

**OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR ROB PORTMAN
RANKING MEMBER
U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY
& GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS**

*“Examining the January 6 Attack on the U.S. Capitol”
JOINT HEARING WITH THE COMMITTEE ON RULES & ADMINISTRATION
FEBRUARY 23, 2021*

(as prepared for delivery)

Thank you, Chairman Peters, Chairwoman Klobuchar, and Ranking Member Blunt for your remarks this morning and your leadership on this critical review.

I want to start by expressing my gratitude to the men and women of the U.S. Capitol Police, Secret Service, National Guard, Metropolitan Police Department, the FBI, and all other law enforcement agencies who put themselves on the line to safeguard democracy on January 6. As I said on the Senate floor that night, it was thanks to them that Vice President Pence, Members of Congress, and the Capitol complex staff were protected, and we were able to complete our Constitutional duty of certifying the election. It was important that a clear message was sent that night to our constituents and to the world that we would not be intimidated; that mob rule would not prevail. But that message could not have been delivered without law enforcement securing us and our respective chambers.

Seven individuals lost their lives as a result of the Capitol attack, including two Capitol Police officers and a D.C. Metropolitan Police Department officer. We will never forget the service and sacrifice of Officers Brian Sicknick, Jeffery Smith, and Howard Liebengood. I knew Officer Liebengood. I saw Howie most days at his post at the Russell Building entrance. As his colleagues will tell you, no officer was more dedicated to his duty to serve and protect, and I am proud to have called him a friend.

To honor that kind of sacrifice and avoid future attacks, we must take a hard look at what went wrong on January 6, and the decision-making leading up to that day, that allowed the Capitol to be breached and overrun. As the bipartisan media advisory announcing this joint hearing stated, the purpose today is to examine the security failures that led to a breach of the Capitol on January 6, specifically the preparations and response efforts.

There are key questions to be answered:

- First, some witnesses have suggested that there was an intelligence failure. We need to know: was there credible intelligence about potential violence; when was it known; and who knew it.
- Second, our witnesses have differing accounts about requests for National Guard assistance. We need to know: did the U.S. Capitol Police request approval to seek National Guard assistance prior to January 6, and if so, why that request was denied. We need to know: was the request for National Guard assistance on January 6 delayed, and if so, why. And we need to know why it took so long for the National Guard to arrive after their support was requested.
- Third, the Capitol was overtaken in a matter of hours. We need to know whether Capitol Police officers were properly trained and equipped to respond to an attack on the Capitol, and if not, why not? And we need to know why the Capitol complex was so vulnerable and insecure that it could be so easily overrun.

My hope is that today we get clear answers to these questions from our witnesses. We need to know what happened and how to ensure that this never happens again.

I will be listening carefully to the testimony of the witnesses before us. The events of January 6 showed that while our democracy is resilient, at times it will be challenged. We must be up to that challenge. That

certainly includes securing this Capitol, the citadel of democracy. And that is something that we can all agree on.

Thank you and I yield back.