

Opening Statement of Ranking Member Gary C. Peters

June 4, 2020 – Business Meeting

As prepared for delivery:

Mr. Chairman – I am disappointed that our Committee is once again meeting to discuss a partisan investigation Senate Republicans are intent on pursuing – and not the serious challenges facing our country that our Committee has a responsibility to address.

Just like our last business meeting – we are facing an unprecedented public health and economic emergency. More than 107,000 Americans have died during this pandemic and nearly 40 million Americans have lost their jobs.

Now, cities across our country are facing civil unrest. We have seen reports that some extremist groups and even foreign adversaries are working to escalate tensions and disrupt peaceful demonstrations.

I appreciate you working with me on our bipartisan request for Committee members to receive a briefing from the Department of Homeland Security on this critical issue.

These are urgent, serious issues – and we have a responsibility to address them with our full focus and resources.

Instead – we are voting today on an unprecedented 36 subpoenas – a process that is completely out of line with our Committee’s typical bipartisan requests for information.

In your first 5 years as Chairman – you only sought two other subpoenas – demonstrating that this Committee only turns to subpoenas as a tool of last resort.

This sudden shift to seek authorization for 36 subpoenas without first seeking voluntary compliance gives this the appearance of a fishing expedition.

I’m also concerned by the timing of your investigation – which did not become a priority until we reached an election year.

With all the other pressing matters facing our country at this troubling time – it's difficult to understand why you have chosen to make this a priority for the Committee's time and resources now – but did not pursue it at any other time during your Chairmanship.

This Committee has a longstanding, nonpartisan tradition of conducting serious oversight of our nation's disaster response and safeguarding our homeland security – and that should be our primary focus.