

Ranking Member Peters Opening Statement
Full Committee Hearing: Exposing Fraud in America
July 15th, 2026

Thank you, Chairman Paul.

The government has a responsibility to ensure that taxpayer dollars are used efficiently, effectively, and responsibly. And when there is evidence of waste, fraud, and abuse in taxpayer-funded programs, the government must take action to recover the costs and hold wrongdoers accountable.

In my time serving in this committee, I have been proud to work across the aisle with many of my colleagues to improve oversight of taxpayer dollars and fight fraud.

I worked with Senator Ernst and Senator Hassan to pass bipartisan legislation to prevent conflicts of interest in federal contracts. After learning that a company was being paid with tax dollars to advise the government on oversight of the pharmaceutical industry, while simultaneously being paid by pharma companies to help market their drugs, we passed a bill to end this practice and to make sure taxpayer dollars are being used in Americans' best interests.

I worked with Senator Kennedy to pass a bipartisan bill to improve government data access, which will save millions of taxpayer dollars by preventing improper payments to deceased people.

I worked with Senator Carper and Senator McCaskill to block scams that were hurting small businesses by fraudulently selling services to secure government contracts — services that the government already provides to small businesses for free.

And when Congress was responding to the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic with significant emergency spending, I worked with Senator Johnson to establish the Pandemic Response Accountability Committee (PRAC).

We fought to ensure there were strong oversight mechanisms including alongside those resources because we knew that bad actors would try to take advantage of the situation. To date, the PRAC has supported more than 50 investigative partners in over 1,200 investigations and has identified \$2.5 billion in potential fraud that the government is now continuing to try to recover.

In fact, the PRAC's model has been so successful that, Chairman Paul, you worked to expand its oversight responsibilities as part of the Big Beautiful Bill.

It is an unfortunate reality that there is always the risk of fraud in government programs, which is why we need strong controls. A strong oversight of government spending to ensure taxpayer dollars are going to help the American people and not the fraudsters.

Our federal government had more of these strong oversight mechanisms up until last year when President Trump fired 19 independent Inspectors General in violation of the law.

He removed experienced, independent investigators with a strong record of identifying waste and fraud and replaced them with cronies. It's hard to overstate the damage that has been done to independent oversight.

Many of the watchdogs we count on to identify wrongdoing are now fearful they will be fired or retaliated against just for doing their jobs.

On top of that, President Trump created DOGE and let inexperienced staffers, led by Elon Musk, make arbitrary cuts across the federal government. DOGE was supposed to save \$1 trillion. Instead, their reckless cuts caused chaos and may have actually cost taxpayers more in the long run, as the Administration had to rehire workers and reinstate contracts that they cancelled.

Mr. Chairman, I ask unanimous consent to enter into the record a report that I released last May.

This report which found that the federal government could have saved taxpayers more than \$175 billion by implementing recommendations from the 19 independent Inspectors General that President Trump fired unlawfully, far more money than DOGE ever delivered.

President Trump is also proposing a new scheme to control federal grant dollars that will allow him to direct taxpayer dollars to political allies and punish partisan enemies, all while undermining independent oversight.

Not only have President Trump's actions created an environment where fraud can thrive, but incredibly, he has also pardoned multiple convicted fraudsters, who combined have committed billions of dollars worth of fraud, pardoned by President Trump.

These pardons wiped out an estimated \$1.3 billion in restitution and have frequently gone to wealthy and well-connected individuals. It sends a signal that if you have the money or the President's favor, you can commit fraud without consequences.

And finally, if we are going to talk about fraud, waste, and abuse we must also talk about how President Trump has abused his public office to enrich himself and his family, not improve the everyday lives of Americans or protect taxpayer dollars.

Since taking office in 2025, President Trump and his family have made an estimated \$2 billion from cryptocurrency alone.

And if this committee is serious about tackling fraud, I hope we could work together to hold the Administration accountable for the ways in which they have undercut independent oversight and fulfill our own role to conduct oversight of the Administration's actions that have unquestionably enabled fraud.

We need to restore the strong, experienced and independent watchdogs who have a proven track record of finding fraud and getting money back for the American people, rather than amplifying sensationalized social media takes that are more focused on getting views than on actually getting the truth.

Mr. Chairman, we share the goal of saving taxpayer dollars and making our government more efficient. And when you are ready to bring in federal officials to testify, conduct oversight, and advance additional legislation to crack down on fraud, my colleagues and I are ready to do the work.