

**Ranking Member Peters Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery**  
**Full Committee Hearing:**  
**Nomination of Governor Kristi Noem**  
**Date: January 17, 2025**

Thank you, Chairman Paul.

Governor Noem, thank you for being here today.

I appreciate your efforts to make yourself available to meet with me and Committee staff as we work to conduct our due diligence and review your qualifications and background to serve as Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security.

As our third largest federal agency with more than 240,000 employees and an operating budget of more than \$100 billion dollars, the Department of Homeland Security requires strong, stable, and principled leadership. Our nation faces serious threats and security challenges from securing our borders and combatting terrorism to preventing cyber-attacks and responding to our nation's increasing number of natural disasters and DHS is the first line of defense.

I appreciated the conversations we had ahead of today's hearing where we discussed the importance of ensuring that our nation's borders are safe and secure. While we must address the challenges, we face at our Southern Border we also need to ensure that there are sufficient resources to secure our Northern Border as well, including building out the Northern Border Mission Center.

That's especially important in my home state of Michigan which has two of our nation's busiest border crossings and where we'll be adding another span when the Gordie Howe International Bridge opens later this year.

To facilitate the lawful trade and travel at those ports of entry that are so critical to our economy I've worked on legislation to hire additional U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers to meet increased staffing demands. We must secure our borders, but we also know it is well past time to streamline our immigration and asylum processes as well. In addition to border security DHS is responsible for addressing many serious threats that face our nation.

Just a few weeks ago, Americans were shocked to see two horrific incidents in New Orleans and Las Vegas a deadly reminder that terrorism and radicalization remain very real and ongoing threats to our homeland security.

In my role on this Committee, I've made combatting foreign and domestic terrorism—as well as extremism a top priority. In this complex environment, it is essential that DHS continue to focus on all terrorism threats, track and report data to Congress and the American people, and coordinate between all components to ensure the Department is effective in addressing all terrorism threats.

We've also seen that persistent cyber-attacks are still a very serious threat. A recent attack from China-based hackers infiltrated the Treasury Department on top of the ongoing Salt Typhoon hack that compromised numerous U.S. telecommunications companies.

There is no question that DHS must continue to lead the way in protecting our networks from foreign adversaries, cyber criminals, and so-called hacktivists to prevent cyber-attacks from becoming increasingly devastating to our security and our economy.

Finally, the Department and the Federal Emergency Management Agency must continue the hard work of addressing the increasing number of natural disasters affecting our communities due to climate change.

From violent storms like the hurricane that brought destruction to states across the South to the devastating wildfires in California and countless other severe storms and flooding events across the country we need leadership at the Department that will ensure our nation is effectively responding to help communities when disaster strikes.

The safety and security of our nation and the American people depend on the Department's ability to effectively address these wide-ranging threats.

Thank you again for your willingness to serve and for being with us here today. I look forward to having a comprehensive discussion about how you intend to lead the Department through these serious national security challenges if confirmed.