

Hearing Transcript

House Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security Hearing on Member Priorities

March 1, 2017

CARTER:

We're going to call this listening session to order. I want to welcome everybody to the Homeland Security Subcommittee on Appropriations. This is our first hearing of the year.

It's been a long time since this subcommittee hosted Members' Hearing Day. Our new full committee chairman, Mr. Frelinghuysen, stressed to us it's -- the importance of providing a forum where members can share their ideas and express their concerns about the Spending and Appropriations Bill.

I completely agree with this. Therefore, I look forward to personally officially receiving your thoughts on appropriations for the Department of Homeland Security and how they impact your district and our nation.

It is my plan to take your ideas and expertise to build a collected knowledge base that ensures the security of the American people in a fiscally responsible manner. With that, I'd like to recognize Ms. Roybal-Allard, our distinguished ranking member, for any remarks she may wish to make.

ROYBAL-ALLARD:

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and welcome to this morning's hearing. You know, this year is likely to be a very difficult year for this subcommittee, and we are very much excited about the fact that you are willing to come here to give us some input as we go about our work. So thank you for being here and I look forward to hearing your testimony.

CARTER:

And we have a schedule and we're trying to stick to it. So, Congressman Barr, we -- you are now recognized for giving us any information you wish to share.

BARR:

Thank you, Chairman Carter, and Ranking Member Roybal- Allard, and to the chairman of the full committee. We appreciate the invitation to come here and offer our testimony and provide some input on the priorities of the Homeland Security Subcommittee.

Obviously, our work here today is to urge this body to adequately fund our priorities and the priorities that I think should be reflected in the subcommittee's Appropriations Bill would include

the Assistance to Firefighters Grants and the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response Grants.

As you know, the SAFER Grants provide much needed funding to fire departments across the United States to hire and retain career and volunteer firefighters, as well as to enhance fire departments' ability to protect the health and safety of its firefighters and the people in local communities in which it serves.

The Fire Grants provide critical funding to local fire and emergency medical services departments to purchase crucial equipment used to help aid first responders to do their jobs in the selfless service of their work.

For example, because of the Assistance to Firefighters grants, Red Lick Volunteer Fire Department located in the 6th District of Kentucky, which I represent, was able to fill in some gaps in their small budget and purchase new personal protective equipment used to enhance the safety and health of its firefighters. And there's other examples of these grants assisting local fire departments within my district. And EMS departments as well.

I would also like to ask this subcommittee to do everything that it can to ensure that the Chemical Stockpile Emergency Preparedness Program, or CSEPP, is fully funded at the highest amount possible.

As you may know, in the 6th District of Kentucky, we are home to one of the two remaining sites for de-militarization under the Chemical Weapons Convention Arms Control Treaty at the Blue Grass Army Depot in Richmond, Kentucky.

BGAD, as we call it, currently guards a stockpile of chemical agents comprising of approximately 523 tons of nerve agent GB, sarin, and VX, and mustard gas. If a fire or an atmospheric release were to occur at BGAD, it would threaten public health and safety and the environment. An immediate death (ph) of workforce of over 1,500 in a population of well over 600,000 Kentuckians in the surrounding communities would be at risk in an emergency.

The CSEPP program provides vital funds to state and local governments to enhance emergency response management for our constituents in the event of an accident or fire at BGAD. Funding for this program as well the Fire and SAFER grants are appropriated by congress to the Department of Homeland Security and are administered through FEMA.

In order to continue to protect the health and safety of the American people and the people of the 6th District of Kentucky, I urge this committee to provide the highest funding possible to ensure our state and local emergency responders have the adequate personal and equipment it needs to effectively respond to possible life threatening emergencies.

And once again, Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to weigh in and offer our priorities for your consideration.

CARTER:

Well, thank you, Mr. Barr. We appreciate you being here. Let me say this is a listening session. However, there may be someone who wants to ask a question. Is there anyone at the -- on our (ph) table? We're going to listen more than talk hopefully. I'm not trying to dominate the conversation. Anybody have a question? Thank you for this.

BARR:

Thank you.

CARTER:

We will take note and we'll do our best to...

BARR:

Thank you, Chairman.

