

OPENING STATEMENT OF  
SENATOR GEORGE V. VOINOVICH, RANKING MEMBER  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT OF GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT,  
THE FEDERAL WORKFORCE AND THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

ONE DHS, ONE MISSION: EFFORTS TO IMPROVE MANAGEMENT INTEGRATION AT THE  
DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

DECEMBER 15, 2009

Good morning. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for calling this hearing so that our Subcommittee can continue its efforts to understand and address the wide range of management challenges the Department of Homeland Security faces.

I regularly remind my colleagues that when we established the Department of Homeland Security in 2002, we initiated the federal government's largest restructuring since the Department of Defense was created in 1947. What's more, we told that Department to protect us from terrorism and natural disasters while addressing the organizational, operational, and cultural challenges associated with merging 22 agencies and 170,000 employees into a single, new entity.

We knew that such a transition would take time – the Government Accountability Office reminds us that successful transformations of large organizations can take at least 5 to 7 years. Yet I am frustrated that, well into its sixth year, so many issues continue to plague the Department.

In addition to the challenges GAO and the DHS Inspector General will tell us about today, the DHS Chief Financial Officer and the Homeland Security Advisory Council's Culture Task Force have both articulated concerns about DHS management.

While all of these entities acknowledge DHS' progress towards becoming an effective and efficient organization, I wonder whether more can be done.

DHS is currently the third largest cabinet with about 220,000 employees and an annual \$50 billion budget. That is too big an entity spending too much money to be deemed susceptible to waste, fraud, abuse, and mismanagement year after year, yet DHS remains on GAO's high risk list.

I hope the Department places the utmost priority on addressing GAO's recommendations to get off the high risk list next year.

I want to thank our witnesses for being here today. I look forward to discussing these matters with them, including what more GAO and the DHS IG think needs to be done, what DHS plans to do regarding those recommendations, and when DHS will get off the high risk list.

Helping DHS get off that list by strengthening its management remains one of my top priorities as I prepare for my final year in Congress. During my career in public service, including as a Mayor and Governor, I have repeatedly observed that the path to organizational success lies in adopting best practices in management, including strategic planning, performance and accountability measures, and effectively leveraging human capital.

I know that DHS had adopted some such practices, and I hope to learn today of their future plans in these areas.

Regarding the practices that have been adopted, I am aware and appreciate the progress that has been made to better manage DHS. To that end, I want to take a moment to thank Under Secretary Duke for her work to improve the Department's management functions.

As Under Secretary for Management, Ms. Duke has served as the DHS Chief Management Officer for about eighteen months. In that time, she has made significant progress in addressing many of the management challenges facing DHS.

For example, under her leadership, DHS has improved its ratings from the Inspector General regarding both acquisition management and grants management. The GAO report we are examining today also indicates that she has been "instrumental" in helping components prioritize their activities.

Ms. Duke, I truly appreciate the efforts you have put into improving DHS, and I look forward to hearing more about those efforts from you today.

But Mr. Chairman, despite DHS' progress under Ms. Duke's tenure, as well as the efforts of her predecessor Paul Schneider, both GAO and the DHS IG recognize that much remains to be done for DHS to be a cohesive, efficient and effective organization. I look forward to discussing today how we will accomplish that.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.