

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Congress' Failure To Pass Long-term DHS Funding Legislation Puts Territory At Risk, Plaskett Says

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Delegate to Congress Stacey Plaskett is concerned that the almost \$1 million of U.S. Virgin Islands Homeland Security funding provided as part of the \$2.5 billion allocated by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to state and local governments may not be received because Congress only managed to vote for a seven-day spending bill for the department.

The seven-day funding extension came mere hours before funding for DHS was to run out. The deal was reached after a humiliating defeat for House Speaker John A. Boehner, when the House voted against its original plan to extend funding for the department for three weeks. According to the [New York Times](#), Boehner had thought that

position was fail-safe.

"A short-term continuing resolution will jeopardize the \$2.5 billion in grant funding DHS awards to state and local governments, including nearly \$1 million to the territory through the State Homeland Security Program," Plaskett said.

"Not only will this render our borders less secure, but it will also affect FEMA's ability to prepare and provide relief for future weather-related disasters, and provide necessary training and support to our local law enforcement apparatus," she added.

The freshman congresswoman also highlighted the territory's borders as often being used for illegal activity, and said without adequate funding, DHS would be unable to effectively manage the framework built after the September 11 attacks.

"The U.S.-Caribbean border is considered the 'Third Border,' which the U.S. Department of Homeland Security has referred to as an 'open door for drug traffickers and terrorists,'" Plaskett said.

She continued: "Our shores represent another point of entry for illegal drugs, guns, and undocumented immigrants into the United States. A failure to adequately fund the DHS would likely result in an inability to effectively manage and support much of the Homeland Security infrastructure that was built following the terrorist attacks on September 11th."

Plaskett cannot vote on a DHS funding bill, as she, and all other U.S.-territory House representatives are non-voting members of Congress. However, the Delegate voiced her support for a long-term, clean-spending bill on the House Floor last week, and has met with DHS Secretary Jeh Johnson and Ranking Member of the House Committee on Homeland Security Bennie Thompson.

Feature Image: Congresswoman Plaskett with Ranking Member of the House Committee on Homeland Security Congressman Bennie Thompson and DHS Secretary Jeh Johnson.