

STATEMENT OF SENATOR GEORGE V. VOINOVICH
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
Hearing on “Ensuring Full Implementation
of the 9/11 Commission’s Recommendations”
January 9, 2007

The September 11, 2001 attacks revealed numerous shortcomings in our nation’s capacity to detect potential terrorist threats and respond effectively. In response, Congress enacted legislation to establish the Department of Homeland Security, and to reform and reorganize our intelligence community to address current and future national security threats. The reorganization of the Intelligence Community was guided by the recommendations of the 9/11 Commission, and represented the most sweeping reform of our intelligence agencies in more than fifty years. In conjunction with legislative reform, the federal government has more than tripled government-wide spending related to non-defense homeland security, distributing approximately \$12 billion dollars in direct grants for state and local preparedness.

As this Committee works to assess the results and implementation of legislative reforms, and as our national homeland security policy matures, it is important to acknowledge that while we can enact legislation and authorize funding to minimize risk, we can never fully eliminate it. Thus, we must use common sense in developing legislative reforms that ensure our limited resources are allocated based upon risk assessments grounded in credible intelligence and analysis.

While activities devoted to preparing for, protecting against, and responding to potential terrorist attacks are essential elements of our national homeland security strategy, preventing terrorist attacks from occurring is our government’s primary responsibility. For this reason, I believe efforts dedicated to detecting, preventing, and disrupting terrorist activity yield the greatest results. It is critical that we continue to strengthen our intelligence gathering capabilities as the first and best line of defense against potential terrorist activity.

Successful implementation of the 9/11 Commission recommendations depend on how the intelligence community agencies operate together as well as how they are organized. Accordingly, I will remain focused on the capacity of the intelligence community to execute its mission in terms of management and personnel. I look forward to hearing whether or not our witnesses believe the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act gave the Director of National Intelligence sufficient authority to effectively manage and integrate the intelligence community.

My continued work in enacting positive human capital reform in our intelligence and homeland security agencies stems back to March 2001, when I chaired a subcommittee hearing entitled, “National Security Implications of the Human Capital Crisis.” During the hearing, former Defense Secretary Schlesinger, a member of the U.S. Commission on National Security in the 21st Century, testified “We must take immediate action in the personnel area to ensure that the United States can meet future

challenges...fixing the personnel problem is a precondition for fixing virtually everything else that needs repair in the institutional edifice of U.S. national security policy.” Similarly, the 9/11 Commission concluded, “We know that the quality of the people is more important than the quality of the wiring diagrams. Good people can overcome bad structures. They should not have to.”

We must be sure that the reforms implemented to date provide for a highly-skilled intelligence community workforce supported by organizational systems that lead to measurable results in the capacity of our nation’s Intelligence Community to meet its ever-changing mission. The report card released by the Public Discourse Project showed evidence of some progress, but weaknesses remain. Further progress is needed if we are to prevent future attacks against our homeland.

Finally, one aspect of the various homeland security reforms that I have been disappointed in has been the Congress’s unwillingness to reform itself in accordance with the 9/11 Commission’s recommendation to provide better and more streamlined oversight of the Department of Homeland Security. I continue to believe that Congress could do a better job if we were willing to set aside the turf battles and reorganize our own committee structure to provide more efficient oversight over homeland security.

I commend Chairman Lieberman for convening this hearing as part of this Committee’s continued oversight of the various homeland security and intelligence reforms it has played a large role in shaping. I look forward to working with my colleagues in a bipartisan manner as we ensure our intelligence community is capable of marshalling the full range of capabilities needed to respond to threats against our homeland.