



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Statement of Chairman Bennie G. Thompson Chemical Facility Anti-Terrorism Act of 2009

June 16, 2009 (Washington) – Today, Committee on Homeland Security Chairman Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS) delivered the following prepared remarks for the full Committee hearing entitled the *Chemical Facility Anti-Terrorism Act of 2009*:

“When I assumed the Chairmanship of this Committee, I identified the need to shield the Nation’s critical infrastructure from foreign and domestic terrorism as one of my key goals in Charting the Course Towards Freedom from Fear.

To that end, reauthorization of the Department of Homeland Security’s chemical security program-- the “Chemical Facilities Anti-Terrorism Standards” program-- before it expires in October 2009 is a major priority.

Today, I am pleased to introduce legislation that not only reauthorizes CFATS but also enhances it in a number of critical ways.

The “Chemical Facility Anti-Terrorism Act of 2009” is the product of over six months of stakeholder meetings and bipartisan discussions between the Committees on Homeland Security and Energy and Commerce.

In the end, we have produced a bill that is both comprehensive and common-sense.

I have made no secret of my disappointment that past efforts to enact chemical security legislation been bogged down because of jurisdictional conflict.

This Congress, I have a partner that shares my commitment to enacting comprehensive chemical security legislation this year—Henry Waxman—the Chairman of the Energy and Commerce Committee.

At our direction, over the past six months,, Committee staff worked in an open and bipartisan manner and sought input from a wide range of experts and stakeholders including:

the Department of Homeland Security; large and small chemical manufacturers; fertilizer manufacturers; petroleum and propane manufacturers and distributors; the explosives industry; key associations in the chemical sector; the State of New Jersey; representatives from labor unions that represent chemical facility workers; drinking water and wastewater organizations, and academic and other experts.

Today’s hearing will continue in that open, collaborative spirit.

While, at introduction, the bill does not yet have a Republican cosponsor, I am hopeful that, in the end, it will garner bipartisan support just as similar Committee-developed legislation has received.

After all, many of the key provisions that were accepted during the negotiations were offered by Republican staff.

Today, in addition to discussing the new legislation, we will also be discussing how things are going on the implementation of CFATS.

As a close observer, I give credit to the Department for the good job it has done so far in promulgating and enforcing the CFATS regulations.

There have been a few missteps, but the Department has adapted quickly and made adjustments as necessary.

The legislation we will discuss today represents a continuation of that effort.

As the CFATS program has been implemented, it is evident that there are a number of areas that need to be addressed legislatively.

These include: (1) the current exemption on security regulations for drinking water, wastewater, and port facilities; (2) the absence of strong whistleblower protections; (3) restrictions of citizen suits; and (4) the absence of a requirement that facilities include methods to reduce consequences of terrorist attacks—a “best practice” in the chemical sector—in their vulnerability assessments.

The bill I am introducing—together with forthcoming provisions that the Energy and Commerce Committee plans include—will take each of these issues on—directly.”

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