



One Hundred Tenth Congress
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20515

January 9, 2008

The Honorable Michael Chertoff
Secretary
Department of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Chertoff:

On May 24, 2007, I wrote to you to raise my concerns about the financial impact of Presidential candidate security details on the budgetary well-being of the U.S. Secret Service. At that time, I was concerned that the Secret Service has the necessary funding to perform the critically important task of safeguarding these Presidential candidates. In your response, you assured me that you were “fully aware of the resource challenges presented by early campaign protection” and that you had communicated funding modification options to the appropriate Congressional committees. Today, I am writing to you to seek a status report on the level of Secret Service protection being provided to current Presidential candidates.

As you know, current law permits Secret Service protection of a Presidential candidate after a committee composed of the Secretary and Congressional leaders determines that a particular candidate qualifies as a “major candidate” and therefore should receive Secret Service protection.

The recent Iowa caucus and New Hampshire primary confirm media reports of very high voter turnout and national and international interest in the 2008 election. As the person who is ultimately charged with overseeing the U.S. Secret Service, you are undoubtedly aware of the threats that are directed at some of the Presidential candidates. Indeed, speculation about the potential Presidential nomination of an African American or female candidate in particular has garnered not only positive attention but also, sadly, may have increased the interest of dangerous individuals who are unable or unwilling to accept the rich diversity of this Nation. Specifically, the national and international profile of Senator Barack Obama (D-IL) gives rise to unique challenges that merit special concern.

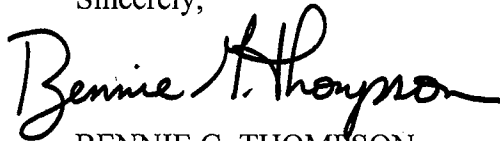
As an African American who was witness to some of this Nation’s most shameful days during the civil rights movement, I know personally that the hatred of some of our fellow citizens can lead to heinous acts of violence. We need only to look to the assassinations of the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and 1968 presidential candidate

Robert Kennedy, as examples. Accordingly, I reiterate my request for increased protective and security service not only to Senators Obama and Clinton but also to all of the remaining candidates that are competing in the primaries and caucuses this winter and spring.

Like you, I am committed to doing what I can to protect America's open and secure election process. Although I am confident that the U.S. Secret Service is doing everything it can to address and avert any and all threats against every candidate, I remain concerned that the enormity of the 2008 election provides a terrorist – domestic or foreign – with a potent, high-profile target to make a statement. We must be better prepared.

Please direct you any questions you may have about this request to Jessica Herrera Flanigan on the Committee on Homeland Security at 202-226-2616.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bennie G. Thompson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

BENNIE G. THOMPSON
Chairman

cc: Mr. Mark Sullivan, Director, United States Secret Service

BGT/vpf