

Opening Statement of Chairman Johnson
Business Meeting
February 28, 2018

As submitted for the record:

Tomorrow marks 15 years since Congress created the Department of Homeland Security. The legislation we are advancing is an important milestone for the Department and our Committee. The Department has never been fully reauthorized, which raises questions about how DHS and its components should operate absent clear direction in statute. The House passed a reauthorization in July by a vote of 386 to 41.

Passing the Department of Homeland Security Authorization Act is an important step to strengthen DHS and to establish a process for regular authorizations so that Congress clearly defines the Department's responsibilities and authorities over time to evolve and address emerging threats.

One of our Committee's goals is to strengthen the Department of Homeland Security, and to enable the Department to execute its missions. This bill is the culmination of a three-year bipartisan project to reauthorize DHS. I began this effort with Senator Carper back in 2015 during the Obama Administration. We worked in a bipartisan manner to try to strengthen DHS's management and "unity of effort." We were successful in passing some reforms, and this bill builds on those efforts.

Over the past year, this Committee has continued to work in a bipartisan manner to authorize the Department. Senator McCaskill's staff and my staff have had more than 25 briefings with DHS to inform this legislation.

As a result, the Ranking Member and I have filed a substitute amendment to the House bill for the Committee to consider that would codify and authorize key roles and responsibilities for the Department's headquarters offices, strengthen the Department's approach to managing its acquisition programs, and address recommendations from watchdogs like the Government Accountability Office and the Inspector General to improve the Department's management and performance.

We have also proposed including a key reorganization for DHS: transforming the National Protection and Programs Directorate into the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency. This Committee has, through previous bipartisan legislation, provided DHS with the authorities it needs to execute its cybersecurity responsibilities. Establishing an agency within DHS to focus on cyber and infrastructure security will help DHS achieve its missions.

I am pleased with how engaged our Members and their staff have been on this legislation. Members have offered some great ideas, many of which are already incorporated in our substitute amendment. Our shared goal is to create a final product that achieves broad support across both aisles in the Senate and is passed into law this year.