

Statement of Senator Susan M. Collins

HSGAC Business Meeting

June 29, 2011

I would like to thank our Chairman for having this business meeting today during, what has been, a very busy week for us. Thank you Mr. Chairman.

I would like to discuss the “Continuing Chemical Facilities Antiterrorism Security Act of 2011” which I re-introduced this past March along with my co-sponsors Senators Portman, Pryor and Landrieu. This is a straight-forward, common-sense reauthorization of the CFATS program.

After September 11, 2001, we realized that chemical facilities were vulnerable to terrorist attack. Given the hazardous chemicals present at many locations, terrorists could view them as attractive targets, yielding loss of life, significant injuries, and major destruction if successfully attacked.

In 2005, as Chairman of the Committee, I held a series of hearings on chemical security. Following these hearings, Senators Lieberman, Carper, Levin, and I introduced bipartisan legislation authorizing the Department of Homeland Security to set and enforce security standards at high-risk chemical facilities. That bill was incorporated into the homeland security appropriations act that was signed into law in 2006.

To implement this new authority, DHS established the Chemical Facility Anti-Terrorism Standards program, or CFATS. The program sets 18 risk-based performance standards that high-risk chemical facilities must meet. These security standards cover a range of threats, such as perimeter security, access control, theft, internal sabotage, and cyber security.

High-risk chemical facilities covered by the program must conduct mandatory vulnerability assessments, develop site security plans, and invest in protective measures.

The Department must approve these assessments and site security plans, using audits and inspections to ensure compliance with the performance standards. The Secretary has strong authority to shut down facilities that are non-compliant.

This risk-based approach has made the owners and operators of chemical plants partners with the federal government in implementing a successful, collaborative security program.

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This landmark law has been in place slightly more than four years. As a direct result, security at our nation's chemical facilities is much stronger today.

Now we must reauthorize the program. Simply put, the program works and should be extended.

Last July, the Homeland Security Committee unanimously approved bipartisan legislation I authored with Senators Pryor, Voinovich, and Landrieu to extend CFATS for three more years. I reintroduced this bill with Senators Pryor, Portman, and Landrieu in early March this year.

The bill would establish a voluntary exercise and training program to improve collaboration with the private sector and state and local communities under the CFATS program; create a voluntary technical assistance program; and create a chemical facility security best practices clearinghouse and private sector advisory board at DHS to assist in the implementation of CFATS.

I am conscious of the risks our nation faces through an attack on a chemical facility. That is why I authored this law in the first place and worked hard to get it enacted. We should support the continuation of this successful security program. I urge my colleagues to support this important bill.

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