



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Statement of Chairman Bennie G. Thompson

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

March 5, 2009 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Chairman Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the Management, Investigations, and Oversight Subcommittee hearing entitled “Putting People First: A Way Forward for the Department of Homeland Security Workforce”:

“Since its inception, six years ago this week, the Department of Homeland Security has faced a series of personnel challenges including:

Merging 22 separate agencies with a combined workforce of over 200,000 into one Cabinet-level agency;

Integrating the employees from these separate and distinct agencies into one common workforce; while recognizing the variety of skill sets and experiences they bring to the Department; and

Confronting on-going recruitment and retention challenges.

Addressing these challenges have not been easy.

To make matters worse, the workforce has been led by four different Chief Human Capitol Officers over the past six years, causing confusion and instability.

Notwithstanding the multiple changes in leadership, the Department has also gone through several major attempted overhauls of its human capital systems.

They tried MaxHR, that didn't work. They then tried HCOP (H-Cop), that didn't work either.

DHS' relentless pursuit of these broken personnel systems has done considerable damage to its workforce morale.

Now, we are faced with charting a way forward. To do so, the Department must properly address the causes of its employees' dissatisfaction.

To do this, it must have a proper and fair personnel system, with clear policies and adequate tools and resources. There needs to be a clearer connection and better collaboration between DHS headquarters and its components.

The Department must communicate, engage and empower its employees. The Department recently released its Human Capital Strategic Plan for FY09-FY12.

The purpose of this plan is to bring the workforce together, improve employee morale, expand the human capital IT infrastructure and develop more effective recruitment and retention plans. With this new Administration and this new Plan we have an exciting opportunity to reverse previous policies that did not work.

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not once again raise the issue of the Department's TSA screener

workforce who is separate from the rest of the Department under its own separate and troubled pay for performance system.

To further illustrate my point, I now ask our clerk to display a chart which illustrates how TSA's personnel system is vastly different from other Department components.

If the Department is truly striving for a unified culture, it makes sense for everyone to operate under the same system.

As the frontline of America's security in our airports, TSA workers need to have whistleblower protections and collective bargaining rights to be able to report security concerns without fear of losing their jobs.”

#

FOR MORE INFORMATION: Please contact Dena Graziano or Adam Comis at (202) 225-9978

United States House of Representatives
Committee on Homeland Security
H2-176, Ford House Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20515
Phone: (202) 226-2616 | Fax: (202) 226-4499
<http://homeland.house.gov>