

COMMITTEES:
ARMED SERVICES
TACTICAL AIR AND LAND FORCES
STRATEGIC FORCES

SELECT COMMITTEE ON
HOMELAND SECURITY
INTELLIGENCE AND
COUNTERTERRORISM

CYBERSECURITY, SCIENCE, AND
RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT
RULES



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September 16, 2003

The Hon. Dennis J. Hastert, Speaker
H232 Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Hastert:

As a Member of the Select Committee on Homeland Security and its Subcommittee on Rules, I write to urge that you take whatever actions are necessary to create a permanent Committee on Homeland Security in the 109th Congress.

On Tuesday, September 9, 2003, the Homeland Security Rules Subcommittee held its final hearing in a three-part, education series on historical perspectives on House reform attempts. Our bipartisan subcommittee heard testimony from former Speakers of the House Thomas Foley and Newt Gingrich, who strongly recommended that the House Homeland Security Committee be made permanent.

The former Speakers pointed out that there are currently 88 committees and subcommittees in both chambers that have oversight of the 22 agencies in the Department of Homeland Security. This decentralization and Balkanization of homeland security issues could well lead to a hodge-podge of conflicting and uncoordinated policies, as well as a disorganized Congressional oversight structure.

Congress and the President were right in reorganizing the Executive Branch agencies into the Department of Homeland Security last year in response to the tragic September 11 attacks on our country. But just as the Congressional Budget Act of 1974, which led to the House Budget Committee and the Congressional Budget Office was a recognition that Congress needs to have its own expertise and bases of information in order to carry out its fiscal Constitutional duties, Congress now needs to organize itself to insure that we have the expertise and independent information necessary to carry out our

Constitutional duties of oversight over the Executive branch and our responsibilities for domestic security.

In recognition of this fact, earlier this year, the House and Senate Appropriations Committees reorganized their subcommittees to insure that Congress can exercise proper control over funding the new Department. Making permanent the Select Committee on Homeland Security would not only be an effective way for Congress to exercise its Constitutional oversight responsibilities but it is a logical extension of the appropriator's initial effort.

To place the issue into context: no one would ever suggest scattering the jurisdiction of the Armed Services Committee over 88 committee and subcommittees, because it would seriously compromise Congress' ability to insure a strong national defense. I believe that protecting the security of our citizens in their homes, neighborhoods and communities is as important and demands the same attention as a strong national defense. We must not wait for another terrorist attack to take a needed and responsible course of action.

For these reasons, I urge you to work with Democratic Leader Pelosi to create a permanent Homeland Security Committee and make a joint announcement this year so that the appropriate planning can be conducted and so the rest of the House--and the Senate--can follow in your lead. I have also written to Democratic Leader Pelosi regarding this matter.

Thank you for your kind consideration of my request.

Sincerely,



KENDRICK B. MEEK
Member of Congress