

**FACT SHEET**-- July 11<sup>th</sup>, 2005 --**CONGRESSIONAL REFORM****The Importance of Congressional Oversight**

- By its very nature, much of the work of intelligence and homeland security takes place out of the public eye. The American people rely on committees of the Congress to make sure that national security programs are functioning effectively.
- To do their job, the intelligence and homeland security committees must have the authority to hold these agencies to account.

**Congressional Oversight Before 9/11**

- Congress did not make the rise of al Qaeda and transnational terrorism a top priority.
- No one committee had as its exclusive responsibility domestic security or counterterrorism. Therefore, committees were distracted by less critical issues.
- Congress largely delegated the issue of emerging national security threats to outside commissions, whose recommendations were usually ignored.

**Homeland Security Oversight After 9/11**

- Jurisdiction for the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) was distributed among a number of different congressional committees.
- Secretary Ridge and other DHS officials were obliged to testify before 88 committees and subcommittees. This obligation was a major drain on their time and the energies of DHS personnel.

**Reforms for the 109th Congress**

- **Intelligence:**
  - The Senate Select Committee on Intelligence (SSCI) removed term limits, reduced its membership, created an oversight subcommittee, and limited sequential referrals.
  - The House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence (HPSCI) created an oversight subcommittee.

- **Homeland Security:**

- The Senate Governmental Affairs Committee became the Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs. The Committee has limited authority over DHS's budget and personnel.
- The House created a permanent Homeland Security Committee (HSC) with jurisdiction over most of DHS. The Committee produced, and the House passed, an authorization bill for DHS, and legislation to allocate first responder grants based on assessed risk and vulnerabilities.

**Outstanding Issues**

- **Intelligence:**

- **Problem:** The defense appropriations committees, which control intelligence funding, frequently override authorized priorities. This reduces the intelligence committees' authority to hold the Intelligence Community to account.
- **Solution:** The House and Senate should create separate appropriations subcommittees for intelligence.

- **Homeland Security:**

- **Problem:** The Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee was not given jurisdiction over several key agencies within DHS. This makes it difficult for the Committee to produce an authorization bill for the Department, as did the House. Without annual authorizations, DHS will continue to operate with an insufficient level of oversight.
- **Solution:** The Senate and the House homeland security committees should have jurisdiction over all counterterrorism elements of DHS.