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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON
HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6250

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November 6, 2019

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave., NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President,

As you know, Acting Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Kevin McAleenan announced his pending resignation on October 11, and the last Senate-confirmed Secretary, Kirstjen Nielsen, left office on April 10, 2019. The Department, with more than 240,000 employees, is charged with the critical task of safeguarding our nation from evolving threats – both foreign and domestic. We write today regarding the absence of Senate-confirmed leadership at DHS, to urge you to promptly nominate a Secretary in accordance with the Appointments Clause of the Constitution.

Currently, 7 of the 18 DHS offices requiring Senate confirmation, including the Department's three top positions, are vacant with no nominee pending. Many of these positions have remained vacant for months, and some for years, without a formal nominee for the Senate to consider. This widespread use of temporary leadership—individuals who, though perhaps qualified, do not serve with the imprimatur of having been confirmed by the Senate—makes it more difficult for the Department to achieve its long-term strategic objectives. Independent government watchdogs, experts, and current and former DHS employees, have recognized the importance of Senate-confirmed leaders and warned of the dangers of pervasive vacancies to government accountability and national security.

The Department of Homeland Security needs qualified, principled leaders to successfully carry out its many vital national security functions – which include securing our nation's borders, preparing for and responding to disasters, protecting critical infrastructure, defending against cyber threats, and addressing the evolving threat of domestic terrorism. We urge you promptly submit qualified nominees for DHS Secretary and all vacant positions at the Department. The American people deserve leaders who will ensure stability and accountability to the Department.

Sincerely,



Ron Johnson
Chairman



Gary C. Peters
Ranking Member