

News From \_\_\_\_\_

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**STATEMENT OF SENATOR ROBERT C. BYRD (D-W.Va.)  
Chairman, Homeland Security Appropriations Subcommittee  
May 13, 2009**

“Good afternoon. I call the Subcommittee to order. Welcome Madam Secretary. I welcome you to this challenging and important job.”

“As you may know, I originally opposed the creation of the Department of Homeland Security because I feared that it would be a management nightmare. However, since the Department was established, I have been a strong advocate for giving the Department the resources it needs to succeed. The Bush Administration’s official position was that the Department could be created at no cost to the taxpayer. This translated into a Department with aging assets and an inability to be nimble in preparing for future threats.”

“In response, Congress, on a bipartisan basis, increased homeland security spending by an average of \$2 billion per year above the President's request. These increases were invested in border security, chemical security, port security, transit security, aviation security and cyber security. We also ensured that state and local partners in homeland security received adequate resources to equip and train our first responders. These investments have paid off, making our citizens more secure and making us better prepared for any disaster. But we have much more work to do.”

“I am pleased to see that President Obama has sent us a budget that backs up its promises with real resources. That said, there are some gaps in the budget. We will explore those gaps today and will work with you, Madam Secretary, to identify responsible ways to narrow those gaps.”

“In 2005, I led a bipartisan effort to improve security on our borders and to enforce our immigration laws. We increased the number of border patrol agents and detention beds, and provided funds for fencing, vehicle barriers and new technology on our southwest border. We also provided funds for fugitive operations teams, the Secure Communities program, and for worksite enforcement. Madame Secretary, I have read your testimony and I look forward to you continuing and expanding these efforts.”

“Madam Secretary, I know that you are aware of the recent devastation from flooding in Southern West Virginia. Last night, Governor Manchin requested a federal disaster declaration. Today, I have sent the President a letter urging his approval. I urge you to recommend to the President that he approve this request as soon as possible so that federal funding can begin flowing to West Virginians who are in need of help.”

“Madam Secretary, you lead a Department of 208,000 men and women who are on the front line every day protecting our citizens. We commend those employees for their service and we welcome you to the Subcommittee today. I also welcome Senator George Voinovich, our new Ranking Member. He follows in the footsteps of my good friends and able colleagues, Senator Thad Cochran and Senator Judd Gregg. I look forward to working with all of our Subcommittee Members this year.”

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