

**U.S. Senator Richard Shelby Opening Statement
Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies**

**Subcommittee Markup of the FY2016 Commerce, Justice, Science,
and Related Agencies Appropriations Act**

June 10, 2015

Welcome to today's Subcommittee mark-up of the Fiscal Year 2016 Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies bill. I want to begin by thanking Senator Mikulski for her partnership on this bill. We have worked together on many issues throughout the years, and I believe that this mark reflects our strong bi-partisan relationship.

The recommendation before us is consistent with the subcommittee's allocation of \$51.068 billion in discretionary spending. This level is \$965 million above the fiscal year 2015 enacted amount, and \$985 million below the budget request. However, when taking into account comparable scorekeeping adjustments, this bill is actually \$3.5 billion below the President's request level. I would also like to point out that this bill is \$310 million below the House's CJS allocation.

The Committee has made difficult but necessary decisions to craft a bill that meets these strict fiscal limitations. Within these budgetary boundaries, I believe the Committee has achieved a careful balance between the competing priorities of: law enforcement, national security, economic development, scientific research, and space exploration.

The bill funds the Department of Commerce at \$8.5 billion, which keeps our next generation of weather satellites on-schedule, and ensures the National Weather Service can continue to provide timely warnings for severe weather.

This bill provides critical funding for the National Water Center that recently opened in Tuscaloosa, Alabama, which will be the first ever clearing house for research and operational forecasting of all water-related matters. I am pleased that it provides necessary funding for this state-of-the-art facility to achieve full operating capability.

Strict oversight and fiscal responsibility are essential for Commerce's success in fiscal year 2016, which is why the bill directs the Census Bureau to continue its efforts to make the costs of the 2020 Census lower than that of the 2010 Census.

This Committee remains supportive of science and innovation by maintaining healthy funding for the National Science Foundation, while preserving a balanced space program within NASA.

This bill funds NASA at \$18.3 billion, making it possible for the agency to achieve efficient and cost-effective operations for science and exploration missions.

Funding the Space Launch System in a responsible manner in fiscal year 2016 is especially needed at this critical stage of development.

The bill maintains strong funding for the Department of Justice at \$27.8 billion.

The mark includes essential cybersecurity funding throughout the Department, in order to protect our Nation, and to track down, arrest, and prosecute child predators to protect our communities.

The Committee believes that our Federal law enforcement agencies must work together, particularly in tough budget environments, to focus limited resources in a manner that wisely targets taxpayer dollars while preserving public safety.

I want to point out that this bill follows the Concurrent Budget Resolution for fiscal year 2016 by providing \$2.6 billion through the Crime Victims Fund, or CVF.

This amount represents a 349 percent increase in just the past two years, and is well above the 3-year average of deposits into the Fund.

Given the significant increase in CVF spending and the Committee's concern for fiscal oversight, this bill uses \$379 million from the Fund for the first time to support victim-related grants in the Department of Justice's State and local accounts.

As a result, overall funding for our entire State and local law enforcement grant programs – which are widely supported by many members of the Committee – remains close to the fiscal year 2015 levels.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to expand upon a few key provisions in this bill that are particularly timely as the unacceptably short Gulf of Mexico federal Red Snapper season comes to a close today.

The Red Snapper fishery is vital to fishermen and businesses across Alabama, and I am pleased that this bill includes several provisions that will help respond to the challenges facing anyone that wants to fish for Gulf Red Snapper.

First, this bill urges NOAA to provide much-needed relief for Gulf recreational anglers that have been disproportionately impacted by NOAA's misguided regulations.

Second, this bill would extend the state fishery boundaries of Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana from 3 miles out to 9 miles, putting all Gulf States on a level playing field and thereby extending state management to those boundaries.

Lastly, this bill provides tools and direction so that NOAA begins to accurately count Red Snapper.

As fishermen in the Gulf already know, Red Snapper are reef fish, and to count elsewhere does not provide an accurate representation of their total population.

I believe that the subcommittee mark strikes a balance between the competing priorities of law enforcement, terrorism prevention, research, scientific advancement and U.S. competitiveness.

We have a transparent product that accommodates the Senate's priorities and the needs of our nation. I, therefore, urge my colleagues to support moving this bill out of the subcommittee today, and to vote for the CJS bill at full committee tomorrow.