

**Ranking Member Peters Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery**  
**Full Committee Hearing: The Second Amendment**  
**April 15, 2026**

Mr. Chairman, I appreciate you convening the committee for this discussion here today, but given President Trump's unconstitutional and unauthorized decision to go to war with Iran, his abuse of power to enrich himself and punish his political enemies and his decision to usurp Congress's powers, including the appropriations funds, I am troubled at the topic that we've chosen.

So, while I agree that the Constitution gives Americans the right to bear arms, the Second Amendment is one of many such liberties that are guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution.

And while there may be some discrete examples where that right has been tested, the Second Amendment is simply not under the same threat as so many of our other constitutional rights today.

The Trump Administration's violations of Americans' First, Fourth and Fifth Amendment rights, and the Administration's flouting of Congress's constitutional authorities are basically creating a crisis for the rule of law in our country.

Meanwhile, Republicans in control of Congress have become mere cheerleaders of the executive while they allow the constitutional powers that Congress has to be undermined.

That's something that as the Senate's top oversight body, I believe this Committee should examine on a larger scale, and I would hope that you would consider that, Mr. Chairman.

So today, I want to expand the discussion to address these other issues, and what Congress must do to not only reclaim our own authorities as the co-equal branch of government, but also how we can restore the checks and balances that our Constitution created to ensure that no single branch of government can infringe on the constitutional rights and protections that are at the very core of our democracy.

The Trump Administration has pushed the bounds of the Executive's authority further than any other president, and our Republican-led Congress has failed to push back — instead ceding its constitutionally delegated responsibilities almost entirely to the President.

Those in control have laid down and allowed loyalty to party to override duty and even self interest in preserving a meaningful check on the President.

There is no question that past Administrations of both parties have tested these boundaries of their authorities, and that Congresses led by both parties have been responsible for delegating away these authorities over many years.

But today, we have an Administration that has refused to follow the laws passed by Congress, abused emergency powers for political purposes, imposed chaotic tariffs that have raised prices

on everyday goods for American families, bypassed Congress to wage unjustified military interventions, and is now trying to completely circumvent Congress's power of the purse by refusing to pass bipartisan appropriations laws to fund key functions of government.

And in return, we have a Republican majority that has almost entirely capitulated to the President whims.

On top of that, this Administration has repeatedly violated the First Amendment rights of Americans by retaliating against and even going so far as to arrest individuals who exercise their rights to free speech, assembly, religion, petitioning the government, and the press.

This Administration has violated Americans' Fourth Amendment rights by allowing immigration enforcement officers to enter and search people's home without a judicial warrant.

And it has violated Americans' rights to due process under the Fifth Amendment, detaining and removing individuals to countries they have no connection to, and without any opportunity to petition for redress from the government in the courts.

Last year, I released a report detailing these constitutional violations and the overreach from the Executive Branch.

In that report, I laid out how the checks and balances designed in our Constitution are absolutely vital to protecting Americans' freedoms.

And I warned how President Trump's unprecedented actions to usurp Congress's Article I powers, disregard the limitations of the Executive in Article II, and defy the Judiciary's Article III lawful court orders have undermined our democratic principles and left us with a President who now is completely unaccountable.

The Constitution provides Congress with the means necessary to check an Administration that is eroding the very principles and the institutions that have always made this country great.

But that is only possible if Congress, especially the party in power, currently the Republican majority, stands up and takes action.

I know many of my colleagues on the other side of aisle are eager to discuss their views on perceived attacks on the Second Amendment, but I urge all of you to join me in broadening this discussion, and finding the courage to take action that will protect our laws, and our most fundamental rights before it's too late.