

Secretary

U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528



**Homeland
Security**

October 9, 2004

The Honorable Ted Stevens
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Earlier today the House of Representatives overwhelmingly passed the FY 2005 Homeland Security Appropriations Conference Report. I urge the Senate to pass the final legislation expeditiously, so that DHS can continue the important mission of securing the homeland.

While the Continuing Resolution currently enacted allows DHS to continue its operations in support of the existing security of our Homeland, we urgently need the additional spending authority and new initiatives contained in the Conference Report on the Department's FY 2005 Appropriation. During this increased period of risk, DHS must continue to improve capabilities in several critical areas including enhancing law enforcement, strengthening our borders, and improving transportation security, I remain concerned about operating under a lengthy Continuing Resolution. For example, under the Continuing Resolution, DHS would not have the funding to maintain the current on-board strength of the Federal Air Marshals; development and deployment work on the legislatively required 2005 deadlines for US Visit will be slowed; the Border Patrol will be unable to continue the critical work to upgrade and update the surveillance technology used on our land borders; and additional Detention and Removal programs and bed space will not be provided. Additionally, necessary program enhancements such as the Container Security Initiative, Radiation Portal Monitors, targeting systems, and critically needed aviation security technology are also on hold. Finally, FEMA's Disaster Relief Fund is in need of supplemental funding as soon as possible.

I appreciate the Senate's continued commitment and diligence in passing these critical pieces of legislation. If there is anything I or my staff can do to assist in expediting this process, please contact me or Under Secretary Janet Hale.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Ridge".

Tom Ridge