

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY APPROPRIATIONS FOR 2026

HEARINGS BEFORE A SUBCOMMITTEE OF THE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES ONE HUNDRED NINETEENTH CONGRESS FIRST SESSION

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Printed for the use of the Committee on Appropriations

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DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY APPROPRIATIONS FOR 2026

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 9, 2025.

MEMBER DAY

Mr. AMODEI. Let's convene the Member Day meeting of the Homeland Security Subcommittee. The committee will come to order.

Good morning, and welcome to the Homeland Security Subcommittee's Member Day hearing. This morning, we will hear from Members about a variety of topics that fall within the subcommittee's jurisdiction.

Thank you to each of our colleagues for taking time out of your schedules to discuss the projects and programs within the Homeland Security bill that are important to your districts. Your input is important.

I look forward to working with Ranking Member Underwood and the members of this subcommittee to pass the fiscal year 2026 Homeland Security appropriations bill.

I will now recognize my colleague Ms. Underwood for her opening remarks.

Ms. UNDERWOOD. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this hearing to kick off the fiscal year 2026 appropriations season. I am grateful that we are hearing testimony from our colleagues, as we have done in the past, so that they can highlight areas of importance for the constituents that they represent.

Mr. Chairman, before we hear from our Members, I would be remiss if I didn't take a moment to raise my concerns with the unconstitutional decisions this administration has been making with the funds provided to the Department by this committee, including: the sudden and unexplained termination of DHS grants to States and nonprofit organizations; the cancellation of the Disaster Relief Fund's Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities program; and reductions in force in parts of the Department, such as the Office of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties and the Offices of the Citizenship and Immigration Services Ombudsman as well as the Immigration Detention Ombudsman; not to mention serious questions about the shortcutting of due process in immigration reviews.

These unconstitutional actions put DHS employees, American citizens, and our national security at incredible risk. Federal disaster relief funding is what makes it possible for communities across the country to recover, from flooding to wildfires. The Office of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties protects the DHS workforce and

upholds our values as Americans. These are non-negotiable priorities.

As we focus today on our Members' funding priorities, we must also acknowledge that there are serious concerns with how DHS is executing the funding that we have provided. I hope that we can work together to address some of these issues in our oversight role.

Now I look forward to discussing the Homeland Security priorities our colleagues are bringing to us today, and I thank them for taking the time to appear before us.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this hearing, and I yield back.

Mr. AMODEI. Thank you. And I share your concerns about several of those things, so we will look forward to working together on those to see—

Ms. UNDERWOOD. Yes, sir.

Mr. AMODEI [continuing]. What we can do.

Mr. Moskowitz, the floor is yours.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 9, 2025.

HON. JARED MOSKOWITZ, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF FLORIDA

Mr. MOSKOWITZ. Good morning. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you, Ranking Member. I appreciate the opportunity to come and talk to you.

So I just want to quickly just give you a little bit of my background. So, before I got to Congress, in another life, I was the director of emergency management for the State of Florida for Governor Ron DeSantis—so a completely different party from mine—and did that job for 2½ years and was in charge of the Hurricane Michael cleanup in the panhandle, along with the entire COVID response for the State of Florida.

Mr. AMODEI. You look young for having done all that.

Mr. MOSKOWITZ. It aged me in ways, Mr. Chairman, I can't describe, which is why I left that job, okay? Yeah. Congress, much easier.

Mr. AMODEI. Smart guy.

Mr. MOSKOWITZ. Yeah, much easier than that job.

But I want to talk about FEMA.

So, obviously, since this is the appropriations committee, obviously I want to make sure that we fully fund FEMA.

But I also want to raise the point that you can't fund something that may not be there. The FEMA situation is in way worse shape at the moment than the public knows, what is going on behind the scenes at Homeland Security.

So, I mean, look, I have a bill out there that would remove FEMA from Homeland. It would basically restore it to the way it was before 9/11; it would give it back to the White House—which would shrink the Agency, because right now FEMA is doing all of the grants for the other 22-agencies-plus in Homeland. And if we want to know why is FEMA doing all this immigration stuff, it is because they are being directed by Homeland General Counsel to run all of those grants.

And so, if it looks like FEMA is not as good as they used to be at response and recovery, it is because they have become a bloated grant agency because of Homeland's direction.

So Byron Donalds and I have that bill to remove it from Homeland and give it back to the President. In the Senate, Thom Tillis and Senator Padilla have that bill. So we have a bipartisan, bicameral bill to try to do that with FEMA.

And I know giving up an agency is always hard, but I am really worried about trying to save FEMA. What is going on in Homeland, there are discussions right now, Mr. Chairman, about breaking FEMA apart and giving pieces to other agencies. I don't know how that is going to make things more efficient or faster.

