



# NEWS

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## Is Homeland Security In Question?

*Taxpayer group urges Congress to pass the Homeland Security package during Lame Duck session.*

WASHINGTON — President Bush urged Congress to pass the Homeland Security Department Bill during this Lame Duck session, but it seems as though there is little chance that the quick action the President hopes for will play out. Though it has yet to be scheduled, the bill could reach the Senate floor as early as tomorrow, where it has been held for months.

The issue is whether or not the President should have flexibility within the department, as 41,000 federal employees who would fall under the department's heading are currently protected by unions. President Bush insists that this department should be non-union as a matter of national security, and he wants the flexibility to hire, fire, promote, and demote as necessary. Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle's (D-S.D.) staunch opposition to the flexibility measures and Sen. Robert Byrd's (D-W.Va.) long-time opposition to the entire bill may be difficult for the Senate to overcome in these few weeks.

**"If there is one area of the bureaucracy that needs flexibility, it's Homeland Security," commented Grover Norquist of Americans for Tax Reform in Washington. "We have not done enough to protect ourselves, and with the responsibility of ensuring our safety, the department must have the flexibility to hire, fire, promote, and demote as necessary. If not, we have the security equivalent to tenured academic professors. We're talking about Homeland Security here, not tearing down the Ivory Tower, and resisting change and modification will not benefit the country. That's not security, it's stupidity."**

The proposed bill does not prevent unionized workers from becoming a part of the Homeland Security Department; it does, however, prevent them from being a part of it simply because they are protected under the union. The President would have to concede to union standards if a union member's job changed in structure or salary by notifying the appropriate union representative, followed by a 30-day comment period allowed in hopes of an agreement with the White House. If a compromise were unable to be reached, another 30-day waiting period would provide for negotiation time. If that were unsuccessful, the director of Homeland Security and the Federal Mediation Service would have to resolve the problem.

**"Since the election, Congressional Democrats have been complaining about the need for change within the party, and by reexamining this issue, they have a chance to do break away from the stagnant Senate environment that created the situation with this legislation," continued Norquist. "If this country plans to move toward genuine security, Congress must work to accomplish an overall goal, not specific agendas. The safety of the entire country depends on it."**

*Americans for Tax Reform is a non-partisan coalition of taxpayers and taxpayer groups who support tax simplification and oppose all federal and state tax increases. For more information or to arrange an interview please contact Jonathan Collegio at (202) 785-0266 or by email at [jcollegio@atr.org](mailto:jcollegio@atr.org)*