

Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may utilize.

I am pleased we are considering the fiscal year 2012 Department of Homeland Security appropriations bill in a timely fashion under an open rule. Chairman Aderholt has been true professional in the drafting of this bill, and I appreciate his willingness to include input from our side along the way.

For the second year in a row, overall funding for the Department of Homeland Security will drop. The bill decreases funding for DHS by 6.8 percent below the President's request and essentially returns funding back to the 2009 level, which is concerning to a lot of people, including myself.

This allocation has required Chairman Aderholt to make some tough decisions. He has been able to retain adequate funding for the front line employees of the Department of Homeland Security to continue conducting critical operations along our borders, protect our nation's airports and seaports, and respond to the wave of natural disasters our country has experienced this spring. But the same, unfortunately, is not true of homeland security grant programs, which are cut radically. 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 especially harmful as many of our states and municipalities are being forced to slash their own budgets. For example, according to the International Association of Firefighters, 1,600 fewer local firefighters will be on the job if the cuts in this bill are enacted. I cannot conceive of any defensible argument for cuts of this magnitude – cuts that come on top of cuts to grants already made in the fiscal year 2011 appropriation. They will do great damage to local preparedness, to emergency response in our communities, and to the economy.

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. And we shouldn't ignore the impact of first responder layoffs to the economic recovery.

This bill recommends other drastic reductions, for example by cutting research funding in half. At this level, the Science and Technology Directorate 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. Other critical research efforts under way, such as cyber security, disaster resiliency, and detection of chemical and biological threats, will not be funded in 2012, if ever.

The bill also greatly reduces funds for information technology needs and construction activities. It 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.

While I recognize that the Administration's budget left Chairman Aderholt some holes to fill, this bill's allocation is the real problem. 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.

The majority further exacerbated the allocation's inadequacy by adding \$850 million in Disaster Relief beyond the President's request to respond to recent flooding and tornado emergencies. Contrary to tradition, the additional spending was not designated as an emergency for budget purposes, and as a result, these disaster funds came out of the hide of first responder funding. We gave the majority two chances to correct this flaw by designating the funding increase beyond the request as an emergency, once in last week's Appropriations Committee markup and yesterday in the Rules Committee. Unfortunately, the majority refused and passed up the opportunity to get us to a point at which both parties might be able to support this bill.

I want to close by reiterating my appreciation for the Chairman and his staff's efforts to work with us on many issues, and for their valiant efforts to sustain our frontline, federal homeland security operations. But the bill falls short of our obligations in critical respects. The inadequate allocation makes it difficult to repair, but I and other members will be offering amendments to move it in a positive direction.

Mr. Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

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