Statement of Senator Susan M. Collins

Business Meeting

Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
September 17, 2008

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We have a busy agenda today. I will comment briefly on one item, but before I begin, I want to note that this is likely our last Committee markup of the 110th Congress. I can't let this opportunity pass without saying a few words about our Chairman.

Throughout this Congress– as during the 109th Congress, when he was Ranking Member – Senator Lieberman's leadership has helped us achieve real progress in investigations and legislation. We have held important hearings on nuclear terrorism, home-grown terrorism, food and energy commodity markets, and other matters. And we have reported significant legislation to strengthen homeland

security. Based on the committee's investigations of contracting failures in Iraq and Afghanistan and in the wake of Hurricane Katrina, we have also produced comprehensive legislation to reform federal procurement. And these are only the highlights of our work.

As always, Senator Lieberman has combined his deep knowledge of the law and current issues with an unflagging spirit of fairness, collegiality, and bipartisanship. This Committee and this country have benefited from his work – to say nothing of the instructive parables about his grandmother's chicken soup.

Thank you for your continued leadership, Mr. Chairman.

Moving now to what I view as the most significant bill on our agenda, I am pleased that the Committee is taking up S. 3384, the bill that Senator Carper and I introduced in July to improve agency performance and Congressional oversight of major federal information- technology (IT) projects.

The GAO, OMB, and other agencies have identified more than 400 IT projects involving $25 billion in federal spending that were planned poorly or are performing poorly – or both. The handheld computers for the 2010 Census are the most recent example of this problem, but there are many, many more.

IT project failures waste taxpayers' money and can undermine the government's ability to defend the nation, enforce its laws, or deliver critical services to citizens.

The IT-management bill we will consider today requires agencies to identify their top mission-critical IT projects, which will trigger additional planning, reporting, and monitoring requirements. It also requires agencies to develop specific corrective steps for troubled projects. If these remedial measures are not taken, the bill mandates suspension of funding until they are. A particularly useful feature of the bill is the creation of an OMB "strike force" of IT experts that can be dispatched to help agencies plan complex projects or reinvigorate troubled programs.

S. 3384 is a constructive and bipartisan approach to problems that this Committee has explored in great depth. I urge my colleagues to support it today.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

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