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Statement by Secretary Jeh C. Johnson Concerning H.R. 399, The Secure Our Border First Act of 2015

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The "Secure Our Border First Act of 2015" voted out of the House Homeland Security Committee last night is not a serious effort at legislating border security – and its authors know it. The bill is extreme to the point of being unworkable; if enacted, it would actually leave the border less secure. The bill sets mandatory and highly prescriptive standards that the Border Patrol itself regards as impossible to achieve, undermines the Department of Homeland Security's capacity to adapt to emerging threats, and politicizes tactical decisions.

In the meantime, the bill does nothing to provide what the Department of Homeland Security really needs from Congress – appropriated funding to pay for vital homeland security initiatives. That includes both the additional resources we put on the border last year, and the additional technology, equipment and other resources we need from Congress to further secure the border. As long as the Department of Homeland Security continues to function on a continuing resolution, as it is now, we are limited in our ability to deploy these critical tools, along with other resources vital to homeland security.

Unfortunately, H.R. 399 is unworkable, plain and simple. I again encourage Congress to support the homeland security professionals at this Department with the resources they need, without provisions that would micromanage their work or restrict their flexibility in dealing with the nation's critical homeland security efforts.

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