

SUBCOMMITTEE RANKING MEMBER DAVID PRICE

May 16, 2012

"Mr. Chairman, I want to begin by commending you for the open, collaborative, and bipartisan process you have led this spring, culminating with the fiscal year 2013 Department of Homeland Security Appropriations bill before us. While I appreciate your efforts, the fact remains our Subcommittee was forced to accept a reduced allocation for the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) when Republicans unilaterally cast aside the spending agreement we reached last August, forcing this Committee to absorb \$19 billion in reductions below the Budget Control Act levels. This lower level will not reduce the deficit, but was done to make way for another round of tax breaks for the wealthiest Americans, and for defense spending the Pentagon didn't ask for.

"Recognizing that the Republican Leadership forced the Appropriations Committee to break the budget agreement, I am pleasantly surprised that you could accommodate as many funding priorities as you did. As you have already stated, the bill before us provides \$39.117 billion for the Department, one percent below the amount requested, continuing a downward funding trend for this agency over the past few years.

"I applaud you and your staff for retaining adequate funding for the front line employees of the Department of Homeland Security, so that they can continue to conduct critical operations along our borders, protect our nation's airports and seaports, and respond to the spate of natural disasters our country has experienced.

"As the recently thwarted attempt to place a non-metallic explosive device on an aircraft shows, terrorists remain committed to attacking the United States, our citizens, and our allies. Al Qaeda and its affiliates continue to devise more and more perverse ways to kill innocent people, requiring DHS and the intelligence community to remain ever vigilant against these threats. This bill sustains those efforts, including funding the President's request for Advanced Imaging Technology machines at our airports. I commend our intelligence professionals for their disruption of this latest plot and remain committed to ensuring we sustain our capacity to prevent terrorist attacks here at home.

"That is why I am pleased this bill substantially increases funding for critical grant programs, while rejecting the Administration's poorly articulated changes to the grant structure - - changes that have not been authorized. Specifically, I want to commend you for funding FEMA State and Local grants \$413 million above the fiscal year 2012 level, and for keeping both fire grants and emergency management performance grants at the requested levels.

"Equally important, the bill provides improved funding for research and development efforts in the Department, most notably at the Science and Technology Directorate. The bill contains sufficient funds for all high priority research efforts and some funds for new projects as well. While the bill appears to fully fund the Administration's request for S&T, however, it includes \$75 million for construction of the National Bio and Agro-defense Facility, which was not requested, thereby in effect reducing funds for R&D efforts. Although I support the eventual construction of this facility, I must question the inclusion of \$75 million in limited resources for a project that the President did not request, that remains under review by the National Academy of Sciences, and that has appropriations already from prior years to draw upon.

"The bill also increases funding for critical Coast Guard, as well as Air and Marine, acquisitions, to recapitalize aging assets while also bringing the latest aviation and vessel technologies on line to ensure these personnel can operate more effectively.

"Finally, the bill includes a substantial increase for cyber security protective efforts to continuously monitor and detect intrusions to our Federal networks from foreign espionage and cyberattacks.

"I do have some concerns with this bill as well, notably some of the immigration provisions. Numerous unnecessary statutory floors are set for a variety of programs, such as an arbitrary minimum of 34,000 detention beds, a required level of spending for the seriously flawed 287(g) program, and an inflexible amount for worksite enforcement. Including these types of spending floors and wasteful mandates in bill language limits the Department's flexibility to respond decisively to the immigration challenges facing our country.

"I also strongly object to the statutory provisions that withhold: 60 percent of all funding provided to the Secretary, Under Secretary and Chief Financial Officer; 10 percent of all funding for salaries and expenses of Customs and Border Protection personnel; and about 37 percent for

Coast Guard Headquarters Directorate until they submit numerous statutory requirements. Couple these withholdings with a provision that prevents the Secretary, Deputy Secretary, Commandant, and Vice Commandant from using their aircraft until certain key statutory reports are received by the Committee! These constraints are excessive and will prevent DHS employees from effectively doing their jobs. While I support efforts to hold the Department accountable, such unrealistic limitations are so excessive that they detract from our ultimate purpose.

"This bill also recommends drastic reductions to information technology and construction activities at the new DHS headquarters already under construction. We have been told repeatedly by the Administration that deferring these investments will ultimately affect front-line operations and greatly increase our costs, and I believe that they are correct on both counts.

"As we move through this process, I will work to rectify some of the shortfalls, including offering an amendment today to restore firefighter hiring waivers to this bill, as we have done each year since 2009 due to poor economic conditions. But in closing, I want to reiterate my appreciation for your efforts to work with us on many issues and to sustain our frontline homeland security operations."