

## DHS and DHHS to Merge

By Norman M. Goldfarb

The secretaries of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) today, April 1, 2015, announced that the two departments will merge into one "super" department — the Department of Homeland Health and Human Services (DHHHS) — with the combined mission of protecting the health, security and welfare of the American people. "After all, what good is security without good health or good health without security?" said DHHS Secretary Sylvia Marcus Burwell. DHS Secretary Jeh Johnson added, "The health implications of weapons of mass destruction, whether chemical, nuclear or biological, cannot be denied."

"Given the breakdown of health services in territories controlled by Islamic State, Boko Haram, and other terrorist groups, it's only a matter of time before the United States finds itself under biological attack by sick children posing as tourists. Pediatric vaccination rates in terrorist-controlled areas can be even lower than those in 'refusenik' states like Colorado and Arkansas. Trust me, you don't want to share a bus with these people." said Secretary Johnson.

She continued, "We can't say for sure yet, but the recent slowdown by longshoremen at West Coast ports might relate to the illegal immigration of 'lazy' foreigners moving through the ports. These persons might, in fact, not be lazy, just infected by enemies of this country with an unidentified virus that causes chronic fatigue syndrome. It would certainly explain why so many persons from turbulent regions in Africa and the Near East are sneaking into Europe to take advantage of the generous vacation benefits." The trend is especially suspicious given the common complaint that immigrants work too hard, thus competing unfairly with U.S. citizens. Chronic fatigue syndrome was recently renamed 'systemic exertion intolerance disease' in an effort to diagnose the condition with a name that afflicted persons will not have the energy to remember.

As an example of how the merger will yield immediate benefits, the Secretaries described a previously unannounced initiative to fight viruses threatening to spread from hospital emergency rooms to electronic medical records. "Both of our departments had these viruses on our watch lists," said Secretary Burwell, "but we just hadn't connected the dots."

The secretaries also announced the launch of a pilot project to check people's health indications as they pass through airport security, not just to prevent outbreaks of diseases like Ebola, but to provide a convenient "health security inventory" of blood pressure, glucose levels, etc. DHHS Secretary Burwell stated, "New technologies now make possible almost instant testing for the blood level of prescription drugs to ensure adherence, which is vital for the good health of our citizens and important national industries. However, we do not plan to test for illicit drugs, which would be an invasion of privacy."

As a side benefit, combining the departments will address the constant problem of people confusing "DHS" with "DHHS." "I can't tell you how many calls I get every day for the Secret Service," said DHHS Secretary Burwell. "I really don't want to change my telephone number again."

President Obama, arriving at the end of the news conference, expressed his excitement about working with Congress to pass the enabling legislation. Merging the two departments will also free up a long-needed seat at the Cabinet table for a new department, tentatively to be named the Department of Government Adeptitude. President Obama closed with a

note of realism, "Sure, we could buy a bigger table, but have you ever spent an hour in a room with these people? I mean, seriously?"

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