

United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON
HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6250

October 14, 2026

The Honorable Markwayne Mullin
Secretary of Homeland Security
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20528

Secretary Mullin:

I write regarding concerns about Department of Homeland Security (DHS) mismanagement and wasteful spending following the billions of dollars it received over the last year through the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA) and the Secure America Act. As you know, OBBBA and the Secure America Act provided an unprecedented \$260 billion (\$191 billion under OBBBA and \$69.5 billion under the Secure America Act) to DHS to be obligated by September 30, 2029.¹ This massive allocation of funds, which will add to the more than \$40.1 trillion in national debt, is roughly three times the amount of funding previously allocated annually to the DHS.²

While the Trump Administration has claimed it is committed to maximizing government efficiency and reducing waste and abuse, current DHS spending and its lack of planning for any meaningful oversight of that spending raises questions about the sincerity of this commitment. For example, as of June 2026, CBP awarded all border wall construction projects under OBBBA, despite the Federal government owning or having access to less than 50 percent of the 700 miles where a border wall is planned to be constructed.³ CBP entered into these contracts knowing that the agency will owe penalties to contractors if it does not provide access to the land within one year – a process that has historically taken multiple years.⁴ Separately, a \$1.3 billion U.S. Army and ICE contract to a construction firm with no detention experience was found by the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to have contributed to millions in waste and unsafe

¹ Secure America Act, Pub. L. No. 119-98; An act to provide for reconciliation pursuant to title II of H. Con. Res. 14, Pub. L. No. 119-21.

² *Understanding the FY2026 DHS Budget Request*, Congress.gov (Sep. 5, 2025)(https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/R48704#_Toc209104343); Department of Homeland Security, *Budget in Brief* (N.D. FY 2027) (https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/2026-04/26_0422_ocfo_fy27-budget-dhs-budget-in-brief.pdf) (See pg.1); *The national debt just hit \$40 trillion. But just how big is \$40 trillion*, CNN (Aug. 23, 2026) (<https://www.cnn.com/2026/08/23/economy/national-debt-40-trillion>).

³ Department of Homeland Security, Customs and Border Protection, Briefing with Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Staff (July 21, 2026).

⁴ Department of Homeland Security, Customs and Border Protection, Briefing with Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Staff (July 21, 2026); Government Accountability Office, Southwest Border: Information on Federal Agencies' Process for Acquiring Private Land for Barriers (GAO-21-114) (Nov. 2020).

conditions at a facility where multiple detainee deaths occurred.⁵ While that contract was ultimately terminated and replaced, it remains unclear what – if any – changes were made to address deficiencies related to facility security, medical care, food pricing, and access to legal resources, disability accommodations and other services.⁶

Recent reporting also indicates that, rather than spend taxpayer funds to advance DHS's mission of ensuring national security, the Trump Administration used DHS funds to buy "pro-Trump advertisements" on television that prominently featured President Trump, most likely in violation of federal law.⁷ In addition, public reports also raise questions regarding DHS's broader acquisition and procurement decision making process. In 2025 ICE ordered thousands of marked vehicles, purportedly for recruitment, that they have reportedly failed to use in the field.⁸ More recently, a GAO report that I requested found that ICE wasted millions of taxpayer dollars when it rushed to expand immigration detention facilities, including at least \$20.5 million on warehouses DHS purchased and then decided to sell. GAO also found that ICE wasted \$7.1 million on food it ended up not needing at one facility.⁹

Separately, last year, I asked the DHS Inspector General to investigate potential misuse of taxpayer dollars by DHS to procure several Gulfstream jets for questionable purposes.¹⁰ In June, my colleagues in the House of Representatives questioned the operational need for these two Gulfstream G700 luxury jets and a third Boeing 737 Max purchased during Secretary Noem's tenure, which, if sold, "could recoup more than \$100 million" for hardworking taxpayers.¹¹ Despite this revelation, instead of cancelling this contract or selling the jets, further reporting suggests that as Secretary, you are now continuing to use a Gulfstream G700 luxury jet for various trips, including trips back home to Oklahoma, and that you recently authorized the purchase of 12 new planes, including five "extravagant new luxury jets" also used by FBI Director Kash Patel, despite the FBI already having appropriate transportation for its Director.¹²

Most concerning, the more than \$260 billion in funding provided to DHS does not contain any serious restrictions, auditing requirements, or mechanisms to ensure existing entities like Offices of Inspectors General (OIGs), GAO, or other independent oversight bodies have the

⁵ Government Accountability Office, Immigration Detention: Waste and performance Issues at Camp East Montana Provide Valuable Lessons for Future Facilities (GAO-26-108886) (June 9, 2026); *Largest ICE detention facility wasted millions and put detainees at risk, report finds*, Associated Press (Jun. 9, 2026).

