



United States Senate
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
Senator Susan M. Collins, Chairman

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SENATOR COLLINS OPENING STATEMENT
“DHS: The Road Ahead”
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As I convene the Committee’s first hearing of the 109th Congress, I want to express my appreciation to our ranking member, Senator Lieberman, and our other veteran members for their commitment to the Committee’s work. I also want to welcome our four new members: Senators Warner, Domenici, Chafee, and Coburn.

Along with new members, our Committee has a new name: Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs. While the new name will not win praise for its brevity or style, it does reflect the Committee’s expanded jurisdiction. And so, it is appropriate that the Committee’s first meeting of the year is an oversight hearing focusing on the Department of Homeland Security, evaluating the progress made so far and challenges that remain. As we prepare for the confirmation hearing of a new DHS secretary, this assessment is especially timely.

The title of this hearing – “DHS: The Road Ahead” – has a deeper meaning than might be immediately apparent. The Homeland Security Act of 2002 established a clear destination for the Department: to prevent terrorist attacks within the United States; to reduce our vulnerability to terrorism; and to assist in recovery should an attack occur. The precise route toward that destination, however, remains under construction. We are here to continue building a road that is as efficient, effective, and durable as possible.

After the attacks of September 11th, 2001, the security of America could not wait until this road was mapped out precisely and built to perfection. The Department began operating under the constraints of a great paradox: it had to meet immediately this new threat of the 21st century with 20th Century components – all or part of some 22 existing federal agencies with 180,000 employees. And it had to do so without neglecting the traditional missions of those components.

Any fair assessment will conclude that the Department, under the leadership of Secretary Ridge, has made considerable progress. Our borders and transportation systems are more secure, our critical infrastructure is better protected, and our emergency response capabilities are improved. But other reforms, such as the Transportation Worker Identification Credential, have lagged, and it has been a daunting challenge for DHS leaders to integrate the 22 agencies while at the same time developing new policies to make us safer.

The Homeland Security Act was not the last word on how we can best marshal our resources. As we proceed with this assessment, I am sure we will confront – and, I hope, address – the broad issue of better integration within the Department, as well as a great many specific issues related to efficiency, accountability, and authority.

Some observers may find it difficult to envision that a Department so large and with so many responsibilities could ever develop the efficiency, effectiveness, and durability to meet this challenge. Yet the Goldwater-Nickles Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986 proves otherwise. Nearly 20 years after the passage of Goldwater-Nickles, the military’s organizational culture has shifted dramatically toward

“jointness,” and combatant commands have produced far greater cohesion across the military services. The Department of Homeland Security should strive for the same organizational culture.

We will hear today from five witnesses, all of whom have scrutinized the Department. These witnesses will discuss several common problems they have identified at DHS, including:

- A lack of strategic planning. Our witnesses today will discuss the Department’s focus on managing daily crises and whether, as a result, it has not engaged in necessary strategic planning. Such planning is needed to ensure that we are directing resources to the right places and that we are making the decisions today that will serve us well into the future.
- Structural problems. Two years into the Department’s life, we now are able to assess whether the agency is configured properly. The Heritage Foundation believes there are unnecessary layers of bureaucracy at DHS. They recommend, for example, the merger of two separate entities, Customs and Border Protection and Immigration and Customs Enforcement, into “one unit with one uniform.” We will review this recommendation today.
- The need for clearer authorities. Some of our witnesses will discuss the belief that in a number of areas there is a muddled division of responsibility between DHS and other agencies. We will hear about the effects of such confusion, as well as some possible solutions.

These three problems, and others our witnesses will discuss, are obstacles in the road ahead, and they must be cleared. I am particularly interested in the thoughts our witnesses have on how these problems relate to several key areas of concern.

Border and transportation security was at the heart of the September 11th attacks. We were reminded of our vulnerability again just last week by what proved to be a false alarm in Boston regarding possible terrorists entering our country from Mexico.

In the hours and days after the September 11th attacks, we saw the vital role emergency preparedness and response can play in reducing damage and loss of life, and we have done much to improve our capabilities at all levels of government. The identification of critical infrastructure and hardening targets are other forms of preparedness in which we have made progress, but they remain a weakness in our homeland defense.

The Department holds an important place in our newly reorganized intelligence community. Because of the connections it already has forged with our first responders, the Department is perhaps our strongest link with state and local authorities. This is an invaluable asset in intelligence that must be maximized.

The integration of 22 agencies with different cultures, practices and areas of expertise into one cohesive entity remains a work in progress. In fact, as we were reminded just yesterday by the Government Accountability Office’s 2005 update of high-risk areas, this integration remains incomplete, and information sharing among the Department components and with other agencies and levels of government is lacking. We must improve department-wide management, from procurement and contracting to information technology. We must eliminate the unnecessary layers of bureaucracy and the barriers to communication that remain from the Department’s creation. But we must do these things always in the interest of reaching our destination with a minimum of detours.

Our witnesses today have studied the issues related to a stronger, more effective and efficient Department, and a more secure homeland, with great expertise and thoroughness. I look forward to hearing their views and insights.

Finally, let me say that I am proud of the heritage and record of this Committee. Our bipartisan collaboration and hard work last year produced landmark legislation strengthening our intelligence community. It is my intention that we approach our work in a similar spirit this year.

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