

Business Meeting Statement
Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee
Chairman Joe Lieberman
May 11, 2011

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Good morning. Thanks to everyone for being here for the Committee's third business meeting this year. We have some new legislation to consider today and some legislation that we've carried over from our last business meeting. I'd like to move through the older items first to clear them from our agenda and then proceed to the newer pieces of legislation.

The two bills we were unable to complete last month are S. 772, the SECURE Facilities Act of 2011, and S. 550, the Fire Grants Reauthorization Act of 2011 – both of which have bipartisan support.

Very briefly, the SECURE Facilities Act would revamp the Federal Protective Service, the agency responsible for the security of employees and visitors at 9,000 federal buildings around the country. This legislation is an effort to set what is now a dysfunctional agency on the right course for future success. FPS' problems of mismanagement, chronic underfunding, and poor training for its 15,000 contract guards have been well documented over the years.

Our bill would provide the agency with the resources it needs to maintain proper security, improve guard training, and put the agency on track to address the very real threat of explosives.

The bill we are marking up today incorporates changes requested last month by Senators Collins and Levin regarding the number of full time employees we would like to add to the agency, advanced imaging technology, and other issues.

The FIRE Grants Reauthorization bill reauthorizes two critical grant programs that give local fire departments the support they need to hire additional firefighters, purchase fire safety equipment and vehicles, and pay for training. The bill differs from current law in that it would require at least 25 percent of grant funding to go to career, volunteer, and combination departments to ensure that every type of community fire department gets its fair share of federal resources.

The last bill I want to mention is a resolution that Senator Collins and I introduced Monday to emphasize the value of using passenger name record data to help prevent terrorist travel. House Homeland Security Committee Chairman Peter King and Ranking Member Bennie Thompson introduced a similar resolution yesterday. We feel the resolution is necessary to send a strong message of disapproval to the European Union, which is moving to

reopen negotiations on an agreement we signed with them in 2007 to share this information, which has already contributed to the arrests of Faisal Shahzad, the Times Square bomber, and David Headley, a planner of the 2009 Mumbai attacks.

With that, we will proceed. Senator Collins, would you like to make any remarks?