



TASK FORCE HIGHLIGHTS NEED TO CONSOLIDATE OVERSIGHT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

New report calls attention to unfulfilled recommendation by 9/11 Commission

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACTS: Michael Rozansky, 215-746-0202
mrozansky@asc.upenn.edu
Geoffrey Baum, 213-337-3100
gbaum@sunnylands.org
Jeffrey Harris, 202-736-3848
jeffrey.harris@aspeninstitute.org

WASHINGTON, September 11, 2013—Nearly a decade after the 9/11 Commission issued its report on the greatest act of terrorism on U.S. soil, one of its most significant recommendations has not been acted upon. The need to consolidate Congressional oversight of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) is, in the words of Commission co-chair Thomas H. Kean, “maybe the toughest recommendation” because Congress does not usually reform itself.

The Annenberg Retreat at Sunnylands and the Aspen Institute Justice & Society Program convened a task force (listed below) of distinguished current and former members of Congress, executive branch and DHS officials, and other homeland security experts to review this recommendation and recommend a strategy going forward.

In its powerful new report released today, the task force warns, “While the failure to reform DHS oversight may be invisible to the public, it is not without consequence or risk. Fragmented jurisdiction impedes DHS’ ability to deal with three major vulnerabilities: the threats posed by small aircraft and boats; cyberattacks; and biological weapons.”

Specific recommendations of the Sunnylands-Aspen Institute task force include:

- DHS should have an oversight structure similar to other critical departments, such as Defense and Justice.
- Congressional committees with jurisdiction over DHS should have overlapping membership.
- DHS should have an authorization bill giving the department clear direction from Congress.

The full report and video interviews with task force members, are available online at www.sunnylands.org. The report may also be downloaded at www.aspeninstitute.org or www.annenbergpublicpolicycenter.org. Printed copies are free and available on request.

To request interviews with task force members, please contact Michael Rozansky, 215-746-0202.

Membership of the Task Force on Streamlining and Consolidating Congressional Oversight of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security includes Arif Alikhan, Thad Allen, Howard Berman, Michael Chertoff, David Dreier, Bob Graham, Lee H. Hamilton, Juliette Kayyem, Thomas H. Kean Sr., Rep. Loretta Sanchez, John Tanner, Caryn A. Wagner, and Kenneth L. Wainstein. Meryl Justin Chertoff and Kathleen Hall Jamieson coordinated the work of the task force.

About the Aspen Institute Justice & Society Program

The Justice and Society Program convenes individuals from diverse backgrounds to discuss justice and how a just society ought to balance fundamental rights with the exigencies of public policy in meeting contemporary social challenges and developing the rule of law. The annual Justice and Society Seminar in Aspen, co-founded by Supreme Court Justice Harry A. Blackmun, continues to be led each summer by preeminent judges and law professors. JSP's Washington, D.C.-based public programming component brings together public officials, established and emerging opinion leaders, and grass-roots organizers to share their perspectives in a neutral and balanced forum. For more information, see www.aspeninstitute.org/jsp.

About The Annenberg Retreat at Sunnylands

The Annenberg Foundation Trust at Sunnylands, which operates The Annenberg Retreat at Sunnylands in Rancho Mirage, California, is an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit operating entity. The Annenberg Retreat at Sunnylands hosts high-level retreats that address serious issues facing the nation and the world, including the recent official meeting between President Obama and President Xi of the People's Republic of China. In addition, Sunnylands offers programs through the Sunnylands Center & Gardens to educate the public about the history of Sunnylands, its architecture, art collections, cultural significance, and sustainable practices. More information may be found online at www.sunnylands.org.

###