FEMA needs to get better at response; there needs to be reform. Block grants is definitely something that we should look at. We can look at block grants. Some States will do better at block grants than others, but we can do block grants, where, you know, the Governor can request it; if approved by the President, we can block-grant money down.

But if you think for a second that the Federal Government doesn't have to do any response, I can tell you that that is not the case.

Yes, Florida and Texas, way more prepared than an Alabama or Mississippi, just based on capabilities, okay? The emergency management departments in Texas and Florida are gigantic. But if you look at where the majority of the disasters have been, from 2011 to 2021, California is number one at 25, but the next States are Mississippi at 22, Oklahoma at 22, Iowa at 21, Tennessee at 20, Louisiana at 18, Alabama at 17.

Those States will go bankrupt if they don't have full reimbursement from the Federal Government. Not only bankrupt, they won't be able to respond.

FEMA doesn't have assets. FEMA coordinates other assets from other agencies, a lot from DOD, and they move these pieces of equipment into the area. And so someone is going to have to do that. There is going to have to be an agency that does it. If we are not going to call it "FEMA" and we are going to call it the "National Office of Emergency Management," I don't care, but there is going to have to be an agency that coordinates a Federal response when a disaster is such that it overwhelms State capacity.

So we can't just push this down to the States. That is number one.

Number two is, you may not be aware, but FEMA has paused all grants—all of them. Not just getting rid of BRIC, but they have paused all reimbursement that is currently going on to all States. They are calling it an additional review. It is a distinction without a difference. They have paused all of it.

Not only have they paused it, there are discussions about getting rid of certain categories. Right now we have categories of reimbursement, A through G. A and B are, you know, immediate needs and debris removal, but the others are roads and bridges and parks and beach renourishment. They are talking about getting rid of those as categories of reimbursement.

I can tell you that all along the Gulf of America and up and down the East Coast—like, I am on your page, Mr. Chairman,

okay? I am on your page. But all around the Gulf of America and up and down the East Coast—South Carolina, North Carolina—if they can't get their beaches reimbursed under category G, okay, then there is a major tourism problem in all these States.

And so this is something that we have to be talking about. I think, Mr. Chairman, there is a disconnect between the White House and Homeland. And there is a lot going on; we know there is a lot going on. I don't think this is getting the attention it deserves.

But I came here to really implore you guys that this isn't just about funding FEMA in the Homeland budget; it is about engaging with the White House and Homeland on what the plan is here for FEMA.

More money goes to red States than blue States. It is not even close. And so this should be a bipartisan issue.

And so I wanted to bring some of those concerns, Mr. Chairman, to you today, and I appreciate the time to address you.

[The information follows:]

Representative Jared Moskowitz (FL-23)

Thank you, Chairman Amodei, Ranking Member Underwood, and Members of the Committee. As the Representative for Florida's 23rd Congressional District — and the only former statewide Emergency Management Director to ever serve in Congress — I've seen firsthand the devastation that disasters bring and the lifesaving difference that FEMA makes.

The truth is, these disasters are becoming larger and more widespread. In recent weeks alone, catastrophic tornados and floods tore through the South and Midwest, upending communities and taking the lives of too many. It comes as we continue to navigate what's been a deadly tornado season and as places, like my home state of Florida, prepare for this year's hurricane season.

FEMA is a cornerstone of the preparation, response, and recovery to disasters like these. Many states just don't have the budgets, operations, or manpower to take these events on alone, and without the critical resources that FEMA provides, they would have to raise taxes or raid other funds to support disaster response. Doing that — taking funds away from places like education or transportation — just won't help these communities build towards a full recovery.

Unfortunately, some are calling to abolish FEMA entirely. This can't be a solution. FEMA isn't perfect, just as no organization is perfect — but we can improve it. We can save FEMA by enacting commonsense reforms that make it faster, more efficient, and more effective, and I've been working on bipartisan proposals to do that. We have a real opportunity to make the agency deliver as the American people deserve it to.

The worst thing Congress could do in this moment, though, is to defund or dismantle the only federal agency whose sole mission is to respond when Americans

are at their most vulnerable. We must provide FEMA the necessary resources in the FY2026 budget.

It goes back to what I said: the rate of disasters isn't just increasing — it's also intensifying, and the facts back it up. In 2023 alone, the United States faced 28 separate billion-dollar disasters, the highest number ever recorded, totaling more than \$91.3 billion in damages.^{1,2} Events like these aren't concentrated in one region, either — they strike nearly every part of the country, and the damage is such that communities simply can't recover alone.