CARTER:

... accommodate. Mr. Polis?

POLIS:

Thank you.

CARTER:

Mr. Polis, welcome. Thank you for coming. We appreciate you participating.

POLIS:

Thank you for having me before such a handsome and intelligent committee with a wonderful Chair. I want to thank Chairman Carter, Ranking Member Lowey (sic). I want to talk about some of the DHS portions of the budget that relate to immigration, a hot topic that obviously the president has talked about and we hear a lot from constituents in our district.

In recent years we've allocated hundreds of millions of dollars to immigration reform and enforcement, and there's been a lot discussion of how we should best target that money. Some of it, unfortunately, has been targeted after individuals with long-standing ties to our community rather than those who pose threats to our community, which should be the focus of the resources we have.

The first program I wanted to discuss is 287(g), which deputizes local law enforcement to engage in federal immigration enforcement. Instead of keeping serious criminals from threatening our

communities, this program forces police to waste their time and resources in trying to figure the immigration status of non-criminals and also opens them up to legal charges or racial profiling.

The program is very unpopular with law enforcement. The Police Foundation, the Major Cities Chief Association have all found that 287(g) has actually made their communities less safe, gotten in the way of community policing and created additional distrust between police and immigrant communities.

I think we can, as we're looking for savings, which I know you are, we can save millions of dollars by cutting funding to 287(g), a program that simply doesn't work and makes communities less safe.

The Secure Communities and Priority Enforcement Programs are another problematic partnership between immigration officials and local law enforcement. It is fundamentally the responsibility of the federal government to enforce immigration laws.

And when you try to pull in, or coerce, or enforce, or even pay local law enforcement to do it, you are taking them away from doing what their job is, which is protecting our communities. So we -- it's very important to keep that in mind as we establish our budget priorities.

If individuals identified as being in the United States illegally, ICE will submit a detainer request calling on local law enforcement to hold the detainee beyond on the time they otherwise would have been released. And while ICE, again, maintains that it prioritizes the removal of criminal aliens, the records from DHS show that 26 percent of those deported through this program had no prior criminal convictions.

And there's \$347 million allocated for the Secure Communities Priority Enforcement Program, and I think that that's another excellent area that the committee can look at making cuts.

I also propose the inclusion of language in the Criminal Alien Program that prohibits the DHS from using federal dollars to fund Criminal Alien Program, or CAP, which gives ICE the authority to detain undocumented individuals in police custody.

Again, the program has ballooned in recent years. It spiked from \$6.6 million in 2004 to \$322 million. That's just over a 10-year period. And we can save hundreds of millions of dollars by defunding that program and focusing our priorities on criminal aliens.

I want to conclude with a proposal to cut funding for private detention facilities, very expensive. Currently, ICE holds 65 percent of detainees in private facilities including one in Colorado I visited several times. These facilities are much more costly than the county prisons and other places where people are kept.

In August, Secretary Jeh Johnson ordered a review of this practice. Homeland Security Advisory Council adopted the stance that fiscal concerns and enforcement policy should not require our deference to the status quo. The body currently allocates \$1.56 billion in funding for private

detention facilities, and we can, again, cut that program out entirely or make significant cuts to that line item.

For too long ICE has a blanket mandate to detain and deport leading to programs that waste our tax payer money, make our communities less safe. Some of these proposed cuts I've brought before you today could save the country \$2 billion as well as help make our communities more safe.

I thank you for the opportunity to testify, be happy to answer any questions. And I look forward to working with each of you to save money on the DHS budget line.

CARTER:

Thank you, Mr. Polis, for your comments. Any questions? Yes, sir.

(UNKNOWN)

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Just to -- I'm still learning about some of these programs and maybe you can clarify for me. The 287(g) program, isn't that a voluntary program where agencies can participate but are not required?

POLIS:

Oh, absolutely, but it's federal dollars, and so given that its impact has not been positive and many of the major metropolitan police areas don't cooperate because they see it as actually increasing crime, it would be pretty low hanging fruit to cut. So I would encourage the committee to take a look at eliminating or cutting that back.

CARTER:

Any other questions? Thank you, Mr. Polis.

POLIS:

Thank you.

