



United States Senate
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
Senator Susan M. Collins, Chairman

Opening Statement of
Senator Susan M. Collins
Chairman, Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
Department of Homeland Security Budget
March 1, 2006

Today, the Committee will review the Department of Homeland Security's budget submission for fiscal year 2007. I welcome Secretary Chertoff back to the Committee.

Three years ago today, the Department first opened its doors. As we review the implications of this budget proposal for our homeland security, we must do so in the context of both the accomplishments and the deficiencies of the past three years.

The 2007 budget proposal requests \$42.7 billion in funding, an overall increase of six percent. The President's budget includes a number of funding increases that will help the Department of Homeland Security make America stronger and the American people safer.

For example, it provides increases for Customs and Border Protection and Immigration and Customs Enforcement to better secure our borders and to help bring an end to the "catch and release" practice of not detaining illegal aliens caught by law enforcement officers. It also prioritizes intelligence gathering and analysis at the Department.

In addition, the budget would create an office within the Department to strengthen the security of chemical facilities. This is of particular interest to me, as I have held four hearings on chemical security and have introduced bipartisan legislation, with Senators Lieberman, Coleman, Carper, Levin and others, to authorize the Department to establish performance-based standards to enhance the security of our chemical plants.

But there are aspects of this budget I find troubling. The mission of DHS cannot be successfully accomplished from Washington alone. The Department must rely on a partnership with state and local governments. Yet, the Administration cuts grants to states and local governments, to police, firefighters, and other first responders. These grants help train and equip our first responders, including providing them with interoperable telecommunications equipment. As we have seen time and again — from the 9-11 attacks to Hurricane Katrina — this training and equipment are essential to an effective front-line response to catastrophes.

There are other areas of insufficient funding. Although this budget recommends a four percent increase for the Coast Guard, this amount is inadequate given the enormous expansion of the Coast Guard's homeland security mission since 9-11. Ironically, this budget proposes to expand the Coast Guard's responsibilities even further by adding the mission of National Capital Region Air Defense. Nor does the budget adequately fund the Coast Guard's non-homeland security missions. Indeed, under the proposal, the Coast Guard would suffer cuts in the

areas such as search and rescue, marine safety, and environmental protection. The cuts to search and rescue are particularly incomprehensible in light of the heroic performance of the Coast Guard during Hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

I am also very concerned that this proposed budget maintains the Deepwater program as a 25-year acquisition project while we continue to spend tremendous sums on legacy assets that are near or past their service life.

The silver lining of the reaction to the pending sale of Peninsular and Oriental to Dubai Ports World is that it has served to highlight the critical importance of port security to our national security. Last November, Senator Murray and I introduced the GreenLane Maritime Cargo Security Act of 2005, based on our years of work on port security. This comprehensive legislation authorizes \$835 million for programs and initiatives to better secure our nation's ports. It provides strong direction to the Department regarding the crucial next steps in supply chain security. Regrettably, the Administration's budget does not dedicate a separate funding stream for port security grants – whereas our bill provides \$400 million for that purpose. The budget request folds port security in with all transportation and critical infrastructure, thus providing no assurance of funding to strengthen the security of our ports.

This budget proposal was developed in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. While the Committee's investigation of the preparation for and response to Katrina has highlighted many outstanding performances, such as by the Coast Guard, our investigation also has revealed a great many failures across the partnership of government agencies charged with disaster preparation and response. Nowhere are these failures more profound and disturbing than those within the Department of Homeland Security, which bears the ultimate federal responsibility for effective preparation and quick response.

I am encouraged that this budget requests \$50 million for a National Preparedness Integration Program, a new initiative that will fund activities to “strengthen the nation's capacity to prepare for and respond to natural or other disasters” through catastrophic planning and improving emergency communications. I look forward to discussing with Secretary Chertoff today how this new initiative and how the overall budget will produce far better results than we saw with Katrina.

Finally, of course, we come to FEMA. From the delayed, uncoordinated, and ineffective response to Katrina to the recurring waste, fraud, and abuse that afflict the relief programs, the performance of FEMA during this disaster has been a disaster itself. The budget provides for a 10-percent increase to begin the strengthening of FEMA, but I remain concerned that the problems Katrina exposed require not only more resources but also better leadership and a more integrated culture at DHS.

A budget is primarily about money, but it is about more than money. It is about priorities. As we review a budget that will carry the Department of Homeland Security into its fourth year, we must ensure that the priorities will truly advance the goal of a stronger, safer America.

###