

## **More than 60 national security experts urge reform in Congressional oversight of Homeland Security**

More than 60 leaders in national defense urged Congress today to reform the way it oversees homeland security, saying that the current system jeopardizes national security and leaves the nation vulnerable to cyber-attacks, bioterrorism, and other threats.

In [a full-page ad](#) in the May 21 editions of The Wall Street Journal, the bipartisan group reflected the overwhelming consensus that the system is dysfunctional and said: “The nation is not as safe as it could and should be.”

The 61 signatories include the three past Secretaries of Homeland Security; all the members of the 9/11 Commission; former heads of the FBI, CIA, NSA and the Joint Chiefs of Staff; former members of Congress, and former homeland security advisors to Presidents. To see the ad and signatories visit: [www.annenbergpublicpolicycenter.org/dhs/](http://www.annenbergpublicpolicycenter.org/dhs/).

The group said more than 100 Congressional committees, subcommittees and other groups claim jurisdiction over the Department of Homeland Security. The result of this “tangle of overlapping committees” is political paralysis, so key security issues are not being properly overseen by Congress.

Among the vulnerabilities that are not being addressed are:

- Unregulated small boats and planes. Passengers and luggage are not screened at many private airports, and federal authorities do not know what is in the cargo holds of small vessels.
- Cybersecurity. Legislation to address cybersecurity has been caught between competing Congressional committees.
- Biological threats. The federal government’s list of 75 biological threats has not been prioritized to give the most dangerous ones greater scrutiny.

The need for simpler oversight was one of 41 recommendations of the 9/11 Commission, which issued its report in 2004. Though most of those recommendations were adopted at least in part, the need for clearer oversight has not been. The Commission’s recommendation was underscored last year by the Sunnylands-Aspen Task Force, a group of homeland security experts convened by the Annenberg Retreat at Sunnylands and the Aspen Institute Justice and Society Program, in partnership with the Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania.

The 114<sup>th</sup> Congress in January will decide which committees will oversee Homeland Security, but for a reorganization plan to succeed, the current Congress must start working on it soon.

For more information, watch the video [“Homeland Confusion.”](#)

### **For interviews, contact:**

Michael Rozansky, Director of Communications, Annenberg Public Policy Center | [mrozansky@asc.upenn.edu](mailto:mrozansky@asc.upenn.edu) | 215-746-0202