



COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

David Price (D-NC), Chairman, Subcommittee on Homeland Security

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OPENING STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN DAVID PRICE *Department of Homeland Security Management Hearing*

I would like to welcome everyone to our first hearing of calendar year 2008. Over the coming months we plan to have 16 hearings focusing on every part of the Department of Homeland Security, and culminating with an appearance by Secretary Chertoff in April.

The Department of Homeland Security will be five years old in three weeks. Even though we all knew that the reorganization that formed the Department would be the most ambitious governmental reorganization in our lifetimes, I'm not sure anyone expected the difficulties the Department has faced, especially the numerous changes in Departmental leadership. Two Secretaries, three Deputy Secretaries, numerous changes in Agency heads, and on and on. If anything needed stability in leadership and superior leadership, it was this Department. It hasn't gotten it.

Too often, we hear about a breakdown at the Department of Homeland Security that appears to stem from flawed judgment.

We have heard about a staged FEMA press conference and an ICE Halloween party that was at the very least distasteful. We also heard about TSA leaders informing screeners about when they were going to be tested. I could go on, but I don't think I need to. Questionable judgment on the part of Departmental leadership affects the morale and performance of all employees of the Department.

We know employee morale at the Department is the lowest in the federal government. We know that the Department has poor procurement practices and poor financial management, as many of the Inspector General and GAO reports issued in the past year have demonstrated. We know that the Department has weak computer security controls. We know from reports that today's witnesses have issued that there are numerous security problems on our northern border.

Last year, GAO issued its high risk list, which included the Department. Just last month, the IG issued a report on what it sees as major management challenges facing the Department: these include catastrophic disaster response; acquisition, grants, and financial management; infrastructure protection; border security, transportation security; information technology management; and trade operations.

This Subcommittee is not out for headlines. We want to acknowledge and encourage areas of progress, in addition to pointing out deficiencies. But we want to see problems fixed and the Department operating in the best manner to secure our homeland. But we are getting impatient. I hope that our two witnesses today can help us direct our impatience into constructive efforts to change things for the better.

I have asked our two witnesses to offer what they view as the top eight management and performance improvements that the Department can make between now and September, or within seven months, and I hope that you will talk about these in your opening statements.

Comptroller General David Walker and DHS Inspector General Richard Skinner are in the business of uncovering federal agency problems and recommending solutions. So it is fitting that we begin this hearing season with them.

Before I ask them to briefly summarize their written statements, I will ask Ranking Member Rogers for any statement that he would like to make.

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