

Ranking Member Peters Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
Full Committee Hearing: ICE & CBP Oversight Hearing
February 12, 2026

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for convening today's hearing.

In communities all across the country, Americans have seen on video, with their own eyes, as law enforcement officers from the Department of Homeland Security have tackled and beaten U.S. citizens in the streets, as they've broken windows and yanked U.S. citizens from their cars, as they've been pepper sprayed in the face at point blank, and as they have shot and killed two U.S. citizens, Renee Good and Alex Pretti, who were exercising their First Amendment rights. In Mr. Pretti's case, his Second Amendment rights.

These actions have been carried out by masked federal officers without appropriate identification, and near areas like schools and houses of worship, where innocent children are often present and placed in harm's way.

While all Americans agree that we should remove violent criminals who pose a threat to public safety as part of immigration enforcement, we all agree with that. But most Americans also overwhelmingly agree that the Administration's violent and heavy-handed tactics are an abuse of power, and they must be reined in.

Today's hearing comes at a critical time, as Congress has the chance to put needed reforms in place to hold DHS law officials, and enforcement officers who supervise them, accountable.

I'm grateful that today the committee, and the American people, will have the chance to hear not only from state officials from the state of Minnesota, but most importantly from key agency officials within the DHS who oversee the officers carrying out the actions that we have all seen on the ground in communities like Minneapolis.

I look forward to hearing testimony from these DHS officials. But, at the end of the day, they all answer to Secretary Noem. She must also fulfill her responsibility to testify before this committee, and more importantly, the American people, for the lawless and unconstitutional behavior that some DHS officers have carried out under her leadership.

Today, we're going to hear a lot of explanations and justifications from federal officials. And I'm sure we'll hear accusations about communities like Minneapolis and what the Trump Administration thinks their obligations are when it comes to immigration enforcement.

But let's be clear: immigration enforcement is solely the responsibility of the federal government. We'll hear today from state officials in Minnesota who will shine a light on how they cooperate with ICE, despite the administration's rhetoric to the contrary.

Instead of working cooperatively with the state and local law enforcement on these operations, through their chaotic and dangerous engagements, the Trump Administration has undermined all trust between communities and federal law enforcement. In doing so, they have made it harder for local police to protect public safety and address crime in their communities.

On top of that, the DHS has also broken trust with the American people, to the point where we can no longer believe the words and information the Department is putting out.

For example, in the aftermath of the horrific shooting deaths of Renee Good and Alex Pretti, at the hands of DHS officers, Secretary Noem and other officials rushed to smear two citizens exercising their First Amendment rights as violent threats and as domestic terrorists.

DHS and White House officials used these words, spun a narrative that falsely painted the victims as violent agitators, and tried to manipulate the truth about what actually happened on the ground. And they did this despite the fact that there were multiple videos that have allowed all of us to see with our own eyes what actually happened.

That Americans who posed no threat, were shot and killed in our streets by representatives of the federal government.

However, despite the efforts of the Trump Administration to spin lies, like most Americans, I believe that the truth still matters.

I believe that every federal law enforcement officer has a responsibility to conduct their work in a professional manner, and in accordance with the law. And I believe that when they don't, whether it is an individual officer or a high-ranking official from the Department of Homeland Security, they must be held accountable for their actions.

Today's hearing is about holding DHS accountable for the terror that they have unleashed in our communities through these violent, excessive, and unprofessional tactics.

As I said before, I expect to hear more excuses than admissions of error from the DHS officials. So, with that in mind, I want to remind everyone exactly what we're talking about today.