

ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH CONGRESS
Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE
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Opening Statement of Rep. Henry A. Waxman
Ranking Member, Committee on Energy and Commerce
Hearing on “The Chemical Facility Antiterrorism Standards Program –
A Progress Report”
Subcommittee on Environment and the Economy
September 11, 2012

The 9/11 attacks took nearly 3,000 lives. It was the worst attack against the United States since Pearl Harbor, and a higher death toll was inflicted on 9/11 than even on the date President Roosevelt said would “live in infamy.”

The 9/11 attacks were directed at our freedoms, our way of life, and modern civilization itself. It was an assault against American leadership in the world and against the ideals that have guided us since the founding of the Republic.

Our resolve from that terrible day was clear: to pursue and defeat those who perpetrated this evil and to make sure they can never again threaten the United States of America and those who live here.

Last May, President Obama and brave Navy SEALs eliminated the threat of Osama bin Laden.

Today, as members of the Energy and Commerce Committee, we also have a responsibility. We must ask ourselves if we’ve done our part to protect the nation from terrorist attack.

Nearly three years ago, this Subcommittee held a legislative hearing on legislation to establish security programs for chemical and drinking water facilities. Our goal was to develop comprehensive legislation that would close security gaps, strengthen enforcement authority, clarify the criteria for approving or disapproving site security plans, and set enforceable deadlines.

I called that legislation unfinished business from 9/11 – critical to homeland security, the safety of workers at those facilities, and the public at large. Regrettably, that business remains unfinished.

This Congress is nearly over and we are no closer to action.

However, I thank the Chairman for calling this hearing. Conducting oversight of agency efforts to implement the existing chemical facility anti-terrorism standards, called CFATS, is important, even if the existing standards have too many loopholes.

As this Congress comes to a close, I hope this hearing will serve to renew our commitment to improving the safety of chemical plants. This should not be a partisan issue. We need to be able to work together to solve our nation's problems, as we have many times in the past.

There is little time left to work on CFATS this year, but I hope next year we can return and develop legislation that best serves the American people.