-Style May 14, 2007 Congress voted this past week to authorize nearly $40 billion for the Homeland Security Department, but the result will likely continue to be more bureaucracy and less security for Americans. Five years into this new Department, Congress still cannot agree on how to handle the mega-bureaucracy it created, which means there has been no effective oversight of the department. While Congress remains in disarray over how to fund and oversee the department, we can only wonder whether we are more vulnerable than we were before Homeland Security was created. I was opposed to the creation of a new Homeland Security Department from the beginning. Only in Washington would anyone call the creation of an additional layer of bureaucracy on top of already bloated bureaucracies “streamlining.” Only in Washington would anyone believe that a bigger, more centralized federal government means more efficiency. When Congress voted to create the Homeland Security Department, I strongly urged that -- at the least -- FEMA and the Coast Guard should remain independent entities outside the Department. Our Coast Guard has an important mission -- to protect us from external threats -- and in my view it is dangerous to experiment with re-arranging the deck chairs when the United States is vulnerable to attack. As I said at the time, “the Coast Guard and its mission are very important to the Texas Gulf coast, and I don’t want that mission relegated to the back burner in a huge bureaucracy." Likewise with FEMA. At the time of the creation of the Department of Homeland Security, I wrote “we risk seeing FEMA become less responsive as part of DHS. FEMA needs to be a flexible, locally focused, hands-on agency that helps people quickly after a disaster.” Unfortunately and tragically, we all know very well what happened in 2005 with Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. We know that FEMA’s handing of the disaster did in many cases more harm than good. FEMA was so disorganized and incompetent in its management of the 2005 hurricanes that one can only wonder how much the internal disarray in the Department of Homeland Security may have contributed to that mismanagement. Folding responsibility for defending our land borders into the Department of Homeland Security was also a bad idea, as we have come to see. The test is simple: We just ask ourselves whether our immigration enforcement has gotten better or worse since functions were transferred into this super bureaucracy. Are our borders being more effectively defended against those who would enter our country illegally? I don’t think so. Are we better off with an enormous conglomerate of government agencies that purports to keep us safe? Certainly we are spending more money and getting less for it with the Department of Homeland Security. Perhaps now that the rush to expand government in response to the attacks of 9/11 is over, we can take a good look at what is working, what is making us safer, and what is not. If so, we will likely conclude that the Department of Homeland Security is too costly, too bloated, and too bureaucratic. Hopefully then we will refocus our efforts on an approach that doesn’t see more federal bureaucracy in Washington as the best way to secure the rest of the nation.