

**Chairman Richard Shelby Opening Statement
Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science,
and Related Agencies**

**Subcommittee Markup of the FY2018 Commerce, Justice, Science,
and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill**

July 25, 2017

(As prepared for delivery)

Welcome to today's Subcommittee mark-up of the Fiscal Year 2018 Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies bill.

I want to begin by thanking Senator Shaheen for her partnership on this bill.

This is the first spending bill we have collaborated on together, and I believe that this mark reflects a strong bipartisan product.

The recommendation before us is consistent with the subcommittee's funding guidance of \$53.4 billion in discretionary spending.

This level is \$3.2 billion below the fiscal year 2017 enacted amount, and \$4.4 billion above the budget request.

The Committee has made difficult but responsible decisions to craft a bill that stays within our spending boundaries.

Within these budgetary boundaries, I believe the Committee has achieved a careful balance between the competing priorities of:

- Law enforcement,
- National security,
- Economic development,
- Scientific research, and
- Space exploration.

The bill funds the Department of Commerce at \$9.2 billion, with the Census Bureau receiving the requested increase in preparation for the 2020 Decennial Census.

Strict oversight and fiscal responsibility are essential for Commerce's success in fiscal year 2018, which is why the bill directs the Census Bureau to continue its efforts to make the costs of the 2020 Census lower than that of the 2010 Census.

The bill keeps our next generation of weather satellites on schedule – including the Polar Follow On mission – and ensures the National Weather Service can continue to provide timely warnings for severe weather.

This bill does not support proposed cuts to weather operations, including NOAA's National Water Center, which provides invaluable forecasts and services to the nation for water-related hazards.

For our coastal communities, the bill continues to direct NOAA to modernize the way it manages its fisheries by supporting independent studies that compare the status of fish stocks with NOAA's internal data and to expand its adoption of electronic monitoring.

The Red Snapper fishery is vital to fishermen and businesses across Alabama.

I am pleased that this bill continues several provisions that respond to challenges in the management of red snapper, and gives NOAA more flexibility to allow States to take the lead in overseeing the fishery in the Gulf of Mexico.

This Committee remains supportive of science and innovation by preserving a balanced space program within NASA.

The budget request reflected a significant reduction of \$561 million that – if enacted – would erode on-going science missions, jeopardize core operations, eliminate the entire education directorate, and delay exploration launches.

Instead, this bill funds NASA at \$19.5 billion, making it possible for the agency to continue supporting on-going science and exploration missions at critical stages of development, especially the Space Launch System, Orion capsule, and their supporting launch facilities.

The bill maintains strong funding for the Department of Justice at \$29.4 billion, which includes increases for all federal law enforcement operations to support the men and women on the front lines of preserving public safety.

It is critical that we target our finite law enforcement resources towards the worst criminals in society, and I agree with the Attorney General's directive to federal prosecutors to go after the most violent offenders.

The bill supports the President's budget request for 230 new assistant U.S. attorneys to address the importance of prosecuting violent crime.

The mark includes essential cybersecurity funding throughout the Department in order to protect our Nation, and to track down, arrest, and prosecute child predators to keep our communities safe.

The bill supports the President's request to increase funding for the Executive Office for Immigration Review to hire an additional 65 immigration judge teams on top of the 10 that were just provided in the fiscal year 2017 Omnibus.

Over the last eight years, dozens of these immigration judge benches have gone unfilled while the backlog of immigration cases has grown to a staggering number of over 600,000.

I appreciate the Department's related efforts to place immigration judges in jurisdictions where they are most needed, and to commit to hiring immigration judges more quickly, which the last Administration failed to do.

Overall funding for victims and victim-related grant programs – which are widely supported by many members of the Committee – remain at or above the fiscal year 2017 levels.

I want to point out that this bill provides \$3.64 billion in disbursements through the Crime Victims Fund, or CVF.

This amount represents the three-year average of deposits into the Fund and is over \$1 billion above the fiscal year 2017 level.

I believe that the Subcommittee mark strikes a balance between the competing priorities of law enforcement, terrorism prevention, research, scientific advancement, and U.S. competitiveness.

We have a transparent product that accommodates the Senate's priorities and addresses the needs of our Nation.

I, therefore, urge my colleagues to support moving this bill out of the subcommittee today, and to vote for the CJS bill at the full committee mark-up on Thursday.

I now turn to Senator Shaheen for any comments she may have.

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