We saw it in Hawaii, when wildfires tore through Maui, decimating the historic town of Lahaina in what became the deadliest U.S. wildfires in more than 100 years. Nearly 100 people were killed, and thousands of families lost their homes and businesses at incredible emotional and financial cost — more than \$5.7 billion in damage.^{2,3}

We saw it in my home state of Florida, when Hurricane Ian made landfall as a Category 4 storm, flattening coastal communities, cutting power to millions, and causing nearly \$120 billion in damage.¹ It was one of the costliest storms on record.

And of course, during COVID-19, our country experienced our first-ever nationwide Major Disaster Declaration. All 50 states, all five territories, and the District of

¹ Wu, Shuang-Ye. "Billion-Dollar Weather and Climate Disasters Broke U.S. Record in 2023, NOAA Says." PBS NewsHour, January 10, 2024. <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/science/a-record-28-billion-dollar-weather-and-climate-disasters-struck-the-u-s-in-2023-noaa>

² National Centers for Environmental Information (NCEI). *U.S. Billion-Dollar Weather & Climate Disasters 1980–2024*. National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. <https://www.ncei.noaa.gov/access/billions/events.pdf>.

³ Blake, Mike, and Marco Garcia. "Maui Wildfires Deadliest in Century as Death Toll Hits 93." *Reuters*, August 13, 2023. <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/death-toll-maui-fires-hits-least-80-damages-billions-dollars-2023-08-12/>.

Columbia were under active declarations at the same time.⁴ It was the first time a public health emergency triggered a response under the Stafford Act.⁵

These are just a few of the many examples, but in all of them, who showed up to help? It was FEMA — working alongside state and local responders — that helped provide shelter, coordinate aid, and begin the long but necessary recovery process.

In the years after Ian, FEMA provided \$1.15 billion in direct grants to help nearly 400,000 Florida households repair and rebuild, and another \$2.3 billion to local communities for debris cleanup and infrastructure repair.⁶ In total, federal support for Ian's recovery topped \$10.2 billion.⁶ In Hawaii, FEMA is still around almost two years later, offering direct housing assistance. And during COVID, the agency helped deliver billions of units of PPE, supported field hospitals and vaccine sites, and provided more than \$125 billion in emergency aid to state and local governments.^{4,5} If there was ever any doubt about FEMA's importance, COVID made it clear.^{4,5} FEMA delivered the national response that the pandemic required.

All of this to say, this is not a regional issue. It is national. As more and more Americans live in high-risk areas and the climate continues to change, the scale and costs of these disasters will keep rising. And FEMA is the only federal agency with the expertise and infrastructure to coordinate response and recovery at this magnitude.

⁴ Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). *FEMA Led Historic Pandemic Response, Supported Record Number of Disasters in 2020*. U.S. Department of Homeland Security, January 11, 2021. <https://www.fema.gov/press-release/20210111/fema-led-historic-pandemic-response-supported-record-number-disasters-2020>.

⁵ U.S. Government Accountability Office. *Disaster Relief Fund: Lessons Learned from COVID-19 Could Improve FEMA's Estimates*. GAO-24-106676. Washington, D.C.: Government Accountability Office, July 9, 2024. <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-24-106676>.

⁶ Federal Emergency Management Agency. "Hurricane Ian: Two Years into Recovery." *FEMA.gov*, September 19, 2024. <https://www.fema.gov/press-release/20250122/hurricane-ian-two-years-recovery>.

But FEMA can only do that work if it has the resources to do so, and right now, that mission is at risk. Last year, we saw what happens when the budget comes up short. In August 2024, FEMA was forced to implement Immediate Needs Funding (INF) restrictions as its Disaster Relief Fund (DRF) neared depletion.⁷ This emergency measure meant that FEMA was forced to halt funding for more than 3,000 recovery and mitigation projects, pausing roughly \$9 billion in targeted aid, so that the remaining funds could be reserved for only the most urgent, life-saving disaster responses.⁷ Long-term but still critical recovery work in disaster-hit communities across the country suddenly ground to a halt. Projects to rebuild homes, schools, roads, and hospitals were paused mid-stream, leaving neighborhoods in limbo.

When FEMA's budget runs dry, communities everywhere feel it. Families waiting to return home are told they have to wait longer. Cities and towns hit by hurricanes and floods are forced to delay rebuilding schools, roads, and water systems. Some are left taking out loans just to keep recovery projects moving.⁸ (Business 1) These delays mean kids are kept out of classrooms. Families stay displaced. Critical infrastructure goes unrepaired while communities wait on resources they were promised.

And this was just a funding shortfall. Imagine the impact if FEMA were eliminated entirely. Unfortunately, that's not hypothetical. It's being proposed right now in Washington.

⁷ Federal Emergency Management Agency. "FEMA Lifts Immediate Needs Funding (INF) Restrictions." *FEMA Advisory*, October 1, 2024. https://homeland.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/FEMA_Advisory_Lifting_INF_20241001.pdf.

