



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Statement of Chairman Bennie G. Thompson**

### **“The President’s FY 2009 Budget Request for the Department of Homeland Security”**

February 12, 2008 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Chairman Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the full Committee hearing entitled “The President’s FY 2009 Budget Request for the Department of Homeland Security”:

“In today’s hearing, the Committee is reviewing the President’s Fiscal Year 2009 Budget Request for the Department of Homeland Security – a budget which you state will: Protect the nation from dangerous people and goods; Protect critical infrastructure; Improve emergency preparedness and response; and, Improve the operations and management of the Department.

Like you, Mr. Secretary, I am committed to a homeland that is truly secure. That is why when I assumed the Chairmanship of this Committee last January, I unveiled my 8 goals in charting the course towards freedom from fear. They are:

- ⇒ Improving the Functionality, Governance, and Accountability of the Department of Homeland Security
- ⇒ Enhancing Security for All Modes of Transportation
- ⇒ Response, Resilience, and Recovery in the Wake of a National Catastrophe
- ⇒ Shielding the Nation’s Critical Infrastructure from Foreign and Domestic Terrorism
- ⇒ Securing the Homeland and Preserving Civil Liberties in Times of Terror
- ⇒ Connecting the Dots: Intelligence, Information Sharing, and Interoperability
- ⇒ Implementing Common Sense Border and Port Security
- ⇒ Inspiring Minds and Developing Technology—The Future of Homeland Security

Our Nation is in a precarious state. We have an Administration that has beaten the drums of the war of terror, but has failed to propose a sound budget that addresses mass transit and rail security concerns.

This Administration has boasted about our first responders, but now proposes to eliminate the SAFER Grant program, cut FIRE grants by 50%, zero-out the Metropolitan Medical Response System (MMRS), and reduce funding for the Emergency Management Performance Grant program by one-third.

We have heard high rhetoric about supporting state and local governments, but then the President's budget shortchanges them by slashing the funding for the State Homeland Security Grant Program by 79%.

That being said, not all is lost with the budget. I will note that there are increases proposed in the budget for cybersecurity and border security.

However, I fear that behind the INCREASES - lurk more problems than answers.

For example, I look forward to hearing from you which metrics the Department has to measure the budget's effectiveness at stopping terrorism, preparing for natural disasters, and improving the Nation's resiliency to man-made emergencies.

I would also like to know what safeguards exist in the budget that will ensure contracts are not given away to friends of the Administration while small, minority, and women-owned businesses are shut out from the competitive process.

At the end of the day, Mr. Secretary, the Committee wants a robust Department, with a clear mission, trained personnel, and the necessary resources that are vital to the security of the homeland.

The Department must complete its obligation to the American people by fully implementing H.R. 1, applying the lessons learned from Hurricane Katrina, and ensuring that the Department is prepared to undergo its first-ever presidential transition.

Simply put, the American people deserve a budget and a plan from the President that ensures that the groundwork has been laid for a resilient Nation.

Mr. Secretary, I look forward to hearing how the budget for the Department of Homeland Security pulls together the talents from our diverse Nation to make clear that our government can provide the American people security, accountability, and most importantly, freedom from fear."

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