

**Chairman Johnson Opening Statement
Nomination of General John F. Kelly, USMC (Ret.),
to be Secretary, U.S. Department of Homeland Security
January 10, 2017**

As submitted for the record:

Good afternoon. Thank you for joining us today.

It is an honor to convene the committee's first hearing of the 115th Congress to consider the nomination of Gen. John Kelly – a man who is uniquely qualified to be the fifth secretary of the Department of Homeland Security.

General Kelly, on behalf of the committee, I thank you for your willingness to once again answer the call to serve our nation. I also applaud President-elect Trump for nominating you for this position.

General Kelly has devoted his life to service—beginning as an enlisted infantryman in 1970, he became a four-star general. He led our men and women in uniform during three tours in Iraq, oversaw the operations at the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay, and served as commander of U.S. Southern Command. His extensive and relevant experience has provided General Kelly with a deep knowledge and understanding of the grave security threats facing our nation and the sacrifices that are required to keep us safe.

Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security is one of the most challenging jobs in government. The department employs 240,000 men and women who are responsible for securing our borders, aviation system, and waterways; administering and enforcing our immigration laws; defending cyberspace; and preparing our nation to respond to disasters. The department also plays a critical role in the nation's counterterrorism efforts, and must work with law enforcement personnel from around the nation who are on the front lines, working to prevent terrorist attacks.

During the last congress, this committee held extensive hearings on the threats and vulnerabilities facing America. From those hearings, I concluded that our borders are not secure, immigration laws are not being fully enforced, cyber threats are real and growing, and our critical infrastructure is not adequately secure. As a result, the next secretary of the Department of Homeland Security will be shouldering enormous responsibilities.

General Kelly, as chairman of this committee, I commit to working with you and your team at the department to address these challenges and to do whatever we can to help make America a more prosperous and secure nation.

Our committee has a history of bipartisanship and a track record of working with the department to make our nation safer. During the 114th Congress, I was honored to work with Ranking Member Carper and all of the members of our committee to enhance our economic and national

security. We held 86 hearings and enacted 49 laws—including important legislation to strengthen the department and to secure our borders.

I look forward to continuing that tradition of bipartisanship with our new ranking member, Senator McCaskill.

Ensuring the continuity of leadership at the department is an important responsibility of this committee and the U.S. Senate. That is why Secretary Napolitano—President Obama’s nominee for DHS secretary—was confirmed by voice vote on the day of the president’s inauguration.

For the sake of our national and homeland security, I sincerely hope we can similarly fulfill our responsibility at the start of the new administration.

General Kelly, thank you again for your service to our nation and your willingness to serve in such a vital position.