

**Opening Statement of Chairman Ron Johnson
June 4, 2020 – Business Meeting**

As prepared for delivery:

America has long been admired for its peaceful and cooperative transitions of power. However, evidence is mounting that this is not what happened in the transition between the Obama and Trump administrations.

The undisputed examples that support that statement include the fact that the DNC and Clinton campaign paid for fabricated foreign opposition research - the Steele Dossier - that was used to instigate an FBI investigation of the Trump campaign and obtain FISA warrants; the use of confidential human sources to target members of the Trump campaign; the 17 significant errors and omissions contained in the applications for the FISA warrants; the FBI's misuse of transition briefings for investigative purposes; the FBI's access to transition materials contrary to practice and without informing the Trump transition team; the unmasking of incoming Trump officials by dozens of political appointees in the waning days of the Obama administration; and FBI leadership's decision to conduct a surprise interview of incoming National Security Advisor Michael Flynn after instructing investigators to shelve the memo that would have closed the case.

And we don't have to wonder if there was political bias within the FBI and sister agencies – we have evidence of it from the Peter Strzok/Lisa Page texts and other FBI messages. Some of the more interesting examples include: “Viva le Resistance”; “my gut sense and concern there's no big there there”; “[Trump's] not ever going to become president, right? Right?!”; “No. No he's not. We'll stop it.”; “maybe you're meant to stay where you are because you're meant to protect the country from that menace.”; “It's like an insurance policy”; and finally, “Think our sisters have begun leaking like mad. Scorned and worried and political, they're kicking in to overdrive.”

I know that most committee members—because of our busy schedules and responsibilities—have paid little attention to our oversight efforts that began in March 2015 with our investigation of former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's use of a private e-mail server for official business. That investigation led to records showing the FBI's material editing of James Comey's exoneration memo of Secretary Clinton; our oversight of the DOJ Office of Inspector General's report on the FBI's Midyear Exam investigation; our successful efforts to obtain and release the Peter Strzok/Lisa Page text messages; our review that found 125

significant leaks of national security information within the Trump administration's first 126 days; our oversight of the General Service Administration's handling of Trump transition documents sought by the FBI; our oversight of the FBI's policies on defensive and transition briefings; our request that led to the release of declassified documents showing that the Steele dossier contained Russian disinformation; and, most recently, our request that led to the declassification of information related to the unmasking of Trump campaign and transition officials.

Along the way, we have written more than 50 public oversight letters, obtained thousands of pages of documents, and released two reports. This committee did not hold hearings on the investigations I've mentioned, preferring instead to let our oversight letters, the agency responses, and our reports speak for themselves. The vast majority of that oversight was performed by two or three committee staff members.

The other two dozen members of my committee staff have remained devoted to the remainder of the committee's substantial workload. As a committee, we should be proud of the results. To date, we have approved nearly 300 bills, more than 100 of which have become law; confirmed 91 nominees; issued nearly 20 reports; and sent approximately 1,500 oversight letters. We have held 180 committee hearings or roundtables: 36 on border security; 12 on cybersecurity; 7 on critical infrastructure protection; 16 on countering terrorism; 37 on DHS; and 72 on government affairs, including regulatory reform and combatting waste, fraud, and abuse.

I have dedicated more than a dozen staff members to oversee the Executive Branch's preparation for and response to COVID-19. We have held three hearings or roundtables examining the issue, with four more planned for the coming weeks, including one Tuesday with three key administration officials to examine the administration's distribution of essential medical supplies. We have also helped coordinate regular hour-long conference call briefings for members with the administration - I personally have participated in more than 30 of these calls since March.

I'm detailing all of this legislative success and oversight activity, not to pat myself on the back, but because I was accused at our last business meeting of running the committee in a partisan manner and ignoring the tragic public health crisis facing our country. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Since becoming Chairman in 2015, I have always tried to focus on areas of agreement, and our committee has devoted the overwhelming majority of its resources doing so. That's what our record reflects, and I believe you all know that.

But there are times when extraordinary situations require action, whether or not we all agree. The conduct we know that occurred during the transition should concern everyone and absolutely warrants further investigation. In addition to being the Senate's primary oversight body, our committee has legislative jurisdiction over federal records, civil service law, and presidential transitions. It is our job to investigate and provide the American people a complete accounting of what happened during the last transition. The subpoena authority I am requesting today will help us gather the necessary information. Hopefully, the agencies and individuals will fully cooperate, and the number of subpoenas required will be limited.

I hope we can vote on this motion expeditiously, without heated rhetoric, and collectively return the bulk of our attention to the other challenges facing our nation. Now, in addition to the COVID-19 crisis, elements within America are using the tragic and reprehensible death of George Floyd to incite riots and senseless destruction in a dystopian display of anarchy that is a serious threat to the security of our homeland. Unfortunately, more death and destruction has followed. Last Friday, two Federal Protective Service officers were shot, and Dave Patrick Underwood tragically lost his life. Sixty Secret Service agents were injured on Sunday, and across the country other police officers have been violently targeted, with additional loss of life.

On Monday, I issued a statement condemning the killing of Mr. Floyd and spoke with Acting Secretary Wolf to offer my full support for actions he, his department, and this administration must take to end the rioting. Yesterday, I joined Senator Peters in a letter to the Acting Secretary requesting a briefing on groups that are inciting this violence. I also successfully negotiated an agreement with Republican leadership and Senators Schumer, Cardin, and Shaheen to pass reforms to the Paycheck Protection Program that has provided needed support to millions of small businesses across America. Regardless of what accusations may be made during this discussion, anyone listening can be assured that the vast majority of my time, and my committee staff's time, will be devoted to these pressing issues.