

OPENING STATEMENT OF REP. CHRIS CARNEY, AS PREPARED

COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY
SUBCOMMITTEE ON MANAGEMENT INVESTIGATIONS & OVERSIGHT

“Putting People First: A Way Forward for the Homeland Security Workforce”

Thursday, March 5, 2009

“Last Congress, this subcommittee travelled to my home state of Pennsylvania to examine the agro-terror threat, and we also travelled to Mr. Rogers’ district in Alabama to see innovative training methods for first responders from across the nation. In this same fashion, this Subcommittee will continue to explore how homeland security issues impact local communities outside of Washington, and I look forward to learning about some of the specific homeland security-related matters facing the wonderful state of Florida.

Today, however, we are examining an issue that is vital to the Department of Homeland Security’s operations and that is the management of the Department’s large workforce.

We hope that by choosing this subject as this Subcommittee’s first hearing of the 111th Congress we are making it clear that the Department must put its people first.

Instead of just knocking the flawed management as so many of DHS’ critics like to do, this hearing gives us an opportunity to take another look at DHS employees and hopefully hear some innovative ways for the Department to deal with and manage some of the challenges its workforce faces.

In the near future, we will bring the Department’s Chief Human Capital Officer before the Subcommittee to provide feedback on the exchange of ideas we have here today, and to discuss plans, policies and implementation strategies for the Department’s workforce.

While DoD’s creation is often cited as a similar challenge, the creation of DHS is really unprecedented in our nation’s history.

The Department currently employs over 223,000 employees, performing varied jobs. From law enforcement officer to intelligence analyst to pilot, and countless jobs in between, it’s easy to see how a complex set of workforce issues has developed.

For all of the criticisms of the Department, since its inception it has, for the most part, successfully succeeded in protecting our country from numerous threats. But the Department has always struggled with employee morale and satisfaction.

Yesterday, Ranking Member Bilirakis and I were pleased to bring to the House floor a resolution honoring the Department’s workforce.

Today, we seek solutions on how the Department can improve its personnel systems. In many ways, this vital oversight, again honors their contributions as we seek to improve their working environment and look for ways to improve employee morale.

In both its 2004 and 2006 Federal Human Capital Surveys, the Office of Personnel Management found that the Department ranked among the lowest cabinet departments and independent agencies in employee morale.

In the 2006 OPM survey, 43% of employees said they have insufficient resources to do their jobs, 41% percent said they do not get enough information from management and 43% disagreed that awards are based on how well employees do their jobs. These statistics are alarming to say the least. I think we can all agree that measures must be taken to correct them and correct them sooner rather than later.”