

**Ranking Member Peters Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery**  
**Full Committee Hearing:**  
**The Department Of Homeland Security's Budget Request For Fiscal Year 2026**  
**May 20, 2025**

Thank you, Chairman Paul.

Secretary Noem, thank you for joining us today.

The Department of Homeland Security is responsible for a number of critical missions that safeguard our nation, from preventing terrorism and cyberattacks – to securing our Northern and Southern borders – and responding to natural disasters.

In a disappointing departure from prior Administrations – including President Trump's first Administration, we are holding today's hearing to discuss the Department's budget needs without having received a detailed budget request from the President, or briefings from the Department's components about their budget needs.

However, we have seen in just a few short months under the Trump Administration, how the Department has undergone tremendous changes. I have serious concerns that some of those changes are harming, rather than helping, the Department in its mission to protect the safety and security of all Americans.

For example, as we head into hurricane season and wildfire season, the Administration has halted critical FEMA programs that support flood mitigation and slashed staff who focus on disaster relief. These are critical resources for states in the aftermath of a natural disaster and the Administration has provided little to no justification for these changes.

FEMA has even internally acknowledged that it is not ready for hurricane season, which starts in just 11 days.

And despite that, the Administration is still planning on shifting the burden for disaster response to state and local governments, which will put Americans at grave risk the next time disaster strikes.

Similarly – at a time when we are facing increasing threats from cyberattacks, the Administration plans to drastically cut our nation's primary cybersecurity agency, CISA.

CISA is supposed to be finalizing a rule required by law that this committee passed to improve cyber incident reporting to better protect our critical infrastructure from cyberattacks, yet

reporting indicates that 700 CISA employees have taken deferred resignation under pressure from this Administration.

CISA's work on election security has stopped and the agency's advisory committees have been shuttered.

These actions make us less prepared to address cybersecurity threats.

The Administration also proposes cutting \$247 million from the Transportation Security Administration's budget to reduce the number of frontline TSA agents.

At a time when air travel is at an all-time high and we are entering the busy summer travel season these cuts only threaten to make our skies and flying travelers less secure.

At the same time, the Administration has also cut Congressionally mandated oversight offices that protect the civil rights and civil liberties of individuals who interact with DHS components.

These offices were put in place to ensure DHS personnel can conduct their important national security missions effectively, while safeguarding the rights of the people in this country. Shutting these offices down not only puts Americans at risk – it's also a violation of the Homeland Security Act.

Despite several inquiries to your office for more information, I have yet to receive a sufficient explanation for these actions.

I also have serious concerns about this Administration's inappropriate use of the U.S. military for domestic immigration enforcement and the outrageous use of taxpayer dollars for detention at Guantanamo Bay.

Our nation faces a multitude of homeland security challenges, and this committee has always been willing to work to address them on a bipartisan basis.

Secretary Noem, when we met prior to your confirmation, you gave me a commitment that you would work with me to address the many threats facing our nation.

I hope today's hearing will be an honest discussion about the resources the Department needs to do just that.

I would hope that we would be able to have that as a discussion in a way that we have done in this committee in a bipartisan way for as long as I can remember, where our first round would be seven minutes and then a second round would be five minutes.

Certainly, Chairman Paul, I would hope you would continue the precedent that I've always known.

When Senator Johnson was chair of the committee, he always made sure that everybody had 7 minutes.

Certainly, Homeland Security is a primary concern for use, Madam Secretary, and for all of us.

I'm not sure why the Chair is insisting on five minutes.

I know you're fully capable of answering for five minutes and you shouldn't be concerned about it, but apparently the Chairman is concerned about that extra time.

So, Mr. Chairman, I hope we'd get seven minutes on the first round and then five, as we always have as long as this committee has been in existence.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I look forward to seven-minute rounds.