CARTER:

Mr. Gosar. Is he here?

(UNKNOWN)

All right, we'll go to the next (inaudible).

CARTER:

Who's here? Mr. Schneider?

(UNKNOWN)

All right (ph).

CARTER:

Mr. Dunn? We'll come back to those others, I think things are going to move pretty fast (inaudible). Welcome Mr. Dunn.

DUNN:

Yes, thank you very much, Chair -- Mr. Chairman. It's an honor to be here. Chairman Carter, ranking members, and all members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today regarding my support for the Offshore Patrol Cutter Program.

As the committee is aware, the Coast Guard's acquisition program of record (ph) calls for 25 cutters - offshore patrol cutters -- to patrol -- to replace the medium endurance cutters. The offshore patrol cutters will feature increased range and endurance and improved communications and electronics suite (ph), and the capability to accommodate safe launch and recovery of helicopters and small boats in all weather.

In accordance with the Coast Guard's acquisition strategy, \$530 million in funding is required in fiscal year 2018. The necessity for the substantial increase in the funding over the \$100 million enacted in fiscal year 2017 is derived from the normally scheduled procurement of the first offshore patrol cutter and the purchase of long lead time materials for the second ship.

As the committee is aware, Eastern Shipbuilding Group is the ship builder under contract to produce the first tranche of offshore patrol cutters. I can personally assure you of the skill and care the hard working boys (ph) of East New (ph) Shipbuilding will invest in delivering the offshore patrol cutters on time and on budget because it is my personal honor to represent them in congress.

In fact, since 2002 in the highly competitive commercial marketplace, Eastern Shipbuilding has built and delivered 136 ships, all of which were on time and on budget. My constituents can fulfill their end of the bargain if congress does its part to provide the necessary resources in a timely manner.

For this reason I respectfully request the appropriation of \$530 (ph) million for the Offshore Patrol Cutter Program which will allow uninterrupted procurement of the first offshore patrol craft and preparations for the construction of the second ship.

My constituents are eager to assist the Coast Guard with performance of its statutory missions and by delivering the next generation capabilities the offshore patrol cutter represents. I thank you very much for the opportunity to speak with you and to advocate on their behalf and for your attention on this important issue. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

CARTER:

Thank you very much, Mr. Dunn. We've worked very hard to get the Offshore Patrol Cutter online and I'm -- the Chair is very supportive of that project. Anybody else have a comment?

(UNKNOWN)

(inaudible).

CARTER:

Well (ph)...

DUNN:

Grateful very much for your time and your support. And thank you, sir.

CARTER:

Yes (ph). You got anybody else who (inaudible).

(OFF-MIKE)

CARTER:

Let's try Ms. (inaudible). Is Ms. Jackson Lee -- is anyone here from her office? Is any here? Mr. Gosar? (AUDIO GAP). (inaudible) Mr. Schneider? Well, we set a time for these people and they make me stick with the (ph) time.

(CROSSTALK)

CARTER:

No. (inaudible) and, you know, the next scheduled is at 9:50. That's five minutes away so we'll just stand at ease (ph) and we'll wait.

(UNKNOWN)

Mr. Chairman. Could I ask unanimous (ph) consent to submit for the record a letter?

CARTER:

Certainly.

(UNKNOWN)

If I can present it?

(OFF-MIKE)

CARTER:

We have two members that have...

(OFF-MIKE)

CARTER:

Schneider? You're welcome to go ahead (inaudible).

SCHNEIDER (?):

I will -- I will borrow that.

CARTER:

So thank you for coming and we're -- welcome and we're here to listen.

SCHNEIDER (?):

Great. Thank you. This is on, right? Good.

SCHNEIDER (?):

Mr. Chairman, Ms. Ranking Member, and the distinguished colleagues of the subcommittee, thank you for this opportunity to speak before the committee. I'm here today to request robust funding for the Department of Homeland Security, specifically two programs of particular importance to the residents of my district and our country.

The United States has always been a nation of immigrants and a shining beacon of hope for those fleeing oppression and seeking a better life. We must ensure our country remains open and welcoming to refugees so the next generation of Americans seeking refuge from war, violence and oppression may find home here.

