

**Statement by Senator Hassan
On the Markup of Ms. Kirstjen Nielsen
HSGAC
11-14-2017**

Mr. Chairman—I'd like to address why I did not vote in favor of advancing Ms. Nielsen's nomination today.

The day after Ms. Nielsen's confirmation hearing, we learned from a *Washington Post* story that the White House Chief of Staff John Kelly—who is Ms. Nielsen's mentor and current immediate superior—was putting “massive pressure” on Acting Secretary Duke to reverse an immigration decision that the Acting Secretary had made just days earlier.

Despite comments from DHS disputing these reports late last Friday, these developments raise important new questions not only about the political interference of the White House, but also about the qualifications and appropriateness of Ms. Nielsen's nomination.

The onus is now on Ms. Nielsen to demonstrate to the Committee that she is able to maintain independence from the White House. Ms. Nielsen, as Chief of Staff Kelly's principal deputy, must also account for any role she may have played in this potential act of political interference, as well as whether she has received any specific directives from the White House about actions she will take if confirmed as Secretary.

On Thursday, I was joined by Senators Harris, Heitkamp, Carper and Peters in sending a letter to our committee leadership requesting a second hearing with Ms. Nielsen to get important answers to these key questions. We received no response to our request. Instead, the Chairman opted to schedule the markup for this morning, letting this decision serve as his response.

Consequently, given the lack of information at our disposal and the refusal of the Committee leadership to hold a second hearing on these important questions, I am forced to oppose advancing the nomination of Ms. Nielsen.

The Department of Homeland Security needs stable, steady and apolitical leadership amid this period of renewed threats to the homeland. Yet with these details of this potential political interference from the White House into the decision making of the Department, it is not clear that the advancement of Ms. Nielsen's nomination will do anything to reestablish stable and steady leadership at the Department. Until we get complete answers on these developments, I will oppose this nomination.