

MEMORANDUM

TO: MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY & GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
FROM: CHAIRMAN RON JOHNSON
DATE: SEPTEMBER 13, 2016
RE: UPDATE ON COMMITTEE BUSINESS AND PLANS FOR THE YEAR

At the outset of the 114th Congress, we developed a mission statement for the Committee: “To enhance the economic and national security of the United States of America.”

Over the past 21 months, we have made real progress advancing this mission. Our work on oversight through hearings, inquiries, and investigations has identified and clarified significant economic and national security challenges facing the nation. And our collaborative work on bipartisan legislation, which includes passing 83 bills through the Committee that improve homeland security and reform government, has demonstrated to the American people that a committee of Senators with differing views about public policy can come together and find agreement in support of commonsense reforms.

I sincerely thank you for the work and time that you have devoted to the Committee’s business. I am proud of the work that we have done together, including:

- **Hearings:** Held more than 100 committee hearings and roundtables to study challenges facing the United States and identify potential solutions.
- **Legislation:** Approved 83 bills through the Committee—82 of which passed with bipartisan support and 73 of which passed unanimously. So far, the Senate has passed 37 of these bills and 28 have been signed into law by President Obama.
- **Nominations:** Approved 26 of President Obama’s nominations for Senate-confirmed positions.
- **Oversight and Investigations:** Sent more than 750 letters, including 84 signed by both the Chairman and Ranking Member, and issued 9 majority staff reports; 1 minority staff report; 1 joint staff report; and dozens of subcommittee staff reports pursuant to the Committee’s oversight duties to examine some of the most pressing issues facing the nation.

Here are just a few highlights of what we have accomplished together:

To improve national security, we have worked to identify challenges and solutions to major threats facing our nation, including border and visa security; international drug trafficking and our nation’s insatiable demand for drugs; cybersecurity threats and vulnerabilities; and the growing counterterrorism threat posed by ISIS and other militant Islamic extremists. We have passed legislation to strengthen border security, improve detection of human trafficking, enhance federal agency cybersecurity practices, and protect our critical infrastructure.

To improve our nation's economic security, we have held a series of hearings to identify the root cause of the challenges that so many Americans face pursuing the American dream. For example, we examined the challenges Americans face finding and paying for high-quality education services for their children, and how the skyrocketing number of federal regulations are reducing economic opportunity for American workers. We held hearings to identify ways to ensure that our most vulnerable, including those with terminal illnesses, and those to whom we owe our freedoms—our nation's veterans—have the ability to receive high-quality health care. We issued majority staff reports examining our border security, America's insatiable demand for drugs, the effect of onerous executive branch regulations, and the tragedies at the Tomah VA Medical Center.

Beyond diagnosing problems, we worked together to approve bipartisan legislation on challenging issues by finding common ground, including legislation to improve the regulatory process and streamline federal regulations. We have also approved dozens of bills that protect taxpayer dollars by reducing wasteful government spending and addressing inefficient, duplicative, or nontransparent government programs.

Of course, much work remains. With the legislative calendar shortening as we approach the end of this Congress, I want to share with you our plans and priorities for the Committee for the next several months:

- *Hearings:* We will hold hearings to examine key issues facing the nation's homeland and economic security, including examining the state of our nation's healthcare markets and helping to ensure that Americans with terminal illnesses have access to treatments that could help them. On September 27th, Committee members will have an opportunity to hear directly from Secretary of Homeland Security Jeh Johnson, FBI Director James Comey, and National Counterterrorism Center Director Nicholas Rasmussen at a hearing to examine the security threats our nation faces.
- *Legislation:* Moving a bill through committee is of course not the end of our efforts; accordingly, my priority is to finish the work we started by securing passage of the 53 bills that have already passed the Committee but still await passage on the floor. While we will work tirelessly to pass all of the legislation that has passed the Committee, I will highlight just a few here:
 - The DHS Accountability Act of 2016, approved 14-0 by our Committee in May, includes several important individual pieces of legislation, in addition to other new transparency and accountability measures for DHS;
 - Regulatory reform, including four pieces of legislation our Committee approved with bipartisan support in October 2015;
 - The Fair Chance Act, approved unanimously by our Committee in October 2015;

- The Dr. Chris Kirkpatrick Whistleblower Protection Act of 2015, approved 9-0 by our Committee in December;
- The Inspector General Empowerment Act of 2015, approved unanimously by our Committee in February 2015;
- The Taxpayer Right to Know Act, approved unanimously by our Committee in May 2015; and
- Federal real property reform, including two bills approved by our Committee: the Federal Asset Sale and Transfer Act of 2015 and the Federal Property Management Reform Act of 2016.

As many of you know, there is another piece of legislation that I am very passionate about: the Trickett Wendler Right to Try Act of 2016. I am proud to say that we have 39 bipartisan cosponsors and counting, and several are members of our Committee. The bill would ensure terminally ill patients have the freedom to access potentially lifesaving treatments where no alternative exists. If any of you would like to learn more, I encourage you to watch a five minute video, available on youtube (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oCNfGBj00lY&feature=youtu.be>) so you can hear the personal stories of Americans struggling with terminal illnesses who just want the right to try to save their lives.

Finally, I introduced the Bolster Accountability to Drive Government Efficiency and Reform Washington Act, or the BADGER Washington Act, with the aim of passing important government reform legislation that the Committee has approved but that remains stalled on the Senate floor. It combines 19 bills that were voice-voted or unanimously roll-call voted out of our Committee in the 114th Congress, and several of the bills have been pending for years with just one or two members blocking unanimous consent. On their own, each of these bills has widespread support, but is unlikely to receive floor time. I encourage you to support this bill receiving floor time, so we can pass these bipartisan, commonsense government reforms.

I recognize that we are in an election season. Several of us will be standing before the voters in November and the American people will also be voting to choose our next President. But I write to ask that each of you join me in carrying forward the Committee's history of bipartisanship over the next four months to ensure that the work we began last January—and in many cases, even years earlier—is accomplished. Our Committee has a responsibility to do all we can to accomplish our mission of enhancing our nation's economic and national security.

Thank you for your service on our Committee.



Ron