

**Hearing Statement for Chairman Joseph Lieberman
Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee
Nomination of Tara O'Toole – DHS Undersecretary of Science and Technology
Washington, DC
June 10, 2009**

Good morning. Today this Committee will consider the nominations of Dr. Tara O'Toole to be Undersecretary of Science and Technology at the Department of Homeland Security and Jeffrey Zients to be the Director for Management at the Office of Management and Budget.

We will begin with Dr. O'Toole, who has appeared previously before our Committee as a witness and who I'm delighted to welcome back as the nominee for this important position.

The Science and Technology Directorate is charged with managing our nation's investments in homeland security research and development projects.

It is hard to think of a threat to America's homeland security that cannot be better defended against with an innovative application of science and technology.

S&T had a difficult launch and in its early years struggled to clarify and execute its primary mission. As a result, the FY 2007 Appropriations Act reduced the Directorate's \$1.4 billion budget by 40 percent.

In wake of this dose of tough-love, former Undersecretary Cohen resolved to build a leaner and more tightly-managed organization that focused on serving its primary customers – DHS agencies – and being transparent with Congress.

Undersecretary Cohen implemented internal controls to monitor S&T finances and track the progress of S&T investments. He established a structured strategic planning process that is designed to produce specific objectives and annual performance measures.

In my view, the recent increases in the Directorate's budget indicates that S&T's career staff has succeeded in regaining the trust of the oversight and appropriations committees in the House and Senate.

But a number of complex challenges remain, and we would look to you, Dr. O'Toole, for the leadership to continue to build and improve this agency that is vital to DHS's overall mission to protect our homeland.

These challenges include expanding investments in innovative R&D for homeland security and insuring the reliability of the testing and evaluation that DHS relies on for large acquisition programs.

You also must strengthen relationships between S&T and agencies within DHS. Dr. O'Toole brings a wealth of experience that will serve her well in this new job.

After practicing medicine in Baltimore for several years, Dr. O'Toole earned a Masters of Public Health from Johns Hopkins University, spent five-years as a senior analyst and project director with the Congressional Office of Technology Assessment and, from 1993 to 1997, served as the Assistant Secretary for Environment, Safety and Health at the Department of Energy.

From 1999 to 2003, she managed the Johns Hopkins Center for Civilian Biodefense Strategies. For the last six years, she has served as the Director and Chief Executive Office of the Center for Biosecurity at the University of Pittsburgh.

Today she is best known as a nationally recognized expert on biodefense and the actions what we must take to detect, deter and react to either a biological terrorist attack or a ruinous pandemic.

An important measure of her fitness for this post is the respect she has garnered in the scientific community and across the U. S. Government.

A former chair of the board of the American Federation of American Scientist, she has participated in major studies or advisory panels at the request of the National Science Foundation, the Department of Defense, the Department of Health and Human Services and the Department of Homeland Security.

I believe her nomination is an inspired choice.

Sen. Collins.