

NEWS ALERT



U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Homeland Security Committee

Rep. Bennie G. Thompson, Chairman



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Statement of Chairman Bennie G. Thompson**

### **“Strong Oversight at the Department of Homeland Security: A Predicate to Good Government”**

April 25, 2007 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Chairman Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the Management, Investigations, and Oversight Subcommittee hearing entitled “Strong Oversight at the Department of Homeland Security: A Predicate to Good Government”:

“We have heard the same line from this Department over and over again: “We welcome oversight.” But saying it does not make it so. And the GAO, the IG, the United States Senate, and this Committee – we all say it isn’t so.

When the GAO or the IG request documents or witnesses, the Department needs to produce them, not shuffle the request from one layer of bureaucracy to another. It is not the Department’s place to question why the GAO wants certain documents or to dictate how the IG can interview a witness. Just as importantly, when Congress requires reports, the Department needs to get them to us on time.

Today we need straight answers. Unfortunately, when Department representatives met with staff to discuss the complaints of the GAO and the IG, they provided anything but straight answers. First they said there has never been a problem. Then they said that the problem has been fixed. And then they couldn’t even explain how they fixed this problem – a problem that supposedly never existed.

So – According to the Department, a problem that never existed was fixed by means that no one can explain. This kind of double-talk is unacceptable.

They say that the first step to getting better is admitting that you have a problem. So maybe this hearing should be viewed as an intervention. I’m not selling a 12-step program, but the fact remains that the Department has been extraordinarily reluctant to acknowledge that it has a problem. I hope that changes today – I hope the Department takes that first step and admits there has been a problem, so together we can fix it. Under Secretary Schneider, I recognize that these problems pre-date your tenure. But they were dumped in your lap.

I am hopeful that the Department can reach some agreement with Mr. Rabkin about how to work better with the GAO in the future. But I want to echo what Chairman Carney said: this issue is not going away. We will both be watching to make sure things improve. And if they don’t, we’ll do this all over again.”

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