

**Statement of Ranking Member Tom Carper**  
**“The Homeland Security Department’s Budget Submission for Fiscal Year 2017”**  
**Tuesday, March 8, 2016**

*As prepared for delivery:*

My thanks to Secretary Johnson for joining us today to discuss the President’s Fiscal Year 2017 budget request for the Department of Homeland Security.

The President has requested \$40.6 billion dollars in discretionary funding for DHS, which is roughly a one percent decrease from the budget enacted last year.

While I am pleased that many vital homeland security missions are funded in this budget request, I do have concerns about several of the proposals and the impact they might have on the Department.

I understand the need to do more with less as part of our efforts to continue to bring our nation’s deficit and debt under control. Making additional progress is critical for the well-being of our nation and our economy. But while doing so, we also need to make sure that the Department has the funds it needs to keep the American people safe against the constantly evolving and growing threats we face as a nation.

I am concerned, for example, by the proposal to cut funding for several homeland security grants. In fact, some grants would be cut by as much as 35 percent. These funds are vital to helping our communities better prepare for major disasters and terrorist attacks. In Boston, for example, homeland security grants were critical to training first responders and preparing the community to respond to the Boston Marathon bombings.

I also have questions about the fee increases proposed in the budget for aviation security. I know that raising these fees has not been popular with some in Congress, but I’ve always felt that if something is worth having, it’s worth paying for. That’s why I’ve supported reasonable fee increases that will help DHS carry out its mission.

However, if Congress doesn’t raise these aviation fees, there will be roughly a \$900 million dollar hole in the budget for TSA. That is deeply concerning. I hope we can all come together and find a sensible solution to this problem.

Despite these areas of concern, there are a number of positive items included in this budget request. For example, there is a sizable investment—over \$1.1 billion dollars—in cybersecurity. This is a 30 percent increase over last year. This new funding will help the Department carry out several laws that this Committee worked hard to pass over the past several years.

For instance, the budget request includes needed increases for Einstein and other cybersecurity tools to better secure our federal networks. There is also funding for additional cyber personnel, as well as for the new information sharing portal that Congress called for creating at DHS.

The proposed budget also continues our recent investments in border security. I was particularly pleased to see increases in funding for valuable ‘force multipliers’ – equipment such as aerostats, airplanes, helicopters, vehicles, boats and surveillance towers – that help our men and women on the ground be more effective.

I was also pleased to see that the budget request continues to make countering violent extremism here at home a high priority by funding the Office of Community Partnerships. Last month, this Committee successfully marked up my legislation that would codify this office. I look forward to working with you, Mr. Secretary, and the Director of the office, George Selim, as well as my colleagues, to advance this important bill through the Senate.

Finally, I’ve also been quite encouraged to see funding for the ongoing consolidation of the Department’s Headquarters at St. Elizabeths. Completing this project will ultimately save the taxpayer more than \$700 million over the next 30 years by cutting down the number of costly leases we use today to house DHS personnel.

Mr. Secretary, I’d like to close by recognizing your leadership, along with that of your Deputy Secretary, Ali Majorakas, as well as the efforts of your senior staff and rank-and-file DHS employees, in support of your Unity of Effort initiatives.

Along with the members of our committee staff, the Chairman and I are working diligently to move legislation that would codify a number of your proposed reforms.

I look forward to hearing more today about how we can work together to ensure the Department has the tools, resources, and authorities it needs to grow stronger and work more effectively.

Thank you again for joining us here today and for your extraordinary service to our country.