

**Chairman John Boozman Opening Statement  
Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security**

**Hearing on the U.S. Department of Homeland Security Fiscal Year 2018 Budget Request**

**May 25, 2017**

*(As prepared for delivery)*

I call this hearing of the Subcommittee on Homeland Security to order. This is my first hearing as Chairman of this Subcommittee, and it is the Subcommittee's first hearing to review the fiscal year 2018 budget request, which was submitted to Congress earlier this week.

I want to begin by thanking the Secretary of Homeland Security, the Honorable John Kelly, for being with us today. Secretary Kelly, we understand the demands on your schedule, and we appreciate your testimony in what is your first appearance before our Subcommittee in your new role.

I would also like to welcome our Subcommittee's Ranking Member, the distinguished Senator from Montana, Senator Tester.

The Department of Homeland Security plays a pivotal role in keeping Americans safe by working to combat terrorism, manage our air, land, and sea borders, administer our immigration laws, secure critical cyber-assets, and prepare for and respond to disasters. The tragic events in Manchester, England earlier this week remind us why we must focus on the serious challenge of securing our homeland.

Mr. Secretary, you've dedicated your career to serving our national security interests, and in just a few months, you have proven your ability to lead this Department during a very challenging time. This Subcommittee will work to support you and the men and women of the Department, who are working every day to keep us safe.

The Department has been called on by this President to refocus its resources on certain national security risks and to redouble efforts to enforce immigration laws. We look forward to learning more about how the Department proposes to address these needs while ensuring we do not neglect the other critical missions of the Department.

This budget request gets many things right.

We've seen over the past few months that border security and immigration enforcement are closely related. As the new Administration is demonstrating, there are consequences for those entering and staying in the country illegally, with illegal border crossings dropping to historic lows.

Your budget proposes increased funding for Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), for both manpower and infrastructure, to continue

to reduce illegal border crossings. In order to better understand these requirements and make the right choices, the Subcommittee must get a more comprehensive plan from the Department that details how we can be smart about investing in border security and interior enforcement.

Another key component to securing our borders is the United States Coast Guard, which this budget generally supports. In FY17 this Subcommittee delivered significant investments to enhance the capabilities of the Coast Guard. We identified funding to continue the modernization of the surface and air fleets, and we partnered with our Defense Subcommittee to begin acquisition of a new polar icebreaker.

We'll have to work again to provide the resources necessary to enable the Coast Guard to continue protecting our borders, interdicting illegal migrants and drugs, conducting search and rescue missions, ensuring the safe navigation of our waterways, and maintaining our defense readiness.

This budget proposal appropriately acknowledges that the Federal government's cyber-network is under constant attack. I am pleased to see that the request has prioritized funding for all four phases of the Continuous Diagnostics and Mitigation (CDM) Program. Other Federal agencies must move past the initial CDM kick-start provided by the Department and begin properly budgeting for their own investment and utilization of this system in order to realize its full benefit.

You've rightly noted in your testimony and through this budget proposal that the Department's workforce is its most valuable resource, and that taking care of the people that work to keep us safe each day is a top priority. I hope we will work together to ensure the Department can improve workforce recruitment, development and retention.

We are aware of the unique stresses caused by the intense 2016 presidential election campaign. Additional duties, increased travel, ongoing investigative work, and the inherent requirements of Presidential protection have stretched the Secret Service workforce thin. These are the brave men and women who put their lives on the line every day to protect our top leaders and to prevent interference with our most critical institutions. We are optimistic that the additional resources provided in the recently-enacted appropriations bill will make a real difference for the men and women of the Secret Service.

But workforce challenges span the Department. We need to hire and retain more Customs officers, more Border Patrol agents, more acquisition experts, and more cyber-professionals. We want to help you make the Department of Homeland Security the best place to work in the entire Federal government.

While this budget proposal makes some smart choices, there are also parts of it that are unworkable. Whether we're talking about a hard-working Arkansas family or one of the largest Departments in the federal government, when it comes time to develop a budget, tough choices have to be made. I have no doubt that many tough decisions were made in preparing this request, but many of the choices reflected in this budget put this Subcommittee in a difficult position.

For instance, it assumes statutory changes to programs that Congress would almost certainly be unable to enact before the end of the fiscal year. From the proposed increase to airline passenger fees, to the significant reductions to assistance for state and local partners, to the failure to invest adequately in research and development, this budget fails to take into consideration many practical realities.

We ask for your cooperation as we consult with you and your staff to make the necessary adjustments to allow this budget to work despite these significant challenges.

We will likely face a very tough appropriations cycle. We will certainly be urged to restore many of the significant reductions proposed by this budget, and absent some significant change to the availability of resources, we are not going to be able to fund all of the priorities it outlines. Congress will have to make these decisions based on shared priorities and with an eye toward risk-based distribution of limited resources. We know we can count on your partnership and guidance throughout the process.

Again, Mr. Secretary, we appreciate your testimony and your willingness to answer questions from members of this Subcommittee.

I will now turn to our distinguished Ranking Member, Senator Tester, then to our full committee Chairman, Senator Cochran, and then to our full Committee Vice Chairman, Senator Leahy, for any opening remarks they may have before asking Secretary Kelly to proceed with his testimony. Then we will allow each Senator, in order of arrival, seven minutes for any statements or questions they may have

Thank you.

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