



Chairman Hal Rogers

House Committee on Appropriations

FY 2016 Budget Request for the Department of Homeland Security
March 26, 2015
Opening Statement As Prepared

Thank you for yielding, Mr. Chairman. Secretary Johnson, thank you for appearing before the Committee to discuss the Fiscal Year 2016 budget request for the Department of Homeland Security. I am immensely pleased that we have finally managed to pass a full-year spending bill for the Department to support our men and women on the frontlines, bolster critical security agencies, and fund vigilant anti-terrorism and law enforcement efforts on our home turf. Though we are getting a later start on the Homeland bill this year, I am absolutely committed to moving all twelve of our appropriations bills through the regular-order process to ensure that we responsibly fund these federal agencies.

Mr. Secretary, in years past, my colleagues and I have expressed disappointment in budget submissions from DHS that were political in nature, not reflective of the security needs confronting our country, and chock-full of budget gimmicks that made our job on the Appropriations Committee needlessly difficult. With a few exceptions that I will highlight later, I am happy to say that I cannot make those criticisms about the budget you've proposed for the upcoming fiscal year. After CBO scoring, the request constitutes a \$1.7 billion increase over enacted levels. It includes important funding for our frontline operations, including a \$98.8 million increase to support 21,270 Border Patrol Agents and essentially level funding for Coast Guard operations. The request for ICE includes sufficient funds for the 34,040 detention beds required under law, and you've done away with many of the unauthorized fees the department previously proposed to offset critical security spending.

While this budget submission is indeed a vast improvement over those we've seen in the past, that does not mean I am left without concerns. First, and probably most important, I question whether this request constitutes a realistic funding level. Unfortunately, the President's budget request government-wide is billions of dollars above the level our Committee will ultimately be allocated to support non-defense discretionary spending – and it's supported by unrealistic tax increases that he knows are DOA here in Congress. This is not responsible budgeting, and I question whether your recommended level of funding is possible given all of the domestic priorities at stake.

Second, President Obama's executive order on immigration remains the elephant in the room. The President's unilateral action demonstrates intentional disregard for the legislative authority of the Congress, jeopardizes the ability of this Committee to move forward with appropriations for the Department, poisons the well for any meaningful immigration reform package, and even

jeopardizes your very well-intentioned agenda to better unify DHS's practices and policies. You have unfortunately become the poster child for this ill-thought-out immigration policy because your department is charged with implementing it. Mr. Secretary, there are separation of powers in this country, and you simply cannot expect the Congress to stand idly by when the President circumvents an entire branch of government.

I have been involved with funding for this department since Day 1, and we take very seriously our responsibilities to support our men and women on the frontlines as they protect our homeland. Because of the importance of the DHS mission to our country's security, we on both sides of the aisle on the Appropriations Committee have worked earnestly to cast politics aside and focus on the critical task at hand. It is supremely disappointing to me that the President's egregious circumvention of Congress has shifted the conversation away from where it ought to be: on keeping this country safe from threats domestic and abroad, and making sure the men and women who protect us all, stay safe.

I look forward to your testimony today, Mr. Secretary, and I yield back.

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