

**Chairman Johnson's Opening Statement**  
**"Authorities and Resources Needed to Protect and Secure the United States"**  
**Tuesday, May 15, 2018**

*As prepared for delivery:*

I would like to thank Secretary Nielsen for appearing before the Committee today to discuss the authorities and resources the Department of Homeland Security needs to protect and secure the United States.

Under the Trump Administration and Secretary Nielsen's leadership, the Department has dedicated itself to securing our border, enforcing immigration laws, and protecting the homeland. In spite of multiple impediments within law and legal precedent, progress has been made. Arrests of MS-13 gang members are up more than 80 percent since the start of this Administration. Apprehensions at the border are surpassing fiscal year 2016 levels, totaling over 50,000 in just the last two months. Last year marked another record year for maritime narcotics interdictions, with more than \$6 billion worth of cocaine seized. And the Federal Emergency Management Agency led an unprecedented response to disasters that affected nearly fifteen percent of the nation's population.

This Committee has a tradition of working closely with the Department on a bipartisan basis to provide the authorities it needs to achieve its missions. Notably, last Congress, we passed reforms to strengthen the Department's "unity of effort" — a priority for former Secretary Jeh Johnson which the Trump Administration has supported and continued. This March, our committee passed a historic, bipartisan reauthorization bill. If passed, this bipartisan legislation would provide the authorities, resources, and guidance that the DHS workforce needs to protect our nation. It would also begin the process of addressing the organizational and jurisdictional challenges that have made authorizing DHS so difficult for the last 15 years.

The existing DHS authorization stems from an age before smart phones, social media, and unmanned aerial systems. Today's DHS needs the tools and resources to defeat a modern enemy and address emerging challenges. Our authorization bill provides those tools. The Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction Office and the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Agency would help address emerging threats. Infrastructure mitigation programs would help create a more resilient nation. Improved performance metrics would help enable Congress to provide actionable guidance and reduce costs.

Additionally, we recently introduced legislation that gives the Department the authority to counter evolving security risks to the public posed by drones.

We know there is more work to be done. As mentioned above, laws, legal precedents, and loopholes still inhibit us from fully defending our borders. Today's discussion will focus on providing the DHS workforce the tools that it needs to execute its mission. I look forward to hearing Secretary Nielsen's testimony and continuing to work with her on actions to equip and empower the men and women of DHS. We thank them for their service and the protection they provide to our nation.

