

## **OPENING STATEMENT**

I want to thank the Chairman for holding this markup today. It is a testament to the work of this committee that we have a markup with 15 bills, most of which have bipartisan support. I particularly want to thank you and your staff for working with me on four of my bills that are on this markup that will improve government efficiency and oversight and increase our homeland security. There are also two bills on the markup that I am proud to have worked on with you as chairman and ranking member of this committee – one to help DHS and DOJ combat the imminent potential threat of drones used by bad actors, and one to enhance disaster mitigation efforts and FEMA transparency so that our communities are able to withstand natural disasters better and rebuild after them.

The Preventing Emerging Threats Act is what happens when the legislative process works well. We had a hearing and a briefing last week on the threat that drones pose to our critical infrastructure and our communities. We learned a great deal from the briefing and the hearing, and out of those efforts, we came up with a strong bill that gives DHS and DOJ the authorities they need to protect this nation from an emerging threat before something bad happens while including protections for privacy and civil liberties. I wish we could follow that simple process more – have a hearing, identify an issue, figure out the best solution and come together on a bipartisan basis to fix the problem. I understand that there are still some concerns with the bill from certain groups, and I hope that we can continue working on this bill to address those concerns as we move through the legislative process. But we know that the enemy is looking at ways to use drones against us, and we would not be doing our job if we waited for that to happen before we did something.

The Disaster Recovery and Reform Act is another good example of how the legislative process should work. The House worked hard to come up reforms based on the lessons learned from recent hurricane seasons. Now it's our turn to make changes that we feel are important as well. It is painfully clear that we need to build our cities to be more resilient in the face of horrific storms that are occurring with increasing frequency and force. And it is equally clear that fraud is rampant when we push hundreds of millions of dollars out the door as quickly as possible to help states rebuild after these storms. This bill addresses both of those issues, setting aside more money for mitigation efforts so that storms do less damage, and giving the IG community greater transparency into how these funds are ultimately being spent, and by who. It is estimated that for every \$1 spent in mitigation, between \$4 and \$8 is saved in avoided disaster recovery costs. It is the definition of penny wise and pound foolish if we don't do the work to make our cities and towns stronger in the face of these storms.

Sadly, in the case of the opioid crisis that is plaguing too many families and communities in this country, we did wait too long. Foreign fentanyl manufacturers realized long before we did that they could exploit the international mail system to get fentanyl into this country virtually undetected. Our international mail facilities are operating with 20<sup>th</sup> century technology, at best, and often still sorting mail and doing inspections by hand, and too much is slipping through the cracks in the system as a result. I hope that my OPIOID Act will focus DHS' attention on developing better capabilities to detect and interdict packages containing illicit narcotics.

Finally, I want to thank the Chairman for including my Post Office Discontinuance Accountability Act on the markup. I know all of us are concerned about the Postal Service's ongoing financial struggles as mail volume continues to decline. Package delivery is a booming business for the Postal Service, but packages are more costly to deliver and the volume still pales

in comparison to regular mail. I hope that the Chairman will allow the postal reform bill to move that Senator Carper, Senator Heitkamp, Senator Moran and I have introduced, or that he will present a plan of his own so that we can reach an agreement to save the postal service.

But my bill on the markup today is really not a postal bill at all – it’s a customer service bill. It’s a bill about making sure a federal agency is doing right by our constituents. The Postal Service has a process to temporarily close post offices after a disaster hits. But these closures are intended to be temporary. They’re called “emergency” suspensions for a reason. Yet some of these post offices that are quote unquote temporarily suspended stay closed for 5 years or more. I have a post office in Missouri that was closed after the Joplin tornado in 2011 that still hasn’t reopened. And these communities are left completely in the dark about when or if their post office will reopen. That’s especially concerning in rural areas where folks have to travel miles to get their mail, or have their packages and medications delivered. It’s not right to leave communities in the dark like this.

The Postal Service needs to have the flexibility to rightsize and make sound business decisions. But it’s still a service. It’s right there in the name – United States Postal SERVICE. When post offices close, communities are given notice, an opportunity to comment, and are provided with a sound business case for why the post office is closing. That’s not the case with a temporary closure. The Post Office is open one day, closed the next, and no one has any idea when it’s going to reopen.

My bill simply tells the Postal Service, if you need to temporarily close a post office, give folks a plan for when you’re going to reopen, and if for whatever reason you can’t meet that plan, just give them some information periodically on when they can expect service to return. Or

else go through the public closure process. That's it. Just tell folks what to expect. It's not that hard.

I'll discuss the rest of my bills as the Chairman brings them up. Thank you.