Statement of Congressman Frank Wolf
January 17, 2014

Good afternoon.

On Wednesday, the House passed the FY 2014 Omnibus Appropriations bill, which contained funding for all 12 appropriations bills for the remainder of the fiscal year. The Senate passed the bill last evening and I anticipate the president will sign it into law today or tomorrow.

As chairman of the Commerce-Justice-Science Appropriations subcommittee, which funds the Justice Department, FBI, Commerce Department, NASA and the National Science Foundation, I wanted to take time today to highlight several key provisions in the bill that merit attention.

I also want to recognize my friend Mr. Fattah, the ranking member on CJS, who has been a great partner on this bill and the issues I want to highlight today. He is a real champion for job creation, investing in the sciences and public safety, and I have enjoyed working with him on the committee.

First, I want to highlight a few overall facts about the CJS portion of the Omnibus bill:

The final CJS bill totals $51.6 billion, which is $1.4 billion below the enacted fiscal year 2013 level.

Since Republicans assumed the majority in the House, we have reduced spending by more than $12 billion for agencies funded in the CJS appropriations bill. The FY14 level is even $200 million below the level of discretionary spending in FY08.

All things considered, it is remarkable that the Appropriations Committee has been able to make these types of cuts to discretionary while still producing a bill with strong bipartisan support.

I think the targeted and responsible reductions the Appropriations Committee has achieved should be a model for how mandatory spending cuts should be made by the Budget, Energy and Commerce, and Ways & Means committees in the years ahead.

Unless these other committees adopt commonsense reforms – like those proposed by the Simpson-Bowles commission – to constrain the growth of mandatory spending programs, there will be less and less money for the critical investments in our national security, public safety and economic competitiveness in the years ahead.

Today, I want to talk about several items in the bill that I believe are of particular importance to our country that deserve more attention. Each of these provisions were particular priorities for me this year as we worked to complete the appropriations bills.

9/11 Review Commission

First, the bill continues to keep the focus on the evolving terrorist threat to the United States.

It continues and expands bill and report language, first approved in last year's bill, for an independent commission to review the FBI's progress on implementing the 9/11 Commission recommendations, as well as looking at new information about the evolving terrorist threat. I have long been concerned about the threat of terrorism to the U.S.

I authored the language creating the National Commission on Terrorism, also known as the Bremmer Commission, which produced a final report in 2000 – just a year before 9/11 – warning about the threat from bin Laden and even had the World Trade Center picture on the report's cover. I regret that both the Clinton and Bush administrations ignored the commission's recommendations before 9/11.

Additionally, a large number of people from my district were killed in the attack on the Pentagon on 9/11, and the first American killed in the war in Afghanistan, Michael Spann, was also a constituent. That is why I believe it is so important that we keep our "eye on the ball" with regard to the threat from terrorism – even 13 years after the 9/11 attacks.

Specifically, the 9/11 review commission will have up to $1.5 million for this congressionally directed review to look at:

- Progress made since 9/11 in transforming the FBI to address the threat of terrorism, including a review of how the 9/11 Commission recommendations have been implemented and the efficacy of these reforms.

- All information relevant to the 9/11 attacks and al Qaeda, especially new information obtained since the release of the 9/11 Commission's report in 2004 – such as information in the documents obtained during the 2011 raid on Osama bin Laden's compound – to ensure that the full story of 9/11 is understood and commission's final report reflects the government's most complete understanding and analysis of the 9/11 plot.

- The evolving threat of terrorism to the U.S. and our interest abroad, with a particular focus on the threat of domestic radicalization, cyber terrorism and the spread of al Qaeda affiliate groups abroad.

I am pleased to announce today that three very distinguished experts have been asked to serve on this independent review commission and will officially launch this effort in the next week or so.

  - Former Attorney General Ed Meese, who served in President Reagan's cabinet and later was a member of the Iraq Study Group;

  - Former Congressman and Ambassador Tim Roemer, who served on the House Intelligence Committee , the Joint Congressional Inquiry into 9/11 and the original 9/11 Commission; and

- Professor Bruce Hoffman, who is a respected counterrorism expert who teaches at Georgetown University and has served on many advisory panels and reviews for the Intelligence Community.

