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## **OPENING STATEMENT OF RANKING MEMBER DAVID PRICE**

### **Full Committee Markup of the FY 2012 DHS Appropriations Bill**

Mr. Chairman, I am pleased that we are proceeding with our standard process of a Full Committee markup for the fiscal year 2012 Department of Homeland Security appropriations bill and that we expect to see this bill on the floor next week. As you have already stated, the bill provides \$40.6 billion, a 6.8 percent decrease below the President's request and more than \$1 billion less than current year funding. At this level, you are funding the Department of Homeland Security at roughly the 2009 level which is concerning to a lot of people, including myself. This allocation has required you to make some tough decisions this year.

Before I elaborate my concerns with these decisions, let me start by applauding you and your staff for working to retain 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 also addresses weaknesses in aviation and maritime cargo security efforts, permits the hiring of additional CBP Officers at the ports of entry, and enhances integrity programs for border personnel. It enhances the Department's overseas efforts to better secure our visa processing; it increases Coast Guard personnel for marine safety and environmental response following the Deepwater Horizon disaster; and it provides sufficient resources to better share information among Federal, State and local entities, including at the fusion centers.

That being said, I am deeply troubled by some of the cuts to homeland security programs in this bill. One of the worst decisions was to decimate funding for almost every grant program for state and local preparedness. Providing a total of \$1 billion for all State and Local Grants, or 65 percent below the request, and providing \$350 million for Firefighter Assistance Grants, almost 50 percent below an already reduced request, breaks faith with the states and localities that depend on us as partners to secure our communities. These cuts will be doubly disruptive as many of our states and municipalities are being forced to slash their own budgets. I cannot conceive of any defensible argument for cuts of this magnitude.

You note that one of the main reasons for the cut to State and Local grant programs is because the agency has allowed large pots of money to remain unexpended and that many of these grant programs are not directly tied to risk. While I concur that the Department has struggled to get those entities who receive grants to expend the dollars quickly, many of these funds are tied to longer term construction projects that require multiple stages of design, permitting, and historic preservation reviews before construction can even begin. And we should be clear that, by and large, these funds are already obligated for specific and approved projects, but the money has not left the Treasury because final receipts for completed work have not been turned in by the states and localities. And, as you know, FEMA and TSA have been working doggedly to try to improve the draw-downs—something that should be favorably acknowledged, not penalized.

As to the absence of comprehensive methods of assessing risk: one of the first things that I did as Chairman was to mandate a system-wide assessment of DHS's ability to estimate and assign risk to critical programs and infrastructure. The National Academy of Sciences completed this work and noted that different risk methodologies apply to different types of grants: most obviously state grants are largely distributed by formula and are designed to maintain preparedness for whatever risk each state faces; whereas urban areas, port, and transit security grants are distributed based on risk, vulnerability, consequence of a terrorist attack. So to say that a reorganization of the grant program will allow limited funds to focus on the highest need and highest threat doesn't hold water if you expect the Secretary to continue funding state homeland security grants, as your current bill language permits. Because of the statutory requirement to fund each state at a particular level and the carve-out for Stonegarden border security grants, that leaves only \$552 million to fund urban areas, port, and transit security

grants – all of which were funded at a combined \$1.25 billion for fiscal year 2011. This is a 56 percent reduction, on top of a 21 percent cut these same programs received from fiscal year 2010 to fiscal year 2011.

It's also important to keep in mind that these grant programs equip our state and local partners to be ready for a disaster, so they can mitigate its impact and respond effectively. While this bill rightly seeks to help states and localities rebuild after a disaster strikes, it decimates the work required to prepare for one before it happens. That exposes our communities to greater risk, and it potentially raises the costs of attacks and disasters when they do occur.

This bill recommends other drastic reductions, for example by cutting research funding in half. At this level, the Science and Technology Directorate has informed us that it would concentrate its remaining resources on aviation security and explosives detection technologies and on two cutting edge, near term research projects. Funding for many other critical research efforts under way on cyber security, disaster resiliency, and detection of chemical and biological threats, will not be funded in 2012.

The bill also greatly reduces funds for information technology needs, automation programs, and construction activities; and includes no funding for the new DHS headquarters already under construction and the related lease consolidation efforts. 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.

Finally, the bill contains some statutory provisions that I find troubling. While I appreciate the Chairman's willingness to continue some of the efforts I began on prioritizing the removal of criminal aliens when they are judged deportable, I have serious reservations about mandating government spending on a pre-set number of detention spaces. This emphasis is contrary to the government's intent to reform the detention system and target its use for only those individuals who require it. And in an environment of fiscal restraint, when we fully fund the Administration's request for detention spaces, should we also be telling a federal agency that they're not permitted to spend less than a certain amount if the same objective can be achieved at a savings to the taxpayer?

While I recognize that the Administration's budget left the Subcommittee some holes to fill, this bill's allocation is the real problem. And that is thanks to a completely unrealistic spending cap set by the House Republican budget. We're now seeing the real implications of that deeply

flawed plan. It simply leaves no room to keep Departmental operations strong while fulfilling our dual responsibility to prepare for and respond to all hazards.

I want to close by reiterating my deep appreciation for the Chairman's efforts to work with us on many issues, and for his valiant efforts to sustain our frontline, federal homeland security operations. But, as you may expect, I will offer some amendments this morning to rectify some of the shortfalls I have highlighted in this opening statement.

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