

Washington, D.C. - Last night, the House of Representatives passed H.R. 2892, the fiscal year 2010 Homeland Security Appropriations Act. As Chairman of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security, U.S. Rep. David Price (D-NC) authored the bill following six months of oversight hearings and intensive discussions with the administration, outside experts, and other Members of Congress. The bill, which would fund all operations of the Department of Homeland Security for the next fiscal year, was passed by an overwhelming bipartisan majority of 389 to 37.

"This bill will enable our government to better protect the American people against all major threats," said Chairman Price. "The key investments made here will assist first responders and enhance security on our borders, at our ports, and in aviation and transit. And this legislation makes these investments in a fiscally responsible manner, coming in under the President's budget request and saving \$1.8 billion through elimination of 16 programs and reduced funding for another 37 programs."

Price's full comments describing the legislation that opened yesterday's floor debate are copied below.

CHAIRMAN PRICE FLOOR STATEMENT

Mr. Chairman, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Chairman, I am pleased to present the fiscal year 2010 Homeland Security Appropriations bill, as reported by the Committee. It is the product of extensive information-gathering and analysis, with 15 hearings touching every Department of Homeland Security component. The bill provides the resources and direction the Department needs for the coming fiscal year.

This bill also reflects our Subcommittee's tradition of bipartisan cooperation, initiated by its first Chairman and now Ranking Member, Hal Rogers. I want to thank the distinguished Ranking Member for his advice and help in making this a better bill, and his staff for working so closely and constructively with us. We agree on most of the bill, if not every item, and I believe this is a bill every Member should get behind.

In total, the bill contains \$42.625 billion in discretionary appropriations for the Department of Homeland Security. This is \$2.6 billion, or 6.5 percent, above the comparable fiscal year 2009 amount, and about one percent below the Administration request, excluding Coast Guard overseas contingency operations. This level reflects our share of the \$10 billion cut made in the budget resolution to the Administration's overall request.

Homeland Security requires identification of and response to all threats, whether manmade or natural. This "all-hazards" approach is a hallmark of our Subcommittee, an approach we are happy to see President Obama and Secretary Napolitano embrace. The persistent threat of pandemic flu is an unmistakable reminder of why we must prepare for "all hazards", as is the annual and predictable onslaught of natural disasters – from hurricanes and floods to wildfires and ice storms. Accordingly, this bill will enable our government to better protect the American people against ALL major threats.

Appropriately -- for the start of hurricane season -- the bill maintains a robust \$844 million for FEMA Management and Administration and \$2 billion for disaster relief. In addition, the bill and report specifically place FEMA at the forefront of disaster response management, thereby avoiding confusion when working with our state and local partners.

State and local emergency managers and first responders are equal partners in disaster preparedness and response, and I am pleased that the Administration's budget request recognizes this important partnership. This bill strengthens our commitment to our State and local partners by providing \$3.96 billion for grant and training programs, including: \$330 million for Emergency Management Performance Grants, our one true all-hazards grant program; \$950 million for State Homeland Security Grants; \$887 million for the Urban Area Security Initiative, which targets the highest risks of terrorism; and \$800 million for Firefighter Assistance Grants.

Within the \$800 million for firefighter assistance grants, \$420 million is for SAFER staffing grants and \$380 million is for basic equipment and training grants. The additional funding for SAFER is part of a targeted and temporary effort to stem the tide of layoffs and ensure our communities are protected by an adequate number of firefighters. In addition to the increased funding, the supplemental appropriations bill just passed allows the waiver of certain restrictions and broadens the use of SAFER to allow the grants to be used for the hiring, rehiring, and retention of firefighters for fiscal years 2009 and 2010.

One could make an argument for increasing nearly any account in this bill; but since we can't spend the whole Federal Treasury on homeland security, we must base our priorities on risk. The Subcommittee has done this with regard to the identification and removal of illegal aliens who have committed crimes – in other words, illegal aliens who have proven their capacity to do harm in our communities. This bill continues the tradition of recent bills by targeting \$1.5 billion of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) appropriations for this priority – an effort the President and Secretary Napolitano wholeheartedly support. Part of this funding furthers development of the Secure Communities program, which offers a productive approach for Federal immigration agents to work closely with State and local law enforcement while distinguishing the traditional Federal role of enforcing immigration law from the local role of prosecuting criminal violations. We have heard from many law enforcement and community groups about the importance of keeping a bright line between immigration enforcement and local community policing, and the Secure Communities program does just that.

Taking on the international drug cartels along our Southwest border is another major priority we support in this bill. The bill enhances funding for CBP and ICE to combat illegal narcotics smuggling from Mexico and the cartels' trafficking in weapons and bulk currency. The bill supports a realistic and strategic approach to Southwest Border infrastructure and maintains a historically robust Border Patrol force.

Other specific priorities we have funded include:

- \$800 million for explosive detection systems at the airports and \$122.8 million for air cargo security (to meet the 100-percent screening mandate for air cargo in the hold of passenger planes by August 2010);
- \$804 million to continue developing systems to screen inbound land and sea-based cargo for weapons or nuclear materials, which includes \$162 million to strengthen overseas operations to monitor and target cargo;
- \$241.5 million for the Coast Guard to support overseas contingencies in the Persian Gulf and off the coast of Somalia;
- \$382 million for cyber security, to help protect vulnerable computer infrastructure from the

escalating sophistication and intensity of cyber attacks; and

- \$10 million above the Administration's request to expand the Alternatives to Detention program nation-wide, which is a cost-effective alternative for low-risk individuals, such as asylum seekers, families, and the elderly.

The bill includes several policy items requested by the Administration: it clarifies fee authorities for Temporary Protected Status petitions and visa fraud investigations; extends E-Verify for 2 years; and continues a longstanding provision related to imported prescription drugs.

As it did last year, the bill contains Member-requested and Presidential earmarks. Each Member's project has been vetted by DHS and deemed eligible, if part of a grant program, or consistent with the Department's mission. We had to reduce Member earmarks 5% below last year's level.

This is a good bill, one I hope that every Member will support.

Mr. Chairman, I reserve the balance of my time.

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