I cannot think of three more qualified individuals to serve on the commission. They are all men of integrity and have significant credibility and expertise on counterterrorism policy.

I have spoken to FBI Director Comey on several occasions about Congress' expectations for this review, and expect that he will provide all of the necessary resources, flexibility and information to ensure the final report to Congress is a comprehensive and substantial product.

I also want to make clear that this commission is not a critique of the FBI's counterterrorism efforts over the last 13 years. In fact, I think former Director Mueller and the men and women of the FBI have done an outstanding job keeping our country safe.

I also have full confidence in the Director Comey, and believe this commission's review will be particularly helpful to him as he continues to grow and strengthen our counterterrorism capabilities.

Bringing Jobs Back to America

In addition to national security, the bill also continues a number of initiatives to bring more jobs back to America, which is something I have been working on over the last several years.

With unemployment numbers still very poor more than five years after the recession – and a troubling number of unemployed Americans who aren't even being counted because they have simply given up their search for work – I believe it's critical for the Congress to continue to make every effort to encourage job creation in the U.S., particularly in industries that were hit hard by the recession, like manufacturing.

That's why this bill included $5 million for "repatriation grants" to help state and local governments compete to bring manufacturing back to the U.S. and maintains a Department of Commerce task force that looks at these issues.

I particularly pleased to announce today that the bill directs the Department of Commerce to host a national summit all focused on the repatriation of jobs to the United States. I already have had several good conversations with Secretary Pritzker about this conference, and I really appreciate her genuine interest and support for this effort.

In addition to these efforts, the bill also includes $128 million for the Manufacturing Extension Partnership program, which helps U.S. businesses streamline manufacturing techniques and increase efficiency and profits, and $160 million in grants for the National Science Foundation's advanced manufacturing research initiative, which is aimed at improving productivity and creating new manufacturing sectors that will produce new technologies and products.

Colson Task Force on Federal Corrections Reform

I am particularly pleased that the Omnibus contains funding to create a bipartisan task force aimed at reforming our nation's prison system, which is over capacity and growing at unsustainable rates.

America now has the dubious distinction of being number one in the world for detaining prisoners – and most of them will be released into communities and are highly likely to reoffend and end up behind bars again. It is an ineffective and costly cycle.

The costs of this growing prison population are staggering. We now spend one quarter of the Justice Department's budget just on detaining federal prisoners – and that number grows significantly each year.

Even more troubling, we now spend as much to house prisoners each year as we spend on the National Science Foundation, to invest in basic research to keep America competitive. And as the amount we spend on prisons goes up, the amount we invest in our future continues to go down.

That is why I am pleased that this federal corrections reform task force will look at successful reforms from the states that could be applied to the federal system to address this challenge.

The task force will be named after the late Chuck Colson, who went from counsel to the president to federal prisoner because of his involvement in the Watergate scandal. Colson later founded Prison Fellowship to support and minister to prisoners and their families in the United States and around the world.

As part of its work, the task force will examine:

- Overcrowding in BOP facilities and options to avert continued growth in the system population;

- Measures to address overcrowding within facilities; violence in the system, including gang violence, and improved public safety measures;

- Prison rehabilitation and employment programs – including Prison Industries, which has collapsed on Attorney General Holder's watch and now serves just a small fraction of the inmate population;

- And reentry programs and policies to reduce recidivism.

It also will undertake a comprehensive analysis of relevant criminal justice data; identify factors driving the growth in prison populations; study ''lessons learned'' from successful state-level justice reinvestment initiatives; and evaluate current and potential criminal justice policies, including the cost-effectiveness of spending on corrections.

I am hopeful the Justice Department will move quickly to award this funding to an outside group that has strong expertise in bipartisan corrections reform efforts, and appoint members to the task force who have been leaders in successfully implementing these reforms.

In many ways, this task force is the successor to the commission proposed by former Senator Webb a few years ago to consider reforms – however this task force is focused on learning from the successful reforms that various states have implemented and applying them to the federal system.

