

U.S. Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Nominations of John Gibbs to be Director, Office of Personnel Management, and The Honorable John M. Barger, The Honorable Christopher B. Burnham, and Frank Dunlevy to be Members, Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board

August 9, 2020

Senator Gary C. Peters, Ranking Member

Opening Statement As Prepared for Delivery

Thank you, Mr. Chairman – and thank you to all the nominees for being here and for your willingness to serve.

Today, we are considering the nominations of John Gibbs to be Director of the Office of Personnel Management, and John Barger, Christopher Burnham, and Frank Dunlevy to be Members of the Federal Retirement Thrift Investment Board.

Both of these agencies require independent, non-partisan leadership to thrive and serve the best interests of the American public.

The Director of Office of Personnel Management not only leads an office of nearly 6,000 employees, but also serves as the chief human resources officer to millions of hardworking, dedicated public servants across the federal government.

Over the last few years, the Office of Personnel Management has faced difficult challenges – including the Administration’s efforts to dismantle the agency and the erosion of its relationship and trust with Congress.

This is an incredibly important position. The civil service requires an experienced, independent leader who can rebuild confidence in OPM, defend federal employees from undue influence, and maintain a non-partisan, merit-based workforce that serves every American during these unprecedented times.

Mr. Gibbs, I appreciated our discussion yesterday. It is always good to connect with a fellow Michigander. I believe your background in software development and information technology could bring a needed perspective at OPM.

In addition to somebody who can fix outdated systems and processes, OPM needs a leader who will tamp down controversies and bring people together. I am concerned that you have engaged in reckless political discourse that could undermine your ability to do this.

As a political commentator, you elevated conspiracy theories and made anti-Muslim statements. The First amendment unquestionably protects your right to make such statements – but it is the Senate’s job to review them as they relate to your ability to do this specific job – just as any company would when hiring a new head of HR.

Mr. Barger, Mr. Burnham and Mr. Dunlevy – if you are confirmed you will be charged with protecting and administering the retirement savings of our nation’s federal employees and military servicemembers.

You will also help to lead an agency that – like the Office of Personnel Management – is dealing with political interference that threatens to harm its mission.

Federal workers and servicemembers are counting on their Thrift Savings Plans to provide them with a secure retirement.

If confirmed, you’ll be responsible for serving as trusted fiduciaries for millions of Americans who have dedicated their lives to public service and who deserve nothing less than to retire with dignity and financial security.

We cannot allow the retirement savings of our nation’s public servants to be subject to undue influence from the Administration or special interest groups.

I look forward to hearing more about the experience and qualifications of all of today’s nominees. And I hope that – if confirmed – they will exercise the appropriate judgment and independence needed to serve in these important roles.