

**Opening Statement of Chairman Ron Johnson
“DHS Management and Acquisition Reform”**

Wednesday, March 16, 2016

As submitted for the record:

Good afternoon and welcome.

We assign to the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) some of the federal government’s most important responsibilities — securing our borders, enforcing our immigration laws, and protecting us from terrorist attacks. Yet we have given the Secretary of Homeland Security some of the greatest challenges of any cabinet official, directing nearly 240,000 employees in 22 components across a broad range of missions. We also require the secretary to answer to a large number of congressional committees with differing and changing priorities.

As chairman of this committee, I have asked tough questions of DHS. I remain concerned that our border is unsecure and that it invites adversaries into our country to do us harm. I am concerned about the security of our visa programs and DHS’s inability to enforce our immigration laws. When DHS fails to do its job, American people are put at risk.

The gravity of DHS’s mission requires us to look at its management structure — to understand what is working and what needs to change. Today, we are here to look at two major DHS challenges: first, DHS headquarters’ ability to lead and manage DHS and, second, DHS’s approach to acquiring multi-million and billion dollar programs.

Both the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) and the DHS Office of Inspector General have identified significant challenges at DHS. In 2002, President Bush signed the Homeland Security Act, bringing together 22 separate components into a single, unified department. Two months later, GAO included *Implementing and Transforming DHS* on its High Risk List because of the management- and mission-related challenges associated with a reorganization of such a tremendous scale. Thirteen years later, DHS management remains on the High Risk List, although GAO acknowledges that improvement has been made.

Secretary Johnson has sought to institute reforms to unify DHS and to improve coordination between its components. I look forward to learning more about those reforms and what work remains.

Our committee is considering legislation to reform DHS management and acquisitions, but we need to be sure that these reforms are the right ones to move DHS — and our nation’s security — in the right direction. I am pleased that we have a panel of experts to assist us in understanding these topics.

I thank all the witnesses for their willingness to participate in today’s hearing, and I look forward to your testimony.