

**Opening Statement of Chairman Robert Aderholt  
Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Homeland Security**

*Customs and Border Patrol FY 2012 Budget*

**Witness: Commissioner Alan Bersin**

**9:30 AM | Wednesday | March 9, 2011 | B-318 RHOB**

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This morning we welcome Alan Bersin, Commissioner of U.S. Customs and Border Protection (or, CBP), as we consider the President's FY12 Budget Request to secure our borders and facilitate lawful travel and trade. Commissioner, we thank you for being here and look forward to hearing your testimony.

CBP has experienced dramatic growth in the past eight years. Today, it is the largest agency within DHS – with a budget of \$11.8 billion dollars and a workforce of nearly 60,000. Given the significance of CBP's mission to our nation's security and prosperity and considering the continuing threats we face, Congress has certainly provided robust resources. Going forward, we expect to see results for those investments.

Commissioner, in a time of fiscal crisis, the American people are demanding responsible budgets and accountability for every dollar spent.

And that's why I am pleased to see your budget pledges to cut costs and prioritize frontline operations – as I've said before, these are also the priorities of this Subcommittee. I am, however, concerned that the President's request for CBP includes undefined efficiencies and administrative savings that will likely impact operations.

For example, the request cuts -\$60 million dollars from Air & Marine personnel and assets which will likely reduce surveillance of the Southwest Border. It also reduces overtime flexibility for CBP officers by -\$20 million dollars that will likely increase wait times at ports of entry. I am not convinced this request stabilizes CBP's budget to sustain the workforce much less support investments in technology, infrastructure, and assets needed to meet the mission.

Commissioner, during this time of fiscal crisis, there are two things we need: truth in budgeting and clear results. First, let's tackle truth in budgeting.

Those so-called efficiencies and savings I mentioned earlier, in addition to program reductions, account for \$330 million dollars. While some proposals represent real savings, the rest are merely budget fiction – operations will suffer and true needs will be deferred.

The President's request also proposed a hypothetical increase to Customs user fee revenues of \$55 million dollars in FY12. Authorizing legislation would be needed to require passengers

entering the U.S. from Canada and Mexico to pay the fee. If not enacted, and history tells us these changes are difficult to enact, CBP will likely expect this Subcommittee to fill the \$55 million dollar hole.

The second thing we need is results – a clear understanding of how your request supports operational needs. The United States has invested billions in Southwest border operations in recent years across law enforcement agencies, but particularly in CBP. We will hear from Field Operations and Border Patrol next week on detailed operations. But today, Commissioner, I look forward to having a clear understanding of how you define operational control of the border and your plan to get there.

Equally significant, this Subcommittee, particularly the esteemed former Chairman, Mr. Price, has invested in CBP's strategy to push out the border. I would like to hear how this request supports CBP's overseas operations to secure trade and travel to the U.S.

Commissioner, the American public demands straightforward answers on our border security efforts – truth in budgeting and transparency with respect to operational needs are essential in this fiscal climate. I appreciate you appearing before us today and thank you in advance for your candor in helping us understand CBP's budget request for FY12.

I would like to now recognize the Subcommittee's distinguished Ranking Member, Mr. Price, for his opening remarks.