

# WebMemo



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## Bush's Homeland Security Budget: Dollars That Make Sense

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In matters of strategy, thought should always precede action. To its credit, the Bush Administration took on drafting a homeland security strategy as one of its first tasks after the 9/11 attacks on New York and Washington. The result has been a national effort that has, for the most part, neither veered into indifference nor careened into overreaction. It has made Americans safer. In particular, the Administration's commitment to homeland security spending has, for the most part, been responsible and appropriate. The President's proposed 2008 Department of Homeland Security (DHS) budget follows in that tradition. Congress should give it serious consideration.

**Smart Spending.** The Administration proposes an overall DHS budget of \$46.5 billion, an increase of 8 percent over what was appropriated this year. The additional funds make sense. They are targeted at programs the department has been building for years, and as they mature, these initiatives require additional resources so that they can be fully implemented. Specifically, the Administration is adding additional dollars for immigration and border control, the universally acknowledged remaining weaknesses in the nation's "layered" defense for protecting against, mitigating, and recovering from terrorist attacks and other catastrophic disasters. Especially important is \$1 billion in new funding for SBI-net, a system of capabilities that will provide the backbone for border security.

**Throwing Money at the Problem.** In contrast to the Administration's efforts to spend homeland security dollars wisely on strategic priorities that will make all Americans safer stands the proposals in the House's recently passed homeland security legislation (H.R. 1, "Implementing the 9/11 Commission Recommendations Act of 2007"). Rushed through the chamber by the House leadership without hearings or floor debate, the measure authorized a plethora of new programs. Absent from the House proposal was any explanation of how these initiatives fit into the overall plan for securing the nation. Rather, the bill offered a helter-skelter hodgepodge of proposals which appeared designed more to deliver on "bumper sticker" election year promises than deliver real security. Nor did the bill contain any discussion of what its crop of programs would cost. An estimate released by the Congressional Budget Office last week put the price tag at about \$21 billion. That number represents about half the DHS annual budget.

**Doing the Right Thing.** Congress should ignore the spending proposals in HR. 1 and stick to the Administration's plan. The President's budget is not perfect. More, for example, needs to be done to ensure that agencies like the U.S. Coast Guard and

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[www.heritage.org/research/homelanddefense/wm1343.cfm](http://www.heritage.org/research/homelanddefense/wm1343.cfm)

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U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services are appropriately funded so that they can be fully capable partners in implementing immigration and border control programs. Still, the Administration has offered a sound blueprint for homeland security. Congress should follow its lead.

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