I strenuously oppose President Trump's discriminatory executive order to bar entry of all refugees, which I believe does nothing to target the root causes of terrorism, does not make our country safer, and undermines the very values that define our nation.

The Department of Homeland Security's U.S. Citizenship and Immigration services, USCIS, plays an important role by processing applications for those seeking entry into the United States as asylum seekers, refugees or through other U.S. humanitarian programs.

This service works alongside other important federal initiatives including the Department of Health and Human Services Refugee and Entrant Assistant Account, REA; the Department of State's Migration and Refugee Assistance, MRA; and Emergency Refugee and Migration Assistance Accounts, ERMA; and the U.S. Agency for International Developments, USAID, International Disaster Assistance, IDA, Account -- and I think that's the end of my initials for a while -- to help refugees domestically and overseas.

Under a USCIS -- currently USCIS faces lengthy backlogs and delays when processing applications. Media outlets reported that in June 2016, the backlog reached a record breaking total of more than 495,000 cases.

The United States must have the necessary resources to process the number of people seeking refuge -- refugee or asylum status in our country. I urge this committee to work with USCIS to determine whether additional funding could reduce this backlog, and both expedite and increase the accuracy of our application and screening processes.

While no system is perfect, the United States has a vigorous vetting process for potential entrants. I am committed to working to improve our screening procedures. However, I strongly disagree with the need to pause processing and admittance of refugees while we do so.

I also urge the committee to continue to fund the Urban Areas Security Initiative, UASI, Non-profit Security Grant Program within the Department of Homeland Security. The NSGP was created so at-risk non-profit organizations that serve as community centers have the resources needed to protect themselves against the potential extremist threats.

The funds may be used for important capital improvements to upgrade security measures. Examples include installing sensing, bars (ph), lighting, video surveillance, metal detectors, access controls, improvements to blast-proof windows and doors, and cybersecurity enhancements.

Underscoring the need for this program is the troubling nationwide rise of anti-Semitic incidents in 2017, including dozens of bomb threats against Jewish community centers, and the severe vandalism of two cemeteries in communities.

In total there have been more than 100 threats against Jewish organizations in 81 states -- 81 sites in 33 states since just the beginning of this year. This threat is exacerbated by the efforts of ISIL and the extremists organizations to inspire and motivate homegrown violent extremism within the United States. The NSGP allows important community centers to take the necessary steps to both deter and protect themselves from hate motivated violence.

Together the USCIS and the NSGP represent the United States' dual commitment to remaining a welcome refuge for those fleeing violence and a secure home for all of our diverse communities. I urge the community -- the committee to prioritize funding for these two critical programs in fiscal year 2018 and I thank you all for your time.

CARTER:

Thank you. Does anyone have any comments or questions? All right, thank you very much.

SCHNEIDER:

Thank you.

CARTER:

We appreciate your input. All right, Mr. Gosar, you're up.

GOSAR:

Thank you, Chairman. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, and thanks for the opportunity to testify before the subcommittee. I'm Congressman Paul Gosar and I represent Arizona's 4th Congressional District.

I'm also the chairman for the Congressional Western Caucus, chairman of the House Committee on Natural Resources, Subcommittee on Energy and Mineral Resources. And vice chairman of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reforms, Subcommittee of Interior.

There are a number of critical programs that we'd like to address in the Homeland Security Appropriations Bill. The force (ph) -- first important measure I would like to advocate for today is the defunding of sanctuary cities and jurisdictions. The Center for Immigration Studies has reported that there are more 276 sanctuary jurisdictions nationwide.

These cities and localities have refused to comply with federal immigration laws and have released more than 8,000 criminal alien offenders over eight months. In the same amount of time, nearly one out of every four released criminals had been arrested for subsequent offenses.

The House has voted and passed language that prohibits federal funding from going to sanctuary cities five different times in recent years. Last year 42 members of the house cosigned a similar request to this subcommittee. I respectfully request the inclusion of this potentially life-saving provision in this fiscal year's bill.

The next measure I would like to advocate deals with the preventing of funds for the implementation of former President Obama's illegal executive actions on immigration. In his first six months in office, President Obama stated no less than 22 times that he did not have the authority to unilaterally change immigration policy.

