



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Statement of Chairman Bennie G. Thompson “DHS: The Path Forward”**

February 25, 2009 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Chairman Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the Full Committee Hearing entitled ‘DHS: The Path Forward’:

“Although the Secretary has been in office for only about a month, she has made herself available to discuss critical issues affecting this Department. Given the demands on her time, the interest she has demonstrated in hearing Congressional concerns is commendable.

I hope this dialogue continues throughout your tenure as you tackle the challenges of moving DHS forward.

However, I would be remiss if I did not point out that in the last two years, this Committee’s oversight work has played a major role in developing the public record on the shortcomings at the Department. Those shortcomings were not exposed to play a Washington game of “gotcha.”

On the contrary, we raised questions about real problems and endeavored to work with DHS to develop real solutions. Rest assured, we will continue to have questions and look to your leadership for answers.

We have called this hearing ‘**DHS: The Path Forward**’ because this Department cannot afford to remain stuck in the same place, doing things the same way and somehow expecting a different outcome. But before moving forward, one must first assess the condition of the road and one’s location on the road. You now oversee a Department that has an annual budget of over \$40 billion and a workforce of over 200,000 people. DHS is on the GAO High Risk List because of the challenges it faces in implementing and transforming 22 separate agencies into one fully functioning Department.

The Department’s mission can be summed up as a duty to keep dangerous people and dangerous things out of this country. To fulfill this mission, it shoulders the responsibility for a wide-range of activities including:

- securing the borders;
- responding to natural disasters and catastrophic events;
- ensuring the security of the passengers and cargo that rely on air, surface and maritime transportation;
- safeguarding critical infrastructure; and
- administering grants.

Unlike many Federal Departments, at each step along the way, this Department must work closely with State, local and tribal governments to accomplish its critical mission. Your actions in the last month have indicated that you understand the wide-ranging nature of the Department’s activities and the need to map a course to take this Department forward.

In your short tenure, you have ordered an agency-wide efficiency review to eliminate wasteful spending and required policy and program reviews in nine (9) key areas including:

- state and local intelligence sharing;
- cybersecurity;
- risk analysis;
- national planning scenarios; and
- Gulf Coast rebuilding efforts.

After you have completed your assessment of DHS’ performance in these key areas, I look forward to hearing from you again about the Department’s response plan. In closing, while you are in the process of charting a path forward, be mindful that every path has some rough spots and potholes.

I hope you keep in mind that the only way to achieve progress is to keep moving forward despite the obstacles. And if you forget, this Committee will be here to remind you. Again, thank you for appearing here today. I look forward to hearing your testimony.

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