

U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Business Meeting
September 30, 2020

Senator Gary C. Peters, Ranking Member
Opening Statement As Prepared for Delivery

Thank you Mr. Chairman. While I have appreciated Mr. Wolf's willingness – at times – to have frank conversations about the challenges facing our country and my home state of Michigan – I will not be supporting his nomination today.

Unfortunately, Mr. Wolf's record at the Department of Homeland Security has only reinforced my concerns about his fitness to lead this critical agency. Under Mr. Wolf's leadership – the Department has faced daunting challenges – serious cyber-attacks – the pandemic – civil unrest – and deadly wildfires and hurricanes.

While these challenges would strain even the most prepared staff – I am concerned by reports of slow decision-making and the sidelining of experts – reports that raise serious questions about the judgment and independence of agency leaders.

Under Mr. Wolf's leadership – the Department has also shockingly downplayed the seriousness of some threats facing our nation – especially the rise of white supremacist violence.

Most recently – despite my request at his nomination hearing and follow up requests from my office – Mr. Wolf has refused to work with me on my oversight efforts on reports of politicization within DHS.

Congressional oversight is absolutely critical to ensuring DHS is effectively carrying out its missions – and I expect the DHS Secretary to be a productive partner in those efforts. The Department cannot successfully tackle the serious challenges it currently faces without strong – steady – and independent leadership.

The Homeland Security Secretary must be willing to let facts and data drive policy decisions – even if the facts don't fit the Administration's desired narrative.

The 240,000 dedicated women and men who work at the Department of Homeland Security and the millions of American they help protect deserve a Secretary who will always put the best interests of the country above political ends.

While I will be voting against Mr. Wolf's nomination, it is my hope that we can continue to build a constructive dialogue between this committee and the Department as we work to protect the American people against the persistent threats our nation faces.