This February, Matthew Allen, a nuclear engineer by training and staff physicist at Sandia National Laborato-
ries, arrived in Washington D.C. to be-
gin a one year assignment as an ASME Congress-
ional Fellow at the House of Representatives, Homeland Security, (HS) Committee. The HS Com-
mittee is chaired by the Honorable Ben-
nie Thompson, a democrat from Missis-
sippi. The Honorable Pete King, a Repub-
lican from New York, leads the mi-
nority staff.1

Chairman
B. Thompson
(R-MS)

Ranking Mem
Pete King
(R-NY)

Dr. Allen will be one of 19 fellows on the minority side—the majority is allotted 38.

March has been a busy month for the HS Committee. They recently passed H.R. 844, the “Promoting Anti-terrorism Coopera-
tion through Technology and Science (PACTS) Act,” and H.R. 1401, the Rail Bill—a bill intended to improve the security of rail-based transportation.

Most recently the staff has been very busy drafting the language for the FY08 Department of Homeland Security Author-
ization Bill. The Authorization bill, which typically authorizes hundreds of billions of dollars for DHS, is passed every year by the House but rarely by the Senate. If fast, in the last three and half years, Congress has not passed an Author-
ization Bill for DHS. Actual money flows to the Department from the Appropriations Committee. This does not de-
ter the staff (or either side of the aisle) from spending long hours drafting, edit-
ing, debating, and re-drafting language for the base bill and amendments.

The HS Committee actually has six subcommittees. As the so-called “nu-
clear fellow” Dr. Allen will be working di-
rectly with the minority staff on the Subcommittee on Emerging Threats, Cybersecurity, and Science and Technolo-
ogy. The ETC Subcommittee (as it is affectionately known) is chaired by the Honorable James Langevin, a Democrat from Rhode Island. The ranking mi-
nority member is the Honorable Michael McCaul, Republican from Texas.

In the month of March the ETC
Subcommittee held two hearings that
directly related to
the oversight of the
Domestic Nuclear
Detection Office. (DND).
Mr. Vayl Oxford, Director of
DND, was the primary witness in both hearings.

The first hearing (held on March 14) examined studies from the Gov-
ernment Accountability Office (GAO). The GAO issued a report highlighting
concerns with the cost-benefit analysis DND conducted to justify the acquisi-
tion of next generation radiation portal monitors (RPMs). Chief among those
concerns was the price DND listed for current generation RPMs and the price of
next generation Advanced Spectroscopic Portals. The second hearing (held on
March 21) focused on DND’s radiation portal monitor deployment strategy.

DND’s plan to go forward with the deployment of hundreds of new Advanced
Spectroscopic Portals (ASPs) has been granted. Tests currently un-
derway at the Nevada Test Site are meant to compare current technology with the
new systems and demonstrate the capa-
bility of three commercial companies to meet the required goals of detection and
identification of radioactive materials.

ETC SUBCOMMITTEE HOLDS TWO HEARINGS WITH DND

1Majority Webpage
2Minority Webpage