

Business Meeting Opening Statement
Chairman Joe Lieberman
June 29, 2011

AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY

Good morning and thanks to everyone for being here today. Our agenda includes Senator Collins' three-year reauthorization of the Chemical Facility Anti-Terrorism Standards, or CFATS, and three nominations for associate judge to the D.C. Superior Court.

Since the 9/11 attacks, we have been concerned about the security of facilities that use dangerous chemicals and the effects a terrorist attack on one of them would have on the surrounding communities.

Senator Collins' legislation -- S. 473 -- is much the same as the proposal she introduced last Congress, which HSGAC reported out to the full Senate. The legislation would extend the existing chemical site security program for three more years and add voluntary security measures such as exercise and training programs and technical assistance.

CFATS is a meaningful improvement to our homeland security. Before its creation, we didn't know the extent and location of hazardous chemicals in our midst and whether or not basic security was in place to protect them. While some facilities voluntarily adopted security codes, CFATS represents a reasonable, risk-based, and mandatory security regime.

Senator Collins' proposal does not include some elements that I have long supported, such as the use of "inherently safer technologies" and the inclusion of water treatment plants, which also use dangerous chemicals. For that reason, I will continue to look for opportunities to strengthen this proposal. We also know that the program has had some administrative stumbles early on and will require our close oversight going forward.

But Senator Collins' proposal has majority support on the Committee, and so I will recommend it be reported out so that we can move ahead to protect as many Americans as possible from the terrorists intent to reign massive death and destruction upon us.

Moving on to our Supreme Court nominees today, they are Jennifer Di Toro, Legal Director of the Children's Law Center, where she has worked since 2004; Yvonne Williams, Counsel at Miller & Chevalier and a former D.C. Public Defender; and Donna Murphy, Principal Deputy Chief at the Department of Justice, Housing and Civil Enforcement Section within the Civil Rights Division. Some questions were raised about Ms. Murphy's tenure at the Justice Department, and I believe she has more than answered those questions satisfactorily and indeed possesses an impressive record of service. So I hope we can move swiftly to fill these slots on the court.

I look forward to working with my colleagues today to report these items out of Committee and move the legislative process forward.