Yet that is exactly what he attempted to do by issuing an unconstitutional executive action November 2014 with the intent of creating the Deferred Action for Parents of Americans, DAPA, Program and expanding the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals, or the DACA Program.

The Obama Administration's executive actions clearly infringe on the authority of congress to control immigration matters as well as the power of the purse and the anti-deficiency Act.

In 2015, the House passed House Amendment 6 to the Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Act to defund DACA and DAPA. Inserting this rider into the FY18 Homeland Security Appropriations Bill will provide assurances to the public that we will do all we can to end this lawlessness, to defend our constitution, and uphold our oath to office.

In submitting this appropriations language request, I ask that the subcommittee uphold the rule of law by including this important language in this year's fiscal bill.

The American people have made it abundantly clear that they wish to see our southern border fortified. For decades, a porous border has allowed millions of unlawful immigrants to enter our country.

The Secure Fence Act of 2006, which is signed into law by President George W. Bush, required the Secretary of Homeland Security to achieve and maintain operation control over the entire international land and maritime borders of the United States. And called for two layers of reinforced fencing in parts of the California, Arizona, New Mexico and Texas, totaling more than 700 miles.

This fencing was intended to deter crossings where illegal activity is at high risk, but DHS has yet to complete the law's fencing requirements. Security fences work, and completion of the double layer fence on our border with Mexico should be a top priority.

Last year 21 members of the House joined me in submitting an appropriation language request on this very matter. I believe this should take priority and respectfully ask for inclusion of these resources in this year's fiscal bill.

The fiscal year 2017 Homeland Security Appropriations Bill provide a \$5.9 billion for ICE. I strongly support funding for State Criminal Alien Assistance Program or the SCAAP program.

I applaud the subcommittee for prioritizing significant resources for this program last fiscal year, and would again like to ask this body to ensure sufficient funding for SCAAP in this fiscal year's bill.

Additionally, I'd like to see the amendment offered by Mr. Aderholt of Alabama, which prohibited federal funding for ICE to provide abortions, and the amendment offered by Mr. Culberson of Texas, which required ICE to detain priority one and priority two illegal aliens, both of which were adopted by this subcommittee and included in the base text of the fiscal year's bill last year.

I appreciate the opportunity to testify before you. I would like to thank all the members of the subcommittee for your important work, and look forward to working with you on this year's fiscal bill. And I thank the Chairman, and I yield back.

CARTER:

Comments or questions? And for your information, I am big supporter of SCAAP. I can tell you that.

GOSAR:

Yes, it works.

CARTER:

Yes. Thank you (ph).

GOSAR:

And I appreciate it. Thank you, Chairman.

CARTER:

(OFF-MIKE) stand at ease until (inaudible). (OFF-MIKE) Yes, Ms. Jackson, (inaudible).

JACKSON LEE:

Thank you. Thank you, Chairman. Good morning. Thank you to the ranking member, and thank you for your patience in my coming from another meeting in the capitol. Thank you very much.

First let me thank both Chairman Carter and Ranking Member Roybal-Allard. You all have worked together for a long time and you have had great leadership on this committee. And as many of you know, I'm on the Homeland Security Authorizing Committee, a committee that I love, and, frankly, was on it at its origins in the heinous backdrop of 9/11.

So the first thing I'd like to say is through your leadership, the Homeland Security Department has been able to be a major buffer against any catastrophic terrorist act since 9/11. This does not discount San Bernardino, Orlando and other incidents that we have had. We do not take that lightly. But it's been your work.

So I'd like to speak very quickly to some without further explanation, but I'd like to emphasize some points that I would (ph) support. I think it is important to continue the \$2 billion funding for the National Protection Program's directorate. I'm on the Cybersecurity Committee and I think if there's ever a new frontier or a continuing frontier for threats to the United States it is cybersecurity.

I am the former chair of the Transportation Security Committee, which at that time -- subcommittee -- which at that time included infrastructure, and I remember about a decade ago going to sewage and water plants as potential sites for terrorist activity. I still believe that our infrastructure that is now almost completely run by the cyber system will find itself vulnerable in counties and cities across America for any franchised or independent acts of terrorism.

