



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

September 19, 2012

The Honorable Janet Napolitano  
Secretary  
Department of Homeland Security  
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Napolitano:

On April 27, 2012, the Subcommittee on Oversight, Investigations, and Management requested the Undersecretary for Management provide information regarding national and international conferences attended by Department of Homeland Security personnel. This request was straightforward and limited in scope. It asked for information on the name, location, and cost (including reimbursement of personnel) of conferences held in fiscal year 2011 both nationally and internationally for a sample of the components within the Department. As the third-largest department in the federal government with an annual budget of almost \$60 billion, this information should not be difficult to obtain. We asked that the information be provided no later than May 31, 2012.

Over 100 business days have since past and our Subcommittee has yet to receive this information despite promises from your staff that the information is being compiled. This is truly unacceptable. The silence from your Department on this issue is deafening. The Department's dereliction in providing this information raises a simple question: what does DHS have to hide on its participation in these conferences? The American people's faith in government was severely shaken when the Inspector General at the General Services Administration (GSA) reported egregious waste and abuse of taxpayer dollars. Lavish spending on conferences within GSA demonstrated a culture of waste and misuse of power. Our request, made on behalf of the taxpayers for whom we serve, is intended to ensure such a culture does not exist at DHS. Unfortunately, your Department's failure to provide our requested information leaves this question very much in doubt.

Upon his inauguration, President Obama pledged that his Administration would usher in a new era of transparency. From inadequate answers on DHS's role in Operation Fast and Furious, sidestepping Congress on the Administration's policy to allow foreigners, even members of terrorist organizations, into the United States, and failure to provide DHS witnesses at important Congressional hearings, this is just the latest example demonstrating how your Department has not lived up to the important expectation of an open and accountable government.

Finally, if the delay in providing this information is due to difficulties in obtaining it, I question how the Department can be entrusted with managing complex acquisition and procurement programs worth billions in taxpayer dollars. DHS's inability to track and maintain routine data on personnel travel and conferences could be symptomatic of negligence in managing other aspects of the Department that have a direct impact on DHS's ability to protect the homeland. If your Department cannot immediately provide the Subcommittee with our requested information, we will explore more formal ways to obtain it.

Your staff may contact Dr. R. Nicholas Palarino, Subcommittee Staff Director for Oversight, Investigations, and Management to discuss these issues. He can be reached at (202) 226-8417.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Michael McCaul", is positioned above the printed name.

Michael T. McCaul

Chairman

Subcommittee on Oversight, Investigations, and Management