I can think of no better honor to Chuck Colson's legacy than for this task force to produce a series of bipartisan, effective recommendations to the Congress to spur long-overdue reforms.

I also want to mention that I included language directing all of the agencies of the Justice Department as well as the National Park Service to urge them to source materials currently purchased from overseas to Federal Prison Industries to help boost jobs for inmates so they can learn valuable skills, which helps reduce recidivism.

Fighting Human Trafficking

Finally, the bill contains a series of provisions directing the Justice Department, FBI and U.S. Attorneys' offices to focus on the scourge of human trafficking inside the U.S. – which is modern day slavery for the tens of thousands of women and girls, each one someone's daughter, mother or sister, who are being sexually trafficked.

I am particularly pleased the bill contains a provision directing the Justice Department to aggressively target Web sites that enable trafficking, particularly of minors.

Websites like Backpage.com are used as conduits for the trafficking of women and girls, and they knowingly profit off of these brutal acts. Yet they largely operate with impunity.

If this Justice Department won't deal with Backpage.com, quite frankly they aren't really addressing the issue of trafficking. I have written the Attorney General repeatedly to urge him to take action, but he refuses to do so.

This is not just a problem in parts of the country, trafficking occurs everywhere – both in poor and rich parts of communities. In my district in Northern Virginia, there are more than 80 massage parlors believed to be trafficking in girls and women.

Although we have an excellent task force in northern Virginia led be Detective Woolf (no relation), they are unable to make a dent in trafficking unless the Justice Department takes action against the facilitators of trafficking, like Backpage.com.

It also continues requirements that all U.S. attorneys offices participating in an anti-trafficking task force and directs the FBI to increase its reporting on trafficking cases, while providing an increase in grants to help victims of human trafficking.

For years, I have urged the Attorney General to get serious about trafficking, and to date he's done far too little. I hope the language in this bill will spur greater action and accountability.

Honor Violence

I also want to take this opportunity to highlight a landmark provision included in this year's Omnibus directing the Justice Department to start collecting and reporting statistics on "honor violence," which is a form of violence against women that is often committed by family members because of belief that they have dishonored the family.

There have been a number of troubling cases in recent years, including several deaths of teenage girls. In some cases, the girls have been attacked or killed because they refused to be forced into an arranged marriage at a young age.

This type of violence is hard to track because the government doesn't keep statistics on the number and nature of these cases. This directive will change that and help shed a light on these crimes, and hopefully lead to more community awareness and prevention of these horrible incidents.

Cybersecurity

Finally, I want to highlight a few of the many provisions throughout the bill aimed at boosting cybersecurity at all of the CJS agencies, and particularly investing in the FBI's cyber capabilities.

As Director Comey recently said, the cyber threat is now as great as the threat from terrorism.

I believe this bill goes to great lengths to provide the necessary resources as well as policy directives to reflect the serious nature of this threat.

The recent cyber attacks on Target and Nieman Marcus, which stole hundreds of millions of Americans' credit card information shows just how pervasive and dangerous this threat is – not to mention the actions of state actors like China, who steal our technology and trade secrets resulting in the loss of thousands if not millions of American jobs.

Last year the committee included language at my direction placing restrictions on the purchase of IT equipment from companies that are owned, directed or subsidized by China.

I included this language out of concerns raised in an October 2012 report released by Mike Rogers and Dutch Ruppersberger that highlighted the potential cyber threat from firms like Huawei and ZTE, which have Communist party cells in their leadership structures and are closely connected to the People's Liberation Army, which coordinates China's massive cyber espionage program against the U.S.

A slightly modified version of this language was continued again this year by bipartisan agreement with the Senate, and I believe it should be maintained and expanded to all civilian federal agencies in the years ahead.

The bill also directs the FBI to produce an unclassified annual Cyber Threat Assessment and directs each agency to produce cybersecurity reports in order to better determine the steps agencies are taking to bolster their cyber defenses.

There is much, much more included in the bill, but I will pause here and would be happy to take some questions about these initiatives.