

Congressman Peter T. King
Statement for the Record
Committee on Rules Member Day Hearing on Proposed Rule Changes
September 15, 2014

In light of the continued terrorist threat facing the United States Homeland and in an effort to make Congress more effective and efficient, I respectfully request that the Committee on Rules consider changes to the 114th Congressional Rules Package regarding homeland security jurisdiction.

As you know, one of the few remaining recommendations from the 2004 9/11 Commission Report is that “Congress should create a single, principal point of oversight and review for homeland security.”

When the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) was first created, it reported to 88 congressional committees.¹ That number has since grown to 119 committees, subcommittees, caucuses, and commissions across both chambers that exercise oversight over some element of DHS.² Many of these committees have no significant role in national security.

The fractured jurisdiction over the Department of Homeland Security has limited Congress’ ability to provide effective guidance to the third largest agency in the Federal government. During the 112th Congress, more than four hundred DHS officials testified at 289 hearings.³ The burden of responding to so many different oversight entities takes time away from Department leadership’s ability to stay focused on the mission of the agency. One estimate suggests that each hearing requires one month’s worth of person-hours or preparation.⁴ In 2009 alone, the Department spent the equivalent of sixty-six working years responding to congressional inquiries at a cost of ten million dollars in taxpayer money.⁵

While Congressional reform cannot make this country 100 percent secure, it is a necessary component of any national effort to manage evolving threats. Thank you for your time and consideration of this important issue.

¹ 9/11 Report, *supra* note 11 at 421.

² *Task Force Report on Streamlining and Consolidating Congressional Oversight of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security*. The Aspen Institute Justice & Society Program, September 2013 at 11.

³ Aspen *supra* note 35 at 10.

⁴ Aspen *supra* note 35 at 12.

⁵ “Inside Washington: DHS Most Overseen Department,” Associated Press, May 17, 2011.