

Statement of
The Honorable George W. Foresman
Nominee for Under Secretary of Preparedness
United States Department of Homeland Security
Before the United States Senate
Committee on Homeland Security and Government Reform
December 8, 2005

Chairman Collins, Senator Liberman and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss my qualifications to serve as Under Secretary for Preparedness at the United States Department of Homeland Security. There is no higher honor than serving the citizens of America in positions of responsibility and public trust.

I also want to extend my deepest thanks and appreciation to President George W. Bush and Secretary of Homeland Security Michael Chertoff for their confidence as evidenced by this nomination. I am humbled simply by the nomination and recognize the enormous responsibilities that will be entrusted to me if it is the will of the United States Senate to confirm me. I do not take lightly the expectations of me by President Bush, Secretary Chertoff, the United States Congress and, most importantly, the citizens of our great nation.

Let me begin by acknowledging my immediate family who could not be with me today. My wife and children are busy preparing lists and other things for a special visitor who is expected at our house in about seventeen days. In the eyes of a three and five year old daddy's day before the United States Senate, while important, pales in comparison to getting the list just right. I am fortunate to have a partner in marriage who's prayers, sensibility and tremendous support have allowed me to be a servant of the people. She believes in me, the ideal of public service and is the all-important anchor in my life that keeps me from drifting.

Public service is sometimes said to represent sacrifice. While there are sacrifices I would offer there is no greater calling or honor for each of us as Americans. My father and mother instilled in my three brothers and me, a deep and unwavering spirit of public service. My parents were phenomenal role models that underscored each and every day that our most important duties in life are to God, family and the nation. Though both are no longer living our family keeps their spirit with us in how we conduct our own lives. My oldest brother has just returned from a second tour of duty in the Middle East as an Army Officer, one has returned from the Gulf Coast where as a Coast Guard employee he assisted local governments distribute critical relief supplies after Katrina and my third brother is pulling duty as an officer in a fire department in Western Virginia. We are proud of each other and our respective roles to make America, its communities and our citizens safer and more secure.

Like my brothers, everyday thousands of men and women across America go to work in the public and private sector with jobs critical to the safety and security of communities, states, the nation and businesses. They help us manage the risks inherent in a nation that is the centerpiece of a global economy and the beacon of democracy around the World. Their work provides comfort and confidence to ordinary citizens and customers that someone is working everyday to keep them safe and meet their needs. It is important work. This work is preparedness.

Preparedness is not and cannot simply be a function of government or elements of the private sector. It must be the culture of government, business and society.

We are at a rare crossroads in the history of this great nation where the hatred of enemies have combined with the ferocity of mother nature to underscore the importance for disciplines, professions, levels of government and our citizens to do their part to better prepare for emergencies and disasters of all kinds, including terrorism. The tragic attacks of 9-11 and the widespread devastation from Katrina have provided searing images of destruction seen around the globe and felt in some way by nearly every American. They drive us to be better prepared.

We should also be reminded that thousands of crisis events will occur today and everyday across America and most will require a limited response and are not likely to receive widespread attention. However, to the people affected many of these will represent the greatest calamity they will face in a lifetime. These more limited events also drive us to be better prepared.

Wanting to be better prepared and actually doing it remains a challenge. Differing perspectives on how to best make advancements, limited resources and the necessity of addressing the crisis of the moment have the potential to cause us to lose sight of the ultimate goal of enhancing preparedness. Two things are clear from my experience. First, I have not met anyone who does not share a desire for a safer and more secure America. Secondly, we must provide a better structure for synchronizing the Nation's preparedness efforts.

Our greatest challenge is also our greatest opportunity. We have a greater ability today than every before to strengthen our systems and processes so that irrespective of the cause, size, location or scope of a crisis we improve our preparedness. A strong focus on preparedness will allow us to better manage the risks we face. Preparedness is that continuum of how we deter, prevent, respond to and recover from the full range of hazards and risks - as government, the private sector and as citizens. Those who are threatened or who become victims expect that the structure, strategy, management and leadership of those organizations and people involved with managing risk will operate in a harmonized and synchronized manner. Our collective responsibility and opportunity is to ensure this harmonization while at the same time helping ordinary citizens become a stronger part of America's preparedness culture.

Based on my more than twenty years of public service and wide ranging front line and executive level experience at the local, state and national levels, I believe that this is our moment in time and the history of the United States to make unprecedented advancements in our Nation's preparedness. I hope I am given the opportunity to contribute to these advancements as the Under Secretary for Preparedness.

Thank you and I am happy to answer your questions.

**Prepared Statement of Tracy A. Henke
Nominee for Executive Director
Office of State and Local Government Coordination and Preparedness
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
December 8, 2005**

Thank you, Chairman Collins, Senator Lieberman, and members of the Committee.

It is a pleasure to appear before you today as you consider my nomination by the President to serve as the Executive Director of the Office of State and Local Government Coordination and Preparedness. I am both honored and humbled by this nomination and thank the President for his confidence. In addition, I thank Secretary Chertoff for his support and confidence. If confirmed, I look forward to the opportunity to be part of Secretary Chertoff's team.

I thank Congresswoman Emerson and Congressman Cleaver for their appearance today on my behalf, their kind words, and their support. In addition, I thank Senators Bond, Talent, and Warner who couldn't be here today, but who have been great supporters and advocates for me throughout the years. I am blessed to know and have worked with all of these great public servants. I am grateful for their mentoring and their friendship. In addition, I thank my family and friends for their support, their guidance, and their love.

With 9/11, Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, and Wilma, as well as other events from around the world, our national awareness of threats—terrorists threats, natural disasters, and other events—has sharpened. As a result, all of us, especially those involved directly or indirectly in public safety, understand our collective responsibility to work to prevent, but also to prepare and respond to those threats as well as our duty to build a safer, and more secure world. Throughout my years in public service, but specifically at the Department of Justice, I have been honored, but more importantly—grateful, for the opportunities to support, work for, and partner with the public safety community. Individuals on the frontlines every day who truly make a difference.

Working on issues such as 9/11, Katrina, body armor, DNA, Medal of Valor, and others have clearly shown that our nation's first responders put themselves—intentionally put themselves—in positions where they will be called upon to show their courage, their dedication, and their selflessness every single day.

Men and women in public safety have a perfect sense of the dangers they might face. Yet, despite that, they raise their right hands, swear the oath, and take the job anyway.

If confirmed, I will raise my right hand, swear the oath, and continue to work with and for, as well as support and partner with the tremendous public safety community serving and protecting all of us and this great nation.

If confirmed, I commit to continuing the efforts to build partnerships at and across all levels of government, with the private sector, and with every day citizens as we work to provide and improve upon the capabilities necessary to better prepare and protect America.

If confirmed, I commit to listening to and working with the first responder community, local, state, and tribal leaders, and all stakeholders as we work toward the common goal of getting the best value and return for our homeland security investments.

If confirmed, I commit to working on improving the preparedness of citizens across the country, knowing that an alert, informed, and knowledgeable citizenry makes a tremendous difference.

If confirmed, I commit to working with the Congress and others in the Administration to ensure a coordinated and informed effort to assist states, communities, and our nation's first responders better prevent, prepare, and if need be, respond and recover from whatever hazards we may confront.

If confirmed, I commit my energies to making a difference in our nation's quest for preparedness.

Thank you.