

Statement of Congressman Steven Palazzo of the Mississippi Fourth Congressional District
Subcommittee on Rules and Organization of the House
Member's Day Hearing on Proposed Rules Changes for the 114th Congress
September 17, 2014

Thank you Chairman Nugent and Ranking Member McGovern for holding this hearing to discuss potential rules changes to the 114th Congress.

I want to bring to this committee's attention an issue that, if left unresolved, places American lives in danger: Congress' failure to reform its fractured and dysfunctional oversight jurisdiction of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

In 2004, the 9/11 Commission Report found that DHS reported to 88 different congressional committees and subcommittees. The Commission urged Congress to reduce that number and streamline DHS oversight down to primary authorizing committees, much like the House and Senate Armed Services Committees serve as the primary authorizing committees for the military.

Unfortunately, this recommendation has remained unfulfilled, and the number of committees with jurisdiction over DHS has *grown* to 92. This is not oversight. It is overkill.

The lack of reform puts American lives at risk and undermines our ability to thwart terrorists, secure our borders, and prepare for natural disasters. Committees without a homeland security focus can direct DHS agencies in a manner that may conflict with broader national security objectives. These jurisdictional quarrels distract from effective homeland security oversight.

As the saying goes - when everyone is responsible, no one is. If Congress cannot provide proper oversight of DHS, our failure to act will make us culpable when the next disaster strikes.

It is imperative that the House does its part to consolidate jurisdiction over DHS for the 114th Congress. The House should amend its rules and designate the House Committee on Homeland Security as the sole authorizing committee for DHS. This would enable Congress to enact regular authorizing legislation to direct DHS, similar to the NDAA. Consolidation would also strengthen communication between the executive and legislative branches of government. Finally, congressional reform would bolster the oversight process.

The world is not getting safer; it is becoming more dangerous. Terrorist groups and extremists are vigilant. We must be even more so. Congress must set politics and egos aside in order to protect the American people from future threats. That is why I strongly encourage the House to consolidate committee jurisdiction over DHS for the 114th Congress.

Thank you.

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