

## OPENING STATEMENT OF SEN. CLAIRE McCASKILL

**Business Meeting  
February 14, 2018**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I know that the focus of this markup was going to be the DHS Authorization bill, which would mark the first time that this committee has passed a bill authorizing DHS on a large scale since the Department was created in 2002. I think we came to the right decision that the bill isn't quite ready, but I know we are working hard to finish everything and move it soon. This is a great opportunity for this committee to set a precedent of authorizing DHS on a regular basis and reviewing its programs and authorities. It's a chance to codify best practices and help the Department improve in areas that it still struggles, like acquisitions. As a member of the Armed Services committee, I see what it means to the Department of Defense to look at ways to improve the Department every year, and I hope we are setting up this Committee to do the same for DHS going forward.

Today we are focusing on the other side of our Committee's jurisdiction – the government affairs side. We have a good list of 9 bills before us that improve government transparency, help whistleblowers, and hopefully provide some better data on the scourge of sexual assault. Without good data, it's impossible for us to pass laws that are truly in the best interest of all Americans.

The Improve Data on Sexual Violence Act, in particular, is something that I hope we can move through the Senate in short order. The bill is based on recommendations from GAO, which showed a variation between how the Departments of Education, Defense, Health and Human Services, and Justice collect data on sexual violence. The bill requires the Office of Management and Budget to create an interagency working group on sexual violence data collection. The working group would be required to study federal efforts and make recommendations for agencies and Congress to implement related to streamlining federal sexual violence data collection. This bill alone is not going to end sexual assault in this country. But it gives this body the tools it needs to better understand how this issue is affecting students, the military and our efforts to bring justice for its victims.

I also want to briefly mention the Chairman's Guidance Out of Darkness, or GOOD Act. I know that we've had our differences on this committee on issues related to regulatory reform, but this is a great example of how we can work together to improve transparency in the regulatory process. This bill will help companies and individuals affected by regulations and agencies' guidance documents understand those regulations by making these documents more easily accessible. [I think we have some more work to do on the definition of guidance, but I want to move this bill out of committee on the understanding that some work remains to be done.]

And finally, I'm glad to see that we're moving the All Circuit Review Act. This bill will make it far easier for whistleblowers to appeal their cases in federal court. Most Americans think that the Federal government is a collection of faceless bureaucrats sitting in Washington, but the truth is that almost 80 percent of federal employees work *outside* of the DC area. California and Texas actually have more federal employees than DC, Virginia and Maryland. Yet before we enacted a pilot to allow federal whistleblowers to appeal their cases in any federal circuit court,

appeals had to be brought to the DC circuit. That created a huge burden for federal workers living in the rest of the country. I'm glad to see that we're going to permanently give workers the opportunity to bring their whistleblower appeals to any circuit court in the country. It's the right thing to do, and I hope it will lead to justice for more whistleblowers.

Thank you Mr. Chairman. I yield back.