

**Opening Statement of Chairman Thomas R. Carper
Nomination of Hon. Jeh C. Johnson to be Secretary
of the Department of Homeland Security
November 13, 2013**

As prepared for delivery:

Today, we meet to consider the nomination of Jeh Johnson to serve as Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). As we all know, the President has asked Mr. Johnson to take on a difficult and demanding job.

The Department is composed of 22 distinct agencies spread across various locations throughout the country. Although progress has clearly been made in bringing these 22 agencies together, ten years after its creation, DHS still lacks cohesion and a strong sense of team. Employee morale at DHS remains perhaps the lowest among major federal agencies.

Moreover, the nation's fiscal challenges and the effects of sequestration mean that DHS will face even more obstacles that make working towards getting better results with fewer federal dollars even more important.

All-in-all, even on a good day, serving as Secretary of DHS is a really hard job. Fortunately for Mr. Johnson, there are few better places to learn how to manage a complex national security bureaucracy than at the Department of Defense.

Mr. Johnson has been confirmed by the Senate twice before--once as the Air Force's top lawyer and once as the top lawyer for the entire Department of Defense. In part because of his experience in these positions and other demanding roles, Mr. Johnson is prepared to face the challenges that will await him if he is confirmed by the Senate. For four years, he was a major player in running the Defense Department. He provided key advice to two exceptional Defense Secretaries--Bob Gates and Leon Panetta--giving him invaluable experience for the huge task to which he has been nominated.

Mr. Johnson has received high praise from many. Our Committee received a joint letter of recommendation from former DHS Secretaries Ridge, Chertoff and Napolitano that touted Mr. Johnson as an "eminently qualified nominee" and urged the committee to quickly approve his nomination.

Here's what former Defense Secretary Gates, a strong manager himself, said about Mr. Johnson and his time at DOD: "Take my word for it: [Jeh Johnson] has successfully managed an array of major initiatives across the biggest bureaucracy in the government – and, in so doing, won the esteem of virtually everyone with whom he worked."

Former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Admiral Mike Mullen has also expressed his deep confidence in the nominee, stating, "Jeh Johnson is as fine a person and professional as I have ever met. I am confident in his choice and that he will succeed in leading this most complex organization at a critical time in our country." In a similar letter, former U.S. Attorney General Michael Mukasey added: "Johnson will bring to DHS not only experience but also a frame of

mind that should be a source of assurance to anyone concerned with the security of this country. He understands both the issues and the stakes, and will make an excellent Secretary.”

Mr. Johnson has also received encouraging words of praise from Fran Townsend – the former Homeland Security Advisor to President Bush – as well as from former Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta, Gen. John Allen, the former Commander of US forces in Afghanistan, and a number of law enforcement groups.

Mr. Johnson, of course, will not be alone in this task of leading DHS. It is critically important that Mr. Johnson be allowed to surround himself with a capable leadership team. We can help. Indeed, we need to. Currently at DHS, there are 13 Presidentially-appointed positions that are without a permanent replacement. Of these, nine require Senate confirmation. I call this “Executive Branch Swiss Cheese.” As we consider Mr. Johnson’s nomination, we must remember that protecting the homeland is a team sport and those of us in the legislative branch are critical members of this important team. Once Mr. Johnson is confirmed, we must do our part to expeditiously vet and – hopefully – confirm his leadership team, as well.

Before I turn to Dr. Coburn for his remarks, let me again offer to Mr. Johnson the same advice publicly that I shared with him when we met in my Senate office recently. Eagerly seek the counsel of former DHS Secretaries Ridge, Chertoff and Napolitano, as well as former Deputy Secretary Lute and GAO Comptroller Gene Dodaro. They want you and the Department to succeed. Ask for their help and don’t be shy about asking for their advice again and again. The same should hold true for reaching out to former DOD Secretaries Gates and Panetta. They hold you in very high esteem. They also know what you’re up against. Lean on them. Their collective advice will prove invaluable to you as you take on the task that lies ahead of you.

In closing, let me reiterate my strong support of Mr. Johnson’s nomination and my appreciation for his willingness to serve the people of this country in this new role. I want to call on my colleagues – both Democrat and Republican – to join me in voting to confirm him as soon as possible. Mr. Johnson, if you are fortunate enough to be confirmed, I look forward to working with you in the coming months and years to better protect our homeland and its people.

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