

**Chairman Johnson Opening Statement for Business Meeting
May 25, 2016**

As submitted for the record:

Good morning.

This is our ninth business meeting to consider legislation this Congress, and once again I am proud to say that our agenda is ambitious and reflects the hard work of members and staff to focus on finding areas of agreement. The legislation on today's agenda, if enacted, will make America safer, protect those who blow the whistle on waste, fraud and abuse, and ultimately help build a more transparent, accountable federal government. Although we will consider more than a dozen bills today, I'd like to highlight a few here.

Today we will consider the largest reforms to the Department of Homeland Security since its creation in 2003. The DHS is tasked with preventing serious threats to national security and public safety, from ISIS to international drug traffickers crossing our border. The DHS Accountability Act of 2016 will strengthen the department's ability to protect our nation by enacting Secretary Jeh Johnson's "Unity of Effort" reforms into law to improve cross-department coordination. The bill also includes serious reforms to improve the department's transparency and accountability — including through new reporting of border security and immigration statistics, stronger whistleblower protections, and requiring independent assessments of the state of homeland security. I am grateful to Ranking Member Carper and his staff for working with me for over a year now on this bipartisan bill.

As we have heard all too often in hearings before this committee, our nation lacks a comprehensive strategy and budget for biosecurity. The Biodefense Strategy Act of 2016 will enact key recommendations of a bipartisan Blue Ribbon Study Panel on Biodefense to ensure we are prepared for biological threats such as Zika and others.

Today we also will consider legislation from Senator Grassley and me to reauthorize the Office of Special Counsel. Although the office plays an essential role in protecting federal whistleblowers, it has not been authorized in almost a decade. This legislation will ensure that the OSC has access to documents and tools it needs to investigate agency retaliation against whistleblowers.

We will also vote on a nominee for inspector general of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp. Jay Lerner has done an exceptional job as chief of staff and senior counsel to Department of Justice Inspector General Michael Horowitz, and I hope my colleagues in the Senate will act swiftly to confirm his nomination.