today we welcome Director Mark Sullivan to the Subcommittee to discuss the 2011 budget for the U.S. Secret Service, which proposes \$1.572 billion for the agency in 2011. This amount includes modest increases to fund inflationary salary growth and to continue the recapitalization of the Secret Service's outdated computer system. The request also includes \$17 million for the start-up costs of the 2012 Presidential campaign. It's hard to believe, but indeed that marathon is already in its formative stages, and the Secret Service agents working the campaign will certainly have an arduous few years ahead of them.

The 2011 request also includes a significant and surprising reduction in Secret Service operations – a \$9.6 million cut to the budget for protective operation support personnel. These personnel were initially funded through a 2009 emergency appropriation, which the Congress passed just after the inauguration to respond to an increased level of threats directed at President Obama. Since that time, the threat level has waned to a level consistent with past Presidents, which is to say that threats against President Obama are more than likely the result of the office he holds and not personal animus against the

man himself. Still, as we are all aware, it only takes one or two deranged and impassioned individuals to create a potentially dangerous situation for Secret Service protectees. The recent “party crashing” incident, which fortunately did not result in violence against any of our country’s leaders, shows how nothing, not even the assumption that uninvited guests won’t show up for a White House function, can be taken for granted in this day and age.

So, Mr. Director, we are interested in understanding how an increase that the Secret Service said it needed less than two years ago is now not longer required for the protective mission. Are you confident that not only the absolute volume of threats, but also the intensity of those threats, make it reasonable to decrease the budget for protective support? Is it wise for the Secret Service to be going into the campaign season with a lower level of support personnel than you thought necessary at the end of the last election?

The other issue of note addressed in the Secret Service budget is the poor state of the agency’s information technology systems. In a recent analysis by the National Security Agency, Secret Service IT systems were found to have a reliability rate of less than 65%. This study also uncovered security vulnerabilities and a mainframe architecture dating from the 1980’s. In last year’s Appropriations Act, we started the process of recapitalizing the Secret Service’s

hardware and software with an appropriation of \$34 million. This year's budget seeks \$48.6 million more, including \$15 million for interoperability of radio systems with the White House Communications Agency. Clearly, this is a project that cannot wait if the Secret Service is to provide the highest levels of protection necessary for the 2012 campaigns. However, I am astonished by the extent to which this problem was seemingly ignored or deferred for so long. The budget for every agency at DHS includes a per-employee "cost module" that is supposed to fund regular capital replacement, such as scheduled upgrades in computer infrastructure. Mr. Director, we need to understand more about how the Secret Service allowed these system deficiencies to fester for so long, especially in light of other Department-wide efforts to improve DHS technology.

Director Sullivan, these issues should not overshadow the excellent work done every day by the agents and officers who work for the Secret Service and literally put their lives on the line to protect our nation's leaders, our financial institutions, and the integrity of our currency. We are grateful for their dedication to serving their country. I also appreciate the good working relationship we have maintained during my tenure as Chairman of the Subcommittee, and your agency's responsiveness to various Congressional concerns. It is this type of

collaborative relationship that our Committee depends on to make the best investment decisions for the country.

Now, let me turn to my colleague and the Ranking Member of the Subcommittee, Hal Rogers, for his opening remarks. After that, Mr. Director, we will ask you to summarize your written testimony in a five minute statement and then answer the questions we have about your budget proposal.