

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****Statement of Chairman Bennie G. Thompson****“Homeland Security Failures:
TWIC Examined”**

October 31, 2007 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Chairman Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the full Committee hearing entitled “Homeland Security Failures: TWIC Examined”:

“TWIC was mandated in law five years ago. It was supposed to provide an extra layer of security at our nation’s ports and other critical transportation hubs.

However, it seems that even before this program gets off the ground, it may have some fatal flaws that undermine its ultimate effectiveness. I look forward to hearing testimony on how the roll-out has been going in Wilmington, over the past two weeks. It could be very instructive for what other ports should expect.

Already, we are hearing that organized crime is working to develop a fake TWIC to operate in our ports. It time to say enough is enough. It is time for the Department of Homeland Security to step up. The Department needs to be straight with us and give us specifics on when TWIC will be rolled out at all of our nation’s ports.

We also need to know how many people will need and TWIC and what resources are necessary to process them. If the estimates that I am hearing are correct, you could have a real problem on your hands. In the past, the Department has projected that just 750,000 workers would need cards in the entire nation. The Port of Houston alone expects 350,000 applicants.

We also need to know how many transportation workers are going to be disqualified from attaining a TWIC. We understand that some estimates are that 10 to 40 percent of all truck drivers could be disqualified.

The Department’s inability to correctly forecast these numbers undermines this Committee’s confidence in you getting this program right. Ports could come to a virtual standstill.

This would have a real and direct impact on commerce. Similarly, I am also concerned about the Department’s waiver and appeals process.

DHS is going to depend on the FBI records to check names. FBI records, according to the Justice Department, are flawed and incomplete. In fact, about half of all records do not even have information on final dispositions.

Finally, I am concerned about the possibility that the TWIC credential is not going to be the “one and only” card that our nation’s transportation workers will have to obtain.

The Department has decided not to pre-empt State access cards – therein creating yet another layer of bureaucracy and additional costs to our workers.

The Department is already charging \$132.50 for the TWIC. How much more should we expect folks to have to pay? Our nation's transportation workers do not deserve more bureaucracy and confusion. We owe them security. We owe them accountability. And most importantly, we owe them freedom from fear. Our workers deserve no less.”

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