

STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN PETER T. KING
Committee on Homeland Security

Before the
Committee on House Administration

Hearing on “Review of the Use of Committee Funds of the 112th Congress”
November 30, 2011

Thank you Chairman Lungren, Ranking Member Brady, and Members of the Committee on House Administration for the opportunity to testify in support of funding for the Committee on Homeland Security in the Second Session of the 112th Congress.

On January 6, 2011, the Full House passed *House Resolution 22, Reducing the Amount Authorized for Salaries and Expenses of Member, Committee, and Leadership Offices in 2011 and 2012*. By an overwhelming vote of 410-13, House Members approved a binding resolution that would reduce the operating budgets of Member, Leadership, and committee offices by 5%, or about \$35 million annually. House committees incorporated a decrease in funding of 5% in 2011, and are preparing to incorporate an additional decrease in funding of 6.4% in 2012.

My testimony today will address the three issues highlighted by your Committee; specifically, (1) how the 5% cut impacted the operations of the Committee on Homeland Security in the First Session; (2) how a possible 6.4% cut will impact the Committee’s operations in the Second Session; and (3) how the Committee’s Minority is funded.

1. How the 5% cut impacted Committee operations in the First Session

When the Committee on House Administration held its hearing on March 1, 2011, on the proposed committee budgets for the 112th Congress, the Committee’s funding was reduced by 5% from the amount allotted in the 111th Congress, a cut of approximately \$900,000. The House Appropriations bill for the Legislative Branch includes a 6.4% reduction for 2012, which equates to a further reduction of \$540,000. The Committee’s 2012 funding level will be \$3,352 more than the funding level in 2006. In 2006, 50 staff positions were authorized for the Committee on Homeland Security, whereas in 2012, 75 staff positions are authorized.

As I testified on March 1st, we intended to do more with less and the Committee on Homeland Security would pursue an aggressive agenda to help keep our Nation safe from future terrorist attacks.

Since that hearing, the Committee on Homeland Security has launched a series of hearings on one of the major threats facing our country – the radicalization by al Qaeda and its affiliates of U.S. citizens and others lawfully residing in the United States and the threat these radicalized terrorists pose to the Homeland. To date, the Committee on Homeland Security has held hearings on the threat of radicalization in the Muslim American community; the role of al

Shabaab in recruiting Americans to fight in Somalia and potentially threaten the Homeland; and the extent of radicalization in U.S. prisons.

As part of this radicalization series, the Committee will end the year with an unprecedented joint hearing with the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee on December 7th to examine the threat of homegrown terrorists to military installations within the United States, as well as military personnel and their families. The growing threat of the last topic was underscored on November 20th with the announced arrest of Jose Pimentel, a 27-year-old U.S. citizen who was radicalized by al Awlaki and his “Inspire” on-line magazines to plot attacks on police stations and post offices in New York City, as well as military personnel returning from Iraq and Afghanistan.

The Committee on Homeland Security and its six subcommittees also held hearings to receive testimony from Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano, former Director of the National Counterterrorism Center Michael Leiter, and numerous other witnesses from the Department of Homeland Security, other Federal agencies, State and local governments, and the private sector on key homeland security issues. Hearing topics included: identifying what is necessary to achieve operational control of the border; strengthening our Nation’s cyber security; improving communications for our Nation’s first responders; strengthening our defenses against terrorist use of weapons of mass destruction; and overseeing the Department of Homeland Security’s operations to ensure they are efficient and cost-effective. The Subcommittees also held numerous oversight hearings and sent many oversight letters. The Subcommittees also held field hearings and conducted site visits on critical homeland security issues in different regions of the country.

The Committee on Homeland Security also passed the first authorization bill since 2007 for the Department of Homeland Security. We currently are working with other committees with related jurisdiction to prepare the bill for consideration by the full House early next year. The Full Committee and its subcommittees also have reported a number of other homeland security bills, including legislation to address chemical plant security. Two of the reported bills have been passed by the full House, one of which has been signed into law. In addition, the Committee is working on additional legislation to move next year, including bills to address cybersecurity, port security, and other homeland security priorities.

We were able to implement this aggressive oversight and legislative agenda, while at the same time incorporating a 5% reduction in Committee funding for the First Session. The impact of the 5% cut was absorbed or minimized through specific steps we took for the Majority, which included:

- Streamlining the subcommittees to sharpen their focus on major homeland security priorities;
- Not filling all authorized staff positions pending assessment of the impact of the budget cuts;
- Hiring staff and utilizing existing staff for positions and roles that could be filled with more experienced staff (commensurately, with higher salaries);
- Utilization of senior fellows and detailees at no cost to the Committee;

- Judicious use of committee travel funds, including use of internet tools to secure lowest fares for airline tickets and lowest rates for rental vehicles;
- Implementation of ‘best practices’ to reduce overall travel expenses;
- Elimination of year-end staff bonuses;
- Reform of telecommunications options for staff, including use of most cost-effective voice and data plans; and
- Implementation of internal administrative reforms to realize cost savings in publication subscriptions, supplies, and information technology (IT).

2. How a possible 6.4 percent cut will impact Committee operations in the Second Session

As the Committee on Homeland Security prepares for the Second Session of the 112th Congress, absorbing a 6.4% cut will be difficult for staff and Committee operations. In light of the Federal Government’s fiscal situation and the multi-year pay freeze imposed on Executive Branch employees, it is important for Congress to lead in this regard. Therefore, it is my intent to continue to do more with less by continuing a number of the management reforms and cost-savings measures we implemented in the First Session.

In addition to the cost-saving measures mentioned above, we will realize savings from our information technology (IT) contract, since the IT contractor advised that it will not exercise its contractual option to increase base fees in 2012. This will result in significant cost-savings that can be applied to other Committee operations and staff salaries.

To help maintain Committee staff currently on board at their current salary levels, we plan to purchase equipment and supplies for 2012 with the funds we saved in 2011. To further reduce the Committee’s expenditures, intern stipends which helped recruit and support legal interns and graduates with related experience will be eliminated.

We also intend to bring on board a detailee from the Government Accountability Office and recruit senior Fellows to augment Committee staffing in key priority areas.

3. How the Committee’s Minority is funded

At the beginning of the 112th Congress after prior consultation with Ranking Member Thompson, we adjusted the budget of the Committee on Homeland Security for the Majority and Minority offices to fully meet the budget reduction for the First Session. We also continued to follow the Committee’s customary 2/3 – 1/3 division of funding between the Majority and Minority offices.

It is my intent to continue to follow the Committee’s 2/3 – 1/3 division of funding between the Majority and Minority offices.

We appreciate the continuing support of Chairman Lungren, Ranking Member Brady, and Members of the Committee on House Administration for the work and mission of the Committee on Homeland Security. I look forward to continuing to work with all Members of

this Committee in the Second Session of the 112th Congress to strengthen our country's defenses against terrorist attacks.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

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