

Opening Statement of
Senator Susan M. Collins

“The SECURE Facilities Act—Protecting Our Federal Facilities, Employees and the Public”

Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs

Business Meeting

September 29, 2010

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Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I will focus my remarks today on the bipartisan legislation known as the SECURE Facilities Act, which would improve the woefully inadequate security at our federal buildings.

I am pleased to join Senators Lieberman, Akaka and Voinovich in this effort to help close major security gaps at our federal buildings.

It is clear that we must reform and modernize the Federal Protective Service (FPS), which is responsible for providing security at 9,000 federal buildings with 1,200 full-time employees and 15,000 contract guards.

The current situation at FPS is a disaster waiting to happen. Independent investigations of FPS by the Government Accountability Office and Department of Homeland Security Inspector General have discovered pervasive security gaps, lax oversight, inadequate training, and systemic operational flaws.

The findings were so alarming that the chairman and I labeled the agency’s overall work a “security crisis.” A review of only a few of the investigations’ more startling findings paints a dangerous picture:

- **Simulated bombs were smuggled into 10 high-security federal buildings. GAO investigators penetrated the security systems at all 10 federal buildings selected.**
- **A majority of FPS contract guards reviewed by GAO lacked mandatory training. Investigators found some FPS contract guards had not been trained to operate metal detectors and X-ray equipment. Others had no CPR, First Aid, or firearms training. All told, GAO found that 62 percent of the FPS contract guards reviewed lacked valid certifications in one or more of these areas.**

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- **The FPS failed to enforce rules governing guard posts and failed to inspect these posts after regular business hours. When GAO investigators conducted these inspections, they found some guards asleep.**
- **GAO found that in more than half of the 53 security checks FPS conducted, guards failed to identify concealed guns and knives.**
- **GAO revealed that an inattentive guard allowed a baby to be run through a building's x-ray machine. Though he was fired, he incredibly won a lawsuit against the FPS because the agency couldn't document that he had received the required training.**

Although some tentative steps have been taken by FPS, the Office of Management and Budget and the Department of Homeland Security have delayed implementing the critical security improvements required to help protect federal buildings, federal employees, and the American public.

The bipartisan legislation before us today is the solution.

It would codify the establishment, membership and authorities of the Interagency Security Committee, established by Executive Order six months after the Oklahoma City bombing. Under this bill, the ISC would be responsible for the development of safety and security standards and best practices to mitigate threats to federal facilities. The ISC, comprised of representatives from across the federal government, would establish risk-based performance standards for the security of federal buildings.

The bill would allow FPS to mandate the implementation of security measures at a facility and enforce compliance through inspections.

The bill also would authorize the Secretary of Homeland Security to charge additional fees to implement security improvements if tenant agencies failed to comply with applicable security standards. In such cases, the Secretary also must notify Congress of the non-compliant facilities.

This legislation would give FPS stronger authority to improve security at our federal buildings, helping to better protect the employees who work there and the public who visits.

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