

Chairman Peters Opening Statement As Prepared for Delivery
Full Committee Hearing: Examining the Senate Confirmation Process and Federal Vacancies
March 3, 2022

I'd like to thank our witnesses for joining us today to help examine the Senate confirmation process for presidential appointees, and evaluate potential reforms that could help streamline the process, and address vacancies and extended confirmation delays to strengthen leadership at our federal agencies.

Every Administration deserves to choose qualified leaders to helm critical agencies, and help effectively govern our nation. And providing a swift confirmation process, without excessive bureaucratic road blocks, for these nominees is key to not only exercising the Senate's responsibility to advise and consent, but also ensuring presidential appointees will be accountable to Congress and the American people.

In recent administrations, we've seen firsthand how vacancies at top federal positions, in many cases caused by prolonged confirmation processes, have compounded significant challenges the federal government must tackle.

For example, there are currently more than 180 Biden Administration nominees being considered by this body. Many of these qualified individuals could be helping to address the problems Americans are facing, from the COVID-19 pandemic to significant threats to our national security. Instead, they are still waiting on this body to act before they can start their important work.

The Constitution grants the Senate with an essential check on executive power, the authority to provide advice and consent on many presidential appointments.

But the number of appointments, and the increasingly arduous process to nominate and confirm appointees has become burdensome, and far beyond what the Framers envisioned.

Recent reports estimate that the Senate has taken an average of 103 days to confirm President Biden's nominees, and the average confirmation process took about twice as long for the two previous Administrations.

Not only do these extended timelines delay getting qualified leaders into vital positions, but protracted vacancies also limit Congress' ability to conduct effective oversight. Today's hearing is an important opportunity for the Committee to discuss potential reforms that will help address these concerns.

This is not the first time the Senate has considered this issue. Ten years ago, this Committee helped pass into law the bipartisan *Presidential Appointment Efficiency and Streamlining Act of 2011*, which reduced the number of positions requiring Senate confirmation, and established working groups that provided additional recommendations on how to make the presidential

appointment process more efficient, including by streamlining the paperwork and background check process for nominees.

While this bipartisan bill was an important step forward, since it was signed into law, even more Senate-confirmed positions have been created, and many recommendations from the working group have not yet been implemented.

This has contributed to an increasingly complex confirmation process for nominees that can eat into valuable time the Senate could be devoting to important legislative efforts, and limiting an administration's capacity to implement their policy agenda.

In addition to improving government efficiency and effectiveness, federal vacancy experts and good government groups have argued that additional reforms, including reducing the number of Senate-confirmed positions, can also save taxpayer dollars. The Congressional Budget Office estimated those savings could be as much as \$82 million.

Today, I am pleased to welcome a group of experts who can provide unique perspectives on how we can reform the presidential appointment process, address the growing number of federal vacancies, and incentivize every administration to quickly submit nominees.

I am hopeful that, on a nonpartisan basis, we can examine the facts and ensure our federal government is able to better serve the American people for generations to come.