

Opening Statement
Ranking Member Rob Portman
U.S. SENATE COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY
& GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

*“DOMESTIC TERRORISM AND VIOLENT EXTREMISM: EXAMINING THE
THREAT OF RACIALLY, ETHNICALLY, RELIGIOUSLY,
AND POLITICALLY MOTIVATED ATTACKS, PART II.”*

AUGUST 5, 2021

AS PREPARED

Thank you, Chairman Peters, for holding this hearing and continuing our discussion from Tuesday about the persistent threat of domestic terrorism and violent extremism. As I said earlier this week, these threats are affecting communities across the country. The threats not only transcend racial, ethnic, and religious lines, but as we heard on Tuesday, are increasingly targeting members of law enforcement, the military, and the government.

On Tuesday, the witnesses highlighted many important points that we will discuss more today, including that:

- Virtually all domestic extremists, inspired by a range of ideological beliefs on the left and the right, use the internet and social media platforms to release propaganda, coordinate training, raise funds, recruit members, and incite violence here at home;
- The administration must be more transparent and provide the necessary data for us to have a comprehensive understanding of the current threat landscape; and
- Going forward, we need to talk about solutions and areas where more Congressional action is needed to address these threats effectively.

I also appreciated that multiple witnesses on Tuesday testified that the Department of Homeland Security’s Nonprofit Security Grant Program

has helped nonprofits to apply for funds they can use to secure their facilities. I worked to authorize and support this grant program, and I'm glad that last year, my bipartisan *Protecting Faith-Based and Nonprofit Organizations from Terrorism Act* with Chairman Peters was signed into law, which authorized \$75 million annually for five years, for this Grant Program. The data shows that despite the expansion of the program, there are many states that do not take full advantage of the resources and tools it provides. I am committed to ensuring states, nonprofits, and religious institutions are aware of the program and utilize it to protect themselves from ever increasing threats.

That's why I was also pleased to hear witnesses express support for the *Pray Safe Act* that I authored and introduced with Senator Hassan. This legislation would establish a federal clearinghouse at the Department of Homeland Security so that faith-based entities can access information on safety and security best practices, available federal grant programs, like the Nonprofit Security Grant Program, and training opportunities.

That said, it is clear that more must be done. Determining what solutions and tools are needed requires us to hear not only from private entities, but from current federal officials responsible for understanding and addressing these threats. Next month the Committee is planning to hold its annual threats hearing, at which I expect domestic terrorism and violent extremism will play a significant part. Hearing from government officials on what the administration is doing to combat these issues is long overdue.

In the interim, I am pleased that today we will be hearing from a former government official, in addition to subject matter experts and some of the community leaders being affected by this threat.

I appreciate the witnesses being here today. I look forward to your insights and perspectives, but most importantly, your recommendations for how Congress can improve federal efforts to combat terrorism and violent extremism in our country.

Thank you.