

Chairman Peters Opening Statement As Prepared for Delivery
Full Committee Hearing: Federal Facility Security
November 29, 2023

The Committee will come to order.

There are thousands of federal buildings across the country that not only serve as workplaces for federal employees – they also host daily visitors who come to access important federal services and help keep our government functioning effectively.

These facilities face a range of security threats that put both people and property at risk, and those threats are only continuing to grow. Threats related to domestic and international terrorism – and even disinformation – are rising, and according to the Department of Homeland Security, can endanger our federal personnel and critical infrastructure.

Today’s hearing will focus on what actions are needed to secure the 9,000 federal facilities overseen by DHS’ Federal Protective Service. These facilities host the bulk of our civilian federal employees – and are visited by 1.4 million Americans every day.

Currently, these federal facilities are secured through a two-step process. First, the Interagency Security Committee – led by the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency – establishes the security standards that federal facilities need to meet. The Federal Protective Service then uses those standards to see what safety measures can be improved. They identify risks to our federal facilities and make recommendations on how to mitigate them.

FPS conducts thousands of these assessments every year. They submit these assessments to federal agencies, recommending countermeasures like security cameras, access control systems, and x-ray screening equipment. These tools make it easier to protect these facilities and the Americans who use them every day.

Unfortunately, these recommendations are rarely implemented. From 2017 to 2021, FPS submitted over 25,000 of these reports. Federal agencies completely ignored more than half of them. When agencies did acknowledge the recommendations – they only approved 27 percent of the recommended security measures. Factors like cost and bureaucratic hurdles often make it easier to maintain current systems. In other words: we’re getting useful information about how to improve security – but it’s not being implemented at a large enough scale.

Today’s hearing and our panel of witnesses will help us evaluate this problem. Our discussion today will also build on the Executive Order released on Monday by the White House, which clarifies the role of the Interagency Security Committee and helps update interagency roles and responsibilities for keeping these facilities safe. We will examine the landscape of current threats – the ways we can improve the assessment process – and how to make federal agencies more responsive when they receive recommendations.

If we improve this process – we can make our federal facilities safer and more secure.