So I support cybersecurity efforts protection civilian federal networks, and to be supported \$900 million. And I think everyone knows the number that 85 to 90 percent maybe now, was 85 percent 10 years ago of the cyber system or the private internet system is in the private sector.

Priority should be given to telecommunication upgrades so that designated calls and communications can be placed on a more current technology during disasters and emergencies.

I'm just going to throw in at this point, I still think that we are behind the curve. We've made great advancement on first responders being able to communicate to each other. You will find local jurisdictions where it's still difficult or they still are not on the same system.

Now some might argue that it's a local issue, but it really is our issue. And so I'd like to at least have the Homeland Security be that link to help our local entities. One of our subcommittees is Emergency Preparedness and that communication is something that we hear all the time from the witnesses that come before us.

The funding must address one of the most stubborn problems, failures of telecommunication systems in the immediate aftermath of a disaster. So that's the point that I think is very important. For some reason, systems go down. If you bring in people from out of state because it's such a massive disaster, how do they communicate with each other?

I was thinking of a couple years ago the massive fires in the west, and I think there was some question about being able to communicate on the same lines of -- this may be something that you've already focused on.

Critical infrastructure and civilian government agencies must be prepared to identify and solve zero-day events which are previously under-detected software or firmware vulnerabilities that if exploited could have catastrophic results because there is no defense.

My conclusion on that, because I have some other points on cybersecurity, is that we need to ramp up the cybersecurity component of Homeland Security both in terms of the professional staffing and the creativity that would help us be -- we should not be behind industry, we should be in front of industry.

The castle and moat approach to cybersecurity must be replaced by a well-resourced and staffed agency that is prepared to meet the challenges proposed by kinetic cyber threat environment that we go ahead and see. I also think that one of the legislations that I -- legislative efforts was to introduce training of more cybersecurity workforce, and to have the Homeland Security be involved in that.

I support \$8 billion for the TSA to fully address additional requirements and screening processes, procedures and training. This organization is very close to my heart having served as a chair and a member of the committee for a number of years.

I think that they get less credit. They are certainly intrusive, that is part of their job. But I would say they too have been on the front lines in spite of many reports that I know that you've been in classified briefings about what was not detected. They should be noted for what has been detected and for stopping, again, any catastrophic or major incident that deals with what people carry on or able to do on aircraft since 9/11. I support \$8 billion for that.

I'm very -- I would want to emphasize to the committee the importance of professional training for TSOs. Their attrition rate, their level of staying powers are rather difficult. They have young hires, they're hiring people at 19 years old. And so we have to find a way to keep them, maintain them and train a professional staff.

I think many of you know Vice Admiral Neffenger, who is not here, but he worked very hard with your resources, with your appropriations for the professional training process and I really think we should emphasize that that new TSOs and existing TSOs -- new TSOs should go to the training site in Georgia. And understand how important it is, new TSOs have no visible present understanding of 9/11. So that's something very important.

But then the existing staff needs to be trained for professional development because they have to have the basis. I also think it's important for them to have a sense that they can do upward mobility and lateral between federal agencies, so (ph) give them incentive to continue to stay at the agency. They have the ability to transfer into some of the other law enforcement other agencies.

\$400 million for transportation screening technology to improve those capabilities. \$120 million to provide -- to provide training for TSA front-line employees, including new basic training. I've said that. And \$55 million for TSO retention, which is a real issue.

I support \$755 million for the Urban Area Security Initiative, this is to work without UAS (ph) Grants to work without high risk terrorist attacks. That is a big debate about low risk and high risk.

I am in a city of a million plus, so a metroplex area of 3 million, Houston /Harris County area. And being on ground, on site on 9/11, I remember distinctly when there was massive confusion, and rumors were flying beyond -- chairman -- the -- and Ranking member -- the rumors of the White House, the State Department. There were rumors of they're next going to Houston because of the oil concentration. So we have to look at areas for what they might pose.

\$1.5 billion for a national flood hazard mapping and risk analysis. Anyone knows the area that I come from, it is an ongoing challenge of the whole flooding and we had several catastrophic -- or -- let me not use that term. We've had several incidents of loss of life and flooding that we've had two years back to back in Houston.

