

WASHINGTON (19 May) – U.S. Rep. Gus M. Bilirakis (R-Fla.), Ranking Member of the Homeland Security Committee’s Subcommittee on Management, Investigations, and Oversight, today joined the entire Homeland Security Committee in supporting a resolution that would require the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to detail the process by which an intelligence assessment about “right-wing” extremism was created.

Bilirakis made the following statement at the committee markup of the resolution this morning:

“Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

“I support your amendment and want to thank you for recognizing just how serious this issue is and for supporting our efforts to obtain the information we need to determine just what went wrong at the Department in its production of the so-called right wing extremism report.

“I was greatly disturbed by the Department of Homeland Security’s view that returning military veterans are potential terrorist recruits and that people who are pro-life, support the Second Amendment, and oppose illegal immigration may be more likely than others to commit terrorist acts. That certainly describes me, many of us in Congress, and many of our constituents.

“The Department must aggressively pursue all appropriate efforts to stop terrorism here at home, regardless of what political or ideological beliefs individuals may hold. But federal homeland security officials should focus on specific, verifiable, and actionable intelligence to stop potential terrorist threats to our country instead of engaging in political and ideological profiling of certain people.

“As Ranking Member of the Management, Investigations, and Oversight Subcommittee, I am especially troubled since we have learned that this report was produced and approved over the objections of its own Office of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties. We then discovered that the Office of Intelligence and Analysis had produced another report, the domestic extremism lexicon, which was recalled the very next day because it had not been properly vetted by the Office of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties.

“I am pleased that Secretary Napolitano has acknowledged that mistakes were made and has said she has instituted new protocols to ensure that this won’t happen again, but as our bipartisan support for moving forward on this resolution shows, we cannot simply take her word for it. We must be able determine for ourselves how and why these breakdowns occurred and whether the Secretary’s new protocols are sufficient.

“Our Committee must exercise its oversight authority over the Department to get a full accounting of the facts surrounding this matter to determine how it happened, stop it from happening again, and ensure that future intelligence assessments of this nature are providing state and local law enforcement with the best and most accurate information to protect our constituents.

“Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back the balance of my time.”