⁶ *ICE replaces contractor at largest detention camp after scrutiny of living conditions*, Associated Press (Mar. 13, 2026).

⁷ *Homeland Security Money Financed Pro-Trump Television Ads*, Wall Street Journal (Sep. 29, 2026).

⁸ *Noem's deputy director of ICE bought thousands of vehicles that officers can't use*, Washington Examiner (Mar. 8, 2026); *Kristi Noem's Deputy 'Wasted' Millions on Vehicles with ICE Logo That Agents Refuse to Use: Report*, Yahoo (Mar. 9, 2026).

⁹ Government Accountability Office, Immigration Detention: Urgent Planning Needed to Avoid Further Waste of Taxpayer Dollars (GAO-26-108663) (Sep. 24, 2026).

¹⁰ Letter from Ranking Member Gary Peters to Joseph Cuffari, Inspector General, Department of Homeland Security (Oct. 23, 2025).

¹¹ Letter from Rep. James Walkinshaw and Ranking Member Bennie Thompson to Markwayne Mullin, Secretary, Department of Homeland Security (June 9, 2026).

¹² *Democratic appropriators push DHS on purchase of a dozen planes, including 'luxury jets,' The Hill* (Aug. 13, 2025) (<https://thehill.com/homenews/administration/6028090-murray-demands-luxury-plane-details/>); House Committee on Appropriations, *Oversight Hearing, Department of Homeland Security*, 119th Cong. (Jun. 26, 2026) (H. Hrg. 119-2358).

capacity or means to meaningfully assess and prevent waste, fraud, and abuse of these taxpayer dollars. As Secretary, you have failed to take the initiative to direct any oversight capabilities or to appropriately resource procurement and operational personnel within DHS regarding obligations made with the use of these funds.

Despite this suspected rampant waste and abuse of billions of taxpayer dollars, this Republican-controlled Congress has shown no appetite to exercise its constitutional oversight responsibilities. As a result, this abdication of Congress's constitutional responsibility will almost surely amount to record levels of taxpayer-funded waste, fraud, and abuse.

I therefore request DHS provide detailed explanations of its plans to ensure cooperation with DHS-OIG reviews, and that DHS publicly commit to not obstructing or limiting access to the OIG in its efforts to carry out its oversight responsibilities. In addition, please provide answers to the following questions:

1. How is DHS ensuring that all applicable acquisition laws, regulations, and policies are being properly followed in the obligation of funds received under the OBBBA and the Secure America Act?
2. What efforts are taken in no-bid contracts to ensure Americans do not overpay for DHS operations? Please list all efforts and operating standards.
 - a. Did these no-bid contracts comply with all applicable acquisition laws, regulations, and policies? Provide supporting documentation.
3. What steps is DHS taking to ensure accountability and transparency regarding the spending of these funds?
4. Why did the Department authorize contracts for border wall construction on land DHS lacks access to?
 - a. How did those decisions comply with applicable laws, regulations, and policies?
 - b. How will DHS ensure funds are not wasted as a result?

The Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs is authorized by Rule XXV(k)(2)(B) of the Standing Rules of the Senate to investigate matters that aid the Committee in “studying the efficiency, economy, and effectiveness of all agencies and departments of the Government” and has broad jurisdiction over the Department of Homeland Security.¹³ Under Senate Resolution 94, Sec. 12(e), of the 119th Congress, the Committee is authorized to review “the possible existence of fraud, misfeasance, malfeasance, collusion, mismanagement,

¹³ Senate Rule XXV(k)(2)(B).

incompetence, corruption or unethical practices, waste, extravagance, conflicts of interest, and the improper expenditure of Government funds.”¹⁴

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Gary C. Peters", written over a horizontal line.

Gary C. Peters
Ranking Member
Committee on Homeland Security
and Governmental Affairs

¹⁴ S. Res. 94, 119th Congress, 1st Sess. (2025).