

**Ranking Member Peters Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery  
Full Committee Hearing: Senator Markwayne Mullin Nomination for DHS Secretary  
March 18, 2026**

Thank you, Chairman Paul, and thank you Senator Mullin for being here today.

Congratulations on your nomination.

I appreciate your willingness to meet with both me and my staff as we consider your nomination to serve as Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security.

I'd also like to welcome your family who are joining us today, and to thank all of you for your commitment to public service.

The Department of Homeland Security is a complicated organization with challenging operational dynamics.

As everyone is well aware, many components within DHS are currently operating without funding.

Let's be clear – Democrats are committed to funding TSA, FEMA, the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency and the Coast Guard while we negotiate much-needed ICE reforms.

We tried to pass those bills by unanimous consent multiple times over the past two weeks. Republicans blocked every single one of those bills.

Yesterday, the White House sent a letter laying out their latest offer – but the devil is in the details.

Administrative action is not enough – we need to pass real reforms into law.

If Republicans really do agree with us that TSA and other personnel need to be paid, then they should join us and pass the bills to pay them today while we continue to negotiate ICE reforms.

And let me be clear – these are very straightforward reforms we're asking for – we just want ICE to follow the same rules that our local police already do.

But DHS has faced management challenges since the start of the Trump Administration, and over the past year, many of those challenges have only increased.

As soon as President Trump was sworn in, he made deep cuts to counterterrorism offices and programs, forced out or reassigned key personnel, and redirected the focus of limited remaining counterterrorism resources away from the serious threats we face, and toward targeting the President's perceived political enemies.

The Administration also gutted our nation's main cybersecurity agency, once again forcing out or reassigning talented personnel, slashing budgets, and limiting the agency's work to help

private companies address significant cyberattacks, protect Americans from criminal hackers, and support secure elections.

The Administration has also taken an axe to FEMA, cutting staff, and freezing or delaying critical grant funding for everything from emergency food and shelter after a disaster, to flood mitigation programs, and security grants for nonprofits, including houses of worship.

All these cuts and reassignments have been made at the expense of vital missions, including the core terrorism prevention and response mission the Department was created to address.

In doing so, the Trump Administration has broken trust between law enforcement and the communities they are intended to protect – a break that will have a generational impact on public safety and security.

Now, after President Trump's reckless war of choice against Iran, the threats our nation faces have never been higher.

In my home state of Michigan, just last week, we saw both a major medical device manufacturer get hacked by an Iranian-backed group, and a horrific violent attack on Temple Israel, a metro Detroit area synagogue.

President Trump's unilateral and unchecked executive actions have put Americans at risk and we need a steady, qualified leader at the Department of Homeland Security to address these serious threats.

How the Homeland Security Secretary responds to a crisis sends signals to everyone from the Department's own personnel, to the American people, and to the entire world.

It's not the role of the Secretary to be a cable news commentator in the wake of a crisis, the Secretary's role is to lead the response and work to ensure the Department they are leading isn't the cause of that crisis.

A Secretary who jumps to conclusions without the facts – as we saw in the case of Renee Good and Alex Pretti's killings – only worsens the situation and makes us less safe.

This is a role where temperament matters, where judgment matters, and where experience matters.

We have seen under Secretary Noem's leadership, how shortcomings in these traits can compound the challenges that already come with leading a large and complex Department.

Now more than ever, we need a DHS Secretary who is a steady hand, who will provide thoughtful leadership, follow the facts, tell the truth, and hold agency officials accountable.

We need a DHS Secretary who is committed to the rule of law and who will protect and cooperate with independent oversight, whether that's from the Inspector General or from Members of Congress.

And we need a DHS Secretary who is free from distractions and conflicts of interest that not only undercut the Department's work, but break trust with the American people.

Senator Mullin, I appreciate you being here today to answer our questions about these concerns and your experience and qualifications for this role.

And while I'm interested in hearing more about your vision for leading the Department, I do have reservations about your readiness to take on such a significant role at such a critical time.

I hope you will provide us with substantive answers today, and candid recognition of where this Administration has fallen short on safeguarding our homeland security as you seek to lead the Department as our nation faces ongoing security threats and war with Iran.