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OPENING STATEMENT OF RANKING MEMBER DAVID PRICE

Department of Homeland Security FY2013 Budget Hearing

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"Good morning, Madam Secretary. It is a pleasure to have you kick off our hearing season. The 2013 discretionary budget request for the Department of Homeland Security is \$39.5 billion, plus an additional \$5.5 billion in disaster relief funding that does not count toward the discretionary cap. At roughly the same level as 2012, this budget represents the first time an Administration has not sought an increase for homeland security activities since the Department was formed.

"Like all federal agencies, you have been asked to do more with less, and this has required some tough decisions. I was pleased to see this budget prioritize current and future threats by including significant increases for FEMA grants and Science and Technology, albeit against a base which has been significantly reduced in the last two years. The budget also proposes reductions to Coast Guard personnel and acquisitions, a realignment of some current DHS programs, and a significant reorganization of homeland security grant programs. Today, I look forward to exploring how the Department is prioritizing risks and allocating funds in this era of shrinking budgets.

"It is also time to reflect about where the Department of Homeland Security has been and where you are heading. This includes the Department's efforts to enforce our nation's immigration

laws, which we all know are in dire need of comprehensive reform despite Congress's failure to act.

"As you well know, illegal immigration attempts have decreased by 36 percent in the past two years and are one-third of what they were during their peak. This impressive decline is due in large part to the doubling of Border Patrol agents along the Southwest Border and the significant increase in immigration personnel working in the same region, along with improvements in detection technologies. This change is something we can all be proud of.

"In addition, the Administration has taken positive steps to improve its immigration enforcement policies. While some have been quick to criticize these efforts, I believe it is both prudent and entirely appropriate for the Administration to focus on the removal of criminal aliens first and foremost, while providing prosecutorial discretion on less pressing cases. I also support your effort to better focus the Secure Communities program to be sure it is fulfilling its intended mission and not being applied indiscriminately. And I am pleased that the Administration continues to oversee and revoke 287(g) authorities and contracts at poorly performing detention facilities when it is clear that problems are not being resolved.

"I must also commend you on the job FEMA did over the past year, nimbly dealing with 99 major disasters. FEMA did a remarkable job of working with affected areas to make sure that our citizens and localities had the resources to remove damaged structures and debris as well as to begin the rebuilding process. This confirms that much of the lost capacity we witnessed following Hurricane Katrina has been rebuilt. This impressive performance was even more laudable since it occurred during a period of great funding uncertainty. Hopefully the new disaster funding mechanism provided in the Budget Control Act will ensure long-term stability for the DRF.

"That being said, there are some areas of your budget request that concern me. I see over 1,000 Coast Guard personnel leaving, significant reductions in mission support staff at both CBP and ICE, and large reductions to Coast Guard and CBP aviation and maritime assets, impairing both agencies' operational tempos. These reductions, coupled with the assumed collection of \$317 million in new aviation security fees that have not been authorized by Congress, leave us with several holes to fill at the outset. And that doesn't even get to commitments you have already made, such as completing construction of a new DHS headquarters, that are not funded in 2013 at all.

"I also have concerns about the growing pains that DHS components continue to experience—nearly a decade into the Department's existence—when it comes to effective oversight of personnel and procurement decisions. Last December, an internal review of the National Protection and Programs Directorate found mismanagement of and by NPPD personnel and misuse of funds. Similarly, an Inspector General report suggests that USCIS officials are unduly pressuring adjudicators to approve applications and petitions, potentially leading to fraud. And we have seen too many Anti-Deficiency Act violations recently, where appropriated funds are diverted to different uses than permitted. The Department needs to hold its personnel accountable to ensure that issues raised by internal reviews, audits, or the Inspector General are addressed promptly and effectively. I think we have made some progress, but we are not fully there yet, and as Secretary you have a responsibility to keep working on it.

"Madam Secretary, I look forward to your testimony and working with you again this year."

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