



**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY  
Homeland Security Advisory Council**

February 19, 2004

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Secretary Tom Ridge  
U.S. Department of Homeland Security  
Washington, DC 20528

Dear Mr. Secretary:

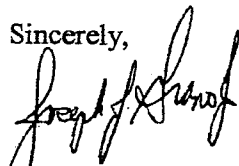
One of the charges you gave your Homeland Security Advisory Council (HSAC) at our June 2003 meeting was to provide you with recommendations to help the Department develop what has been described as a "*National Homeland Security Award for Excellence*." To that end, the HSAC formed an Award Working Group chaired by Dr. Lydia Thomas to expedite our observations and recommendations.

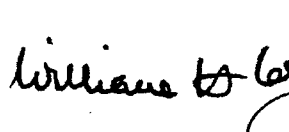
After consultations with our colleagues on the HSAC Senior Advisory Committees and after public deliberations at our October 2003 and December 2003 HSAC meetings, we are pleased to present the attached recommendations. We believe that the recommendations provide an excellent foundation for the creation of your Homeland Security Award program and may allow the Department to present its first Award(s) as early as the fall of 2004.

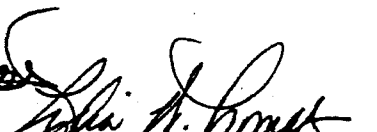
With the goal of accelerating implementation of the President's *National Strategy for Homeland Security*, it is our earnest hope that these recommendations will assist you in highlighting the best practices of state, local, and tribal governments, the private sector, individual citizens, and all who make outstanding contributions as homeland security partners.

The Council thanks you for the opportunity to serve and looks forward to all opportunities to work with you in meeting the spectrum of the Nation's Homeland Security challenges.

Sincerely,

  
Joseph J. Grano  
Chair, Homeland  
Security Advisory  
Council

  
William Webster  
Vice Chair, Homeland  
Security Advisory  
Council

  
Dr. Lydia Thomas  
Award Working Group Chair,  
Homeland Security Advisory  
Council

## HOMELAND SECURITY ADVISORY COUNCIL

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At the inaugural meeting of the Homeland Security Advisory Council (HSAC) in June 2003, Secretary Ridge charged his Council to provide recommendations to help the Department develop a "*National Homeland Security Award for Excellence.*"

The Council strongly believes that the creation of a *National Award for Homeland Security Excellence* is consistent with the President's "*National Strategy for Homeland Security*," the "*Statewide Template Initiative*" (STI) and the Department's mission of building a secure homeland.

### GENERAL OBSERVATIONS AND COMMENTS

- The Scope of the Award should be unprecedented –involving all sectors of American society.
- The Award must be consistent with and designed to accelerate implementation of the President's "*National Strategy for Homeland Security.*"
- The Award should enhance the Nation's level of preparedness at the state and local levels, and in the private sector – including public/private partnerships. It should encourage the creation of exemplars by highlighting, fostering, sharing and rewarding the demonstration/implementation of Homeland Security best practices.
- The Council reviewed other prestigious awards and concluded that the Department's commitment to the award and its initial funding to implement it, are sufficient.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 1. THE AWARD

- The Department should administer the Award program.
- The Department establish and maintain an Awards Office, staffed as appropriate with a budget consistent with the scope and importance of its awards program.
- The title of the award is very important. While we do not recommend a specific name, the following examples incorporate characteristics that we believe the award should represent and that the Department may build upon in branding the award.
  1. Patriot Award for Excellence in Homeland Security
  2. Golden Guardian Award for Excellence in Homeland Security

- Given the importance of the homeland security mission and to provide optimal exposure to the best practices of award winners, the award(s) should be a Presidential-level award presented by the President during a White House ceremony whenever possible.
  - The Award be presented on a day representative of a date associated with Homeland Security, i.e. September 11<sup>th</sup>, September 12<sup>th</sup> (“the day the nation renewed its resolve to secure the homeland), November 11<sup>th</sup> (Veterans Day) and November 25<sup>th</sup> (signing of Homeland Security Act creating the Department of Homeland Security).
- All Awardees should receive a medal designed and struck for the occasion, to ensure recognition.
  - When organizations or partnerships are presented the award, all individuals within such an organization(s) that contributed to the effort should receive a lapel pin or similar memento acknowledging their contributions to the national homeland security effort. This does not in any way preclude the Department from presenting a plaque(s), certificate(s) or any other form of recognition it sees fit to the organization(s) or individual(s) for office, etc. display purposes.

## 2. AWARD PROCESS

- The Award application process must be simple – *straight-forward* – and designed to accept applications from all sectors of American society - - not bureaucratic or “*process based*.” It must be an open and accessible procedure that does not present barriers of entry. There should be no cost to the applicant.
  - Applications (2-3 pages) submitted via a secure DHS website in addition to traditional means.
- The criteria for the Award should be derived from the President’s “National Strategy for Homeland Security six “*Critical Mission Areas – intelligence and warning, border and transportation security, domestic counterterrorism, protecting critical infrastructure, defending against catastrophic terrorism, and emergency preparedness and response*” and/or any of the 21 Homeland Security planning components identified in the Statewide Template Initiative.
  - Example - an applicant could explain how they have enhanced the Nation’s security by protecting Critical Infrastructure and key assets.
  - Example – an applicant could demonstrate how they have enhanced Homeland Security by addressing school or emergency response issues, or how new policies or lessons-learned have been integrated into day-to-day operations.

- Example – an applicant could demonstrate how they improved on or developed a homeland security technology.
- The Secretary appoints exceptional individuals from the public and private sectors that would form a “*Blue Ribbon Panel*” to serve as Award examiners.
  - Award winners are recommended to the Secretary by the “*Blue Ribbon Panel*.”
  - To ensure consistency, panel membership must remain consistent throughout the yearly award cycle, with each member reviewing all submissions. If this proves too difficult to achieve, the Award Office staff must develop a process that will ensure the objective of this recommendation is met.
- In addition to receiving award recommendations from DHS components, federal, state, local and tribal partners, private sector groups and a broad spectrum of homeland security stakeholders, DHS Award Staff monitors the media/daily news clips, and other sources for outstanding examples of Homeland Security initiatives and assume responsibility for notifying those groups of the award and the award process.
- The Department’s Homeland Security Foundation and its potential fund raising capabilities are leveraged.
  - The Foundation could offset costs incurred as a result of “*Blue Ribbon Panel*” operations, award design and purchase, travel of award recipients, award ceremony/luncheons, etc.
  - Chair of the Homeland Security Foundation or current Board member serves on the “*Blue Ribbon Panel*.”
- Recognizing the scale of the National Homeland Security efforts, the Department must have the flexibility and the option to award one or multiple awards in several categories as appropriate to recognize Best Practices regardless of the source.
- The Department’s Public Affairs Office develops and implements a public relations and “*branding plan*” and forms public private partnerships to educate the public and promote the Award. Intergovernmental and Private Sector associations, State Homeland Security Advisors, and other entities have expressed a desire to assist the Department in this effort.