But it's an example of flooding, it's an example of the issues that happen in California in terms of potential flooding. And I think that is a very important part of what we do. \$1.5 billion for a commitment to maintain funding over the five-year period dealing with this funding, which would amount to \$7.5 billion in total. It's important to note that in the 1990s, the numbers of disasters nationally were about 30 a year. Today they're over 100 at a cost of roughly \$1 billion.

I support robust funding for the Pre-disaster Mitigation Program within FEMA, and there's a list of things that I think are important, and my statement is on the record. I obviously support \$100 million for the Port Security Grant program. It has been very helpful to our ports across the nation.

Maritime security is another element of crucial need, and even though ports represent a local economic engine, we should not in any way diminish the potential for threats. I've toured and visited a lot of ports. There's massive cargo, massive opportunity. And I would make the argument that the security is not as firm as we would like it.

Port wide maritime security risk management, enhanced maritime domain awareness, support maritime security training and exercises. And I think we should work with our unions that work on the port to include them in training as well.

\$44 million for university programs. This is very close to my heart. Homeland Security Centers of Excellence for minorities serving universities. We have had them on transportation security. We are working on trying to develop cybersecurity.

These are where we help train the next front-line professional for Homeland Security Centers of Excellence, and they have been in a number of schools. And I would commend you to reviewing the success of those training opportunities for young people to go into the business of Homeland Security.

I would argue for the expansion of such because Homeland Security in my perspective is more important now than it has ever been, and you have one of, if not the most, important committee -- Subcommittee on Appropriations. It is the securing of this nation, the domestic security of this nation which combines with intelligence and other aspects. So this -- these particular centers of excellence are really to help build the workforce for the 21st century.

\$10 million for U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services. And I'm going to just summarize and support robust funding for Customs and Border Protection salaries and expenses. I support \$12 for immigrant integration and citizenship programs.

I had spent a lot of time coming from Houston going to swearing-in ceremonies, not to being sworn at, but the very emotional services of new immigrants. And if you ever want joy, please participate in those. And we've had whole stadiums full of people in Houston, and they are so eager to be part of this great country.

But they do the ask for those of us who may be there speaking or maybe there to acknowledge them, what do we do next? Or how do we participate in this great country. So I think the immigrant integration and citizenship programs that USCIS does is very important so it helps them move forward and helps their family.

\$410 million for the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program. I think that's self-explanatory. But I want to finish my comments on CBP and the Citizenship and Immigration Services.

We are in the midst of an executive order that many of us fully and completely disagree with, and that's I know recognized that we have different positions, and that's what congress and what America's all about.

But you will have to fund a number of these particular areas, and if we don't fund the processes of legal immigration to help people process, to help people seek legal immigration, to help people get status, then we're begging the question.

I would argue, I have nothing in here about the wall, and so I'll speak frankly. I have spent a lot of time on the border. I was here when the funding was allocated for the border that is the fence that is at San Diego. I've been long enough to have been with the -- all of the chairs of the Homeland Security Committee Authorizing Committee. I've been to that wall now, it is not -- excuse -- fence, it is not a wall.

The topography in Texas does not -- is not well suited for any kind of wall. All of the people rejected it, and I, frankly, don't think there is any resources -- if it comes under your committee, maybe it's under another subcommittee -- that there are any resources to build a wall.

And with all of the monies that are being asked to bolster up Homeland Security to in fact provide for a secure nation, I believe that there are many other resources that can be utilized for our border patrol, enhancing staffing, more technology, possibly aerial resources that could be utilized. But working with the communities that are on the border, I believe those are important hearings that you should have on the border.

With that, my big support for CBP, Border Patrol and Immigration Services remains strong and they should be funded to the needs that they have in doing their job. And with that, Mr. Chairman, I thank you for your -- and ranking member -- I thank you for your indulgence.

CARTER:

Thank you. And the Chair will note that you have a very well-submitted written statement. And thank you very much for your comments. Any questions or comments?

(UNKNOWN)

Nothing (ph).

JACKSON LEE:

Thank you.

CARTER:

Thank you very much.

JACKSON LEE:

Thank you for your patience.