



**SELECT COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY
CHAIRMAN CHRISTOPHER COX**

homeland.house.gov

Broad Support for Homeland Security Committee Permanency

A wide range of think-tanks, scholars, and government officials have expressed their full support for a permanent standing Committee on Homeland Security:

The 9/11 Commission:

“[O]n certain issues, other priorities pointed Congress in a direction that was unhelpful in meeting the threats that were emerging in the months leading up to 9/11. Committees with oversight responsibility for aviation focused overwhelmingly on airport congestion and the economic health of the airlines, not aviation security. Committees with responsibility for the INS focused on the Southwest border, not on terrorists. ...

Even in congressional committees responsible for national security, “[t]errorism was a second- or third-order priority.”

9/11 Commission Report at pp.106-07.

The Heritage Foundation:

"[V]igorous support from Congress is needed to ensure that the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) got the right direction, authorities, and support Unfortunately, from the onset the Homeland Security Committee had only limited authority to serve as an effective watchdog. Dozens of other committees retained their authorities to manage the Department’s affairs. ... The Cox report [to the Committee on Rules] should call for: Establishing a permanent Homeland Security Committee with broad oversight of the Department, including sole responsibility for a DHS authorization bill."

Heritage Foundation Web Memo #579, James J. Carafano, "Lack of Congressional Reform Leaves America Less Safe" (September 30, 2004).

The Gilmore Commission:

“The Congress is still not well organized to address issues involving homeland security in a cohesive way. The House recently took the bold, necessary, but unfortunately only temporary step of creating a special committee just to consider the proposal to create the Department of Homeland Security. Structures of that nature are required on a longer-term basis. Jurisdiction for various aspects of this issue continues to be scattered over dozens of committees and subcommittees.”

“Recommendation: That each House of the Congress establish a separate authorizing committee and related appropriation subcommittee with jurisdiction over Federal programs and authority for Combating Terrorism/Homeland Security.”

Gilmore Commission, Fourth Report at 50 (Dec. 15, 2002).

9/11 Commission Vice Chair Lee Hamilton:

“[Y]ou are at a crunch point, and ... if another incident were to happen – and the Congress had done nothing to put its own House in order – I think the institution, and maybe some of you individually, would be criticized for not acting. In other words, I think there is a political risk here

“[Y]ou have to get your house in order so that you can have robust oversight over the Department of Homeland Security. The Department of Homeland Security needs your advice and counsel. Secretary Ridge said, ‘I want to be able to come to one expert body of the Congress and lay out my problems, tell them what we’ve done, tell them what we haven’t done and get their advice and counsel.’ Secretary Ridge prefers this rather than going to 88 subcommittees – 88 subcommittees! That really is absurd, and it is simply not fair to the Executive branch to make them do that.”

Hearing, Select Committee on Homeland Security, August 17, 2004.

Former Speaker Newt Gingrich:

“88 committees and subcommittees for one department? By one count, 412 members of the House serve on a committee or a subcommittee with some right to jurisdiction, 100 of the senators? I mean not a single senator is left without an opportunity to ask Secretary Ridge what he's doing ... Now, that's just an absurdity, and it's a violation of our survival requirements.”

* * *

“My suggestion is first that you have to have a single standing committee. ... And, so, I think at the earliest date this Congress, this House has to make clear there will be a standing committee, it will have real authority.”

Hearing, Select Committee on Homeland Security, Subcommittee on Rules, September 9, 2003.

Former Speaker Tom Foley:

“[T]here's not only a need to bring some focus and scope to the oversight function, but there is a critical need to avoid the distraction of members of this new Department from having to respond day-by-day to dozens and dozens of different requests for testimony.”

Hearing, Select Committee on Homeland Security, Subcommittee on Rules, September 9, 2003.

Markle Foundation Task Force on National Security in the Information Age:

“Congress should simplify its oversight of homeland security. The ideal approach would be to form standing committees on homeland security. Difficult and disruptive as this would be for Congress, it is no more than is being asked of the Executive Branch and it is the only way to assure sensible, effective congressional oversight and responsibility. ... [I]t is the only way to assure sensible, effective congressional oversight and responsibility.”

Markle Report at 76 (Oct. 2002) (Report of Working Group on Organizational Challenges).