

Subcommittee Ranking Member Rep. David Price

May 9, 2012

"Mr. Chairman, I want to commend 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. Recognizing that the Republican Leadership forced the Appropriations Committee to take an additional \$19 billion in reductions below the Budget Control Act levels we all agreed to last August, I am pleasantly surprised that you could accommodate as many funding priorities as you did in this mark. As you have already stated, the mark before us provides \$39.117 billion for the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), one percent below the amount requested, continuing a downward funding trend for DHS over the past two years.

"While I don't agree with everything in this bill, 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 this spring.

"The bill substantially increases funding for critical grant programs while rejecting the poorly articulated changes to the grant structure; changes that have not been authorized. Specifically, I want to thank you for funding FEMA State and Local grants by \$416 million over fiscal year 2012, and keeping both fire grants and emergency performance grants at the requested levels.

"Equally important, the bill provides ample funding for research and development efforts in the Department, most notably at the Science and Technology Directorate. While the bill appears to fully fund the Administration's request for S&T, the mark includes \$75 million for construction of the National Bio and Agro-defense Facility, which was not requested, thereby reducing funds for R&D efforts. Although I support the eventual construction of the NBAF facility, I must question the inclusion of \$75 million in limited resources for a project that is not requested and remains under review by the National Academy of Sciences. However, even after you factor out these construction costs, the bill contains sufficient funds for all high priority research efforts and some funds for new projects as well.

"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.

"And finally, of note, 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.

"All of that being said, 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 on the seriously flawed 287(g) program, and an arbitrary amount for worksite enforcement. Including these types of floors in bill language limits the Department's flexibility to respond decisively to the ever changing immigration issues affecting in our country.

"I am also deeply concerned about statutory provisions that withhold: 60 percent of all funding provided to the Secretary, Under Secretary, 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 except in limited emergency situations, until certain key statutory reports are received by the Committee, is excessive and will impact the ability of DHS employees from effectively doing their job. While I support efforts to hold the Department accountable, such a limitation does nothing to help this Committee, nor the country.

"This bill also recommends drastic reductions to information technology needs 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 cost us more money in the future, and I believe that they are correct.

"As we move through this process, I will work to rectify some of the shortfalls I have highlighted in this statement. But in closing, I want to reiterate my deep appreciation for the Chairman's efforts to work with us on many issues, and for his efforts to sustain our frontline, federal

homeland security operations."