

**Statement of Ranking Member Tom Carper
“DHS Management and Acquisition Reform”**

Wednesday, March 16, 2016

As prepared for delivery:

Our oversight on this committee is usually focused on the men and women at the Department of Homeland Security working on the frontlines at our airports, our land borders, or our coasts. But backing up the Department’s frontline personnel is a dedicated cadre of professionals in the DHS Management Directorate. The Management Directorate controls the Department’s finances; it oversees the acquisition of assets and procurement of services; it manages the Department’s IT backbone; and, it makes sure every employee gets the paychecks and benefits they’ve earned. As you can see, and as my colleagues have heard me say before, ‘management matters.’

Our friends from the Government Accountability Office (GAO) and the Inspector General have kept a close eye on the Department’s management and acquisition practices. As their testimony indicates, there have been a number of challenges in these areas since the Department’s creation about thirteen years ago. And the management of the Department, of course, continues to be on the GAO High Risk list as Secretary Johnson continues his predecessors’ efforts to merge nearly two-dozen agencies that were once spread across the federal government.

Despite the massive undertaking of stitching together so many agencies with different missions and cultures, we’ve seen a number of management successes at the Department over the years. In fact, I was very pleased to hear that the Department has just taken another step towards getting off the High Risk list by improving the monitoring of its key management initiatives. This is definitely good news, and Secretary Johnson and his team deserve to be commended.

But as the Inspector General has noted before, addressing the Department’s long-term management challenges requires ‘a commitment to building – and sustaining – a culture that recognizes the need to act in a more unified, inclusive, and transparent way.’ I couldn’t agree more. That’s why I strongly support Secretary Johnson’s ‘Unity of Effort’ initiative, which seeks to create more cohesion and efficiency across the Department by standing up joint operations.

Last week, Secretary Johnson told this Committee that he would like to see his management initiatives codified in law so that the improvements he and his team are making can be sustained and made even stronger by the next Administration. That makes a lot of sense to me. And it’s why I’ve joined the Chairman in cosponsoring two pieces of legislation that would seek to make permanent many of the management reforms that the Department has already instituted. In some cases, our legislation provides new authority or requirements. For example, the DHS management bill provides headquarters officials’ additional authority they can use to better oversee the activities of the components. It would also require DHS to report to GAO every six months on the progress being made to get off the High Risk List.

The second bill focuses on improving the acquisition processes at the Department. Among other things, this bill would, for the first time, designate the Under Secretary for Management as the

single accountable leader for all DHS acquisition programs. It would also vest the Under Secretary with the statutory authority to halt, modify, or cancel acquisition programs that are struggling or are not viable. While I believe these bills provide a solid foundation for the Department to continue to mature and grow even stronger, I know they are not perfect. And when something is not perfect, we should make it better. I look forward to working with all my colleagues on further ways to improve these bills.

In closing, I think it's important to remember that the Department, at the age of thirteen, is still a young organization. Given this fact, it needs proper guidance, firm rules, and strong oversight. That's where these bills and this hearing come in. By working together, we can give the Department the tools and authorities it needs to continue to mature and truly become 'One DHS.'