

**U.S. Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee**  
**“Reauthorizing DHS: Positioning DHS to Address New and Emerging  
Threats to the Homeland”**

**February 7, 2018**

**Ranking Member Claire McCaskill**

**Opening Statement**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Department of Homeland Security is the newest department in the federal government, having been established in 2002 by combining 22 existing agencies under one roof. Since its inception, the Department has never been authorized as a whole, and DHS has had difficulty managing and integrating its components into one cohesive Department. At the same time, the nature of the threat we face has evolved. It is long past time to authorize DHS, and really, this is something we should be doing much more often.

Many Americans might not realize the vast array of offices and responsibilities that fall under the Department. Each office – served by their hundreds-of-thousands of hard-working employees – is dedicated to the common goal of protecting America, but getting these offices to work in concert has been a challenge from the beginning of DHS. The authorization of the Department is an

opportunity to bring them together by giving DHS management the authority they need to create that cohesion.

On the management side, I want to just touch on a few priorities. This authorization bill includes several provisions that Senator Daines and I have introduced to reform the procurement process at DHS. We're all very familiar with some of the higher profile procurement failures at DHS. I know there have been improvements - the IG and GAO have pointed to the progress as a result of greater attention by leadership. The bills that Senator Daines and I have introduced would make sure that the progress sticks regardless of who's in charge.

We've also seen a significant change in the nature of threats since DHS was established. In the 15 years since the Department was created, terrorists have turned from airline hijackings to vehicle ramming attacks in New York and Charlottesville and mass shootings in Orlando and Las Vegas. We've seen how vulnerable our digitally connected world is with attacks like the WannaCry ransomware attack, the OPM hack, and of course, Russian interference in the 2016 elections. So authorization is also an opportunity to ensure that DHS is organized and capable of responding to today's and tomorrow's threats—not just those of over a decade ago.

The bill also authorizes counterterrorism funding, but one thing I'd like to hear from the witnesses today is whether the level of funding in the House bill is appropriate. I have repeatedly discussed my concerns—including with DHS—over this Administration's plan to cut state and local counterterrorism programs like the Homeland Security Grant Program. The House bill recognizes the importance of these grants by authorizing \$800 million in appropriations over the next four years, but my understanding is that Chairman Johnson is hoping to reduce the authorization levels funding our first responders. I certainly share his commitment to being a good steward of taxpayer dollars, but I want to make sure that we're striking the right balance between that and the safety of our communities. This Department is at the forefront of many of our most contentious political battles right now, and I want to know that we're prioritizing homeland security funding based on risk, not on politics.

I look forward to hearing from DHS, the IG and GAO about how this bill will make DHS better, and what other provisions could improve the Department and strengthen our security.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.