



One Hundred Thirteenth Congress
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20515

July 10, 2015

The Honorable Jeh Johnson
Secretary
Department of Homeland Security

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Secretary Johnson,

As you are aware, on June 25, 2015 I introduced H.R. 2899, the "Countering Violent Extremism Act of 2015." This bill aims to streamline the Department of Homeland Security's efforts to counter violent extremism (CVE) and provide DHS with the resources and guidance to build an effective CVE program.

In his forward to the Administration's 2011 CVE strategy entitled, "Empowering Local Partners To Prevent Violent Extremism In The United States," President Obama noted that "[the United States is] working to prevent all types of extremism that leads to violence..." and clearly identified CVE as a priority for the Administration. As Secretary of Homeland Security, you created the Department's first standalone Coordinator for Countering Violent Extremism and have repeatedly taken part in DHS CVE-related community engagement efforts. Furthermore, in drafting this bill, the Committee has worked with the Department to identify ways to refine and improve DHS' CVE efforts. The text of H.R. 2899 reflects multiple suggestions provided by the Department as included in their technical drafting assistance. As the Committee moves toward consideration of HR 2899, I write to ask you the following:

1. In Congressional testimony earlier this year, you noted "In the current threat environment, countering violent extremism is an indispensable part of our homeland security mission." How would you characterize the need for effective and efficient CVE programs and policies within the Department today?
2. As President Obama noted in his recent remarks at the Pentagon, extremist groups like the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) are actively recruiting Americans, and "in order for us to defeat terrorist groups like ISIL and al Qaeda it's going to also require us to discredit their ideology... Ideologies are not defeated with guns; they're defeated by better ideas -- a more attractive and more compelling vision... So the United States will continue to do our part, by working with partners to counter ISIL's hateful propaganda, especially online." Do you agree with President Obama that in order to defeat the ideology of extremist groups which

recruit Americans the United States needs to confront these ideologies through countermessaging?

- a. Is DHS capable of carrying out this effort – in partnership with the Department of State and non-governmental partners?
3. Can you assure the Committee that all DHS CVE activities are conducted with respect to the Civil Rights and Civil Liberties of all Americans?
4. As noted above, you have personally invested in improving DHS CVE efforts. Can you provide a description of those CVE efforts in which you have personally taken part and those which you perceive are most important to combatting recruitment and radicalization of violent extremist groups?

I look forward to hearing from you on this important issue. If you have any questions on this issue please don't hesitate to contact the Committee at (202) 226-8417.

Sincerely,



MICHAEL T. McCAUL
Chairman
Committee on Homeland Security