⁸ Boudreau, Catherine. "FEMA Was Strapped for Cash Even Before America's Hurricane Double Whammy." *Business Insider*, October 10, 2024. <https://www.businessinsider.com/fema-helene-milton-relief-funding-congress-disaster-victims-2024-10>.

FEMA is not a luxury. It is a lifeline. Whether it's hurricanes in Florida or Texas, wildfires in Hawaii or California, floods in Vermont or Iowa, tornados in Kentucky or Mississippi, or heat waves in Nevada or Arizona, FEMA shows up with the people and resources to help. That work doesn't replace state or local efforts — it supports and strengthens them when the scale exceeds what a single community can manage.

But that partnership only works if Congress chooses to fund it and defend it. I welcome the conversation on how to make FEMA better, and trust me, I have plenty of ideas. But that conversation starts with fully funding FEMA and keeping the agency alive. I urge this Committee to fully fund FEMA in the FY2026 budget and to reject any proposal that puts its mission or its future at risk.

Mr. AMODEI. Thank you.

Ms. Underwood, do you have any questions?

Ms. UNDERWOOD. Well, I appreciate you raising the legislation that you have authored to do some FEMA reform, and I think that there is obviously a bipartisan appetite there.

But you mentioned in your testimony the damage of Hurricane Ian to your home State of Florida, estimated to be about \$10 billion. Given your experience as an emergency management director in Florida, can you talk about what it would have meant to your State if FEMA hadn't been there?

Mr. MOSKOWITZ. So let me say this. So—I want to talk about the reimbursement piece.

Ms. UNDERWOOD. Okay.

Mr. MOSKOWITZ. As we know, all of this is in the Stafford Act, right? It is in—

Ms. UNDERWOOD. Yes.

Mr. MOSKOWITZ. It is in statute. Okay? You know, not to go off on a tangent here, but, you know, the administration is not necessarily following what is in statute, right? They are doing a little bit of what they want on their own.

And that is the concern. If they do that here with FEMA, they could just end reimbursement. And then, you know, that will get litigated in the courts, but in the meantime there are grants that are in process, reimbursement, and we are getting into hurricane season right around the corner.

If Florida—which is one of the wealthier States, right? Florida, Texas, California, New York. If you were to get rid of reimbursement, even for the wealthier States, they would have to raid their DOT funds, they would have to raid their healthcare funds, they would have to raid their education funds.

And that is only for one event. If they got a back-to-back, if they got what just happened with, you know, Milton and Helene, if they got a Francis-Jeanne-and-Charley season where they got three hurricanes, you are talking the State would have to take \$10 billion, \$12 billion out of their budget. It would decimate the State budget.

Now, take that example and run that on Mississippi or Alabama or Louisiana. That amount of money is almost the entire State budget. Or run it on an F5 tornado in Oklahoma or Tennessee. Run it on a major flood in Kentucky.

And so, you know, FEMA needs reform. The President is right that FEMA needs reform. And I am—the whole industry is clear-eyed on that. But this idea that we have switched from reform to removal, okay, States are going to dramatically suffer.

I will tell you this: Of all the things currently being discussed—getting rid of this department, getting rid of that department, or block-granting money down—in the emergency management space, it will do more damage to State budgets and State legislatures, on a bipartisan basis, if all of a sudden we start messing with the categories of reimbursement.

And from a response standpoint, you know, we didn't need Federal help in Ian—

Ms. UNDERWOOD. Uh-huh.

Mr. MOSKOWITZ [continuing]. But we would have needed it in Dorian. Dorian was a storm—you might remember, it was a Category

5 storm. I was the director at the time. It stopped 75 miles off the coast of Florida, decimated the Bahamas, and went due north.

Dorian's wind was beyond all of the building code in Florida. It was 180-mile sustained winds, with 210 gusts. Florida's building code is up to 160. All the hurricane glass is up to 160.

DOD had moved tons of equipment into Florida, pre-staged, ready for the response, because we weren't sure what was really going to happen. FEMA is the one who coordinated all of that.

If there is no one coordinating Federal assets from different agencies, States are dramatically in trouble. Katrina in Louisiana, without the Federal coordinating those assets, over their capacity.

If you want to know why the response in North Carolina looked anemic, the truth is, the State response was a disaster, so FEMA had to come in and basically do the response for the State, and FEMA, because they need reform, wasn't prepared to do that.

So they moved a ton of Federal assets in. Well, again, if there is no one doing that, who is moving these Federal assets?

Ms. UNDERWOOD. Uh-huh. Thank you so much.

I yield back.

Mr. AMODEI. Can you tell me briefly where you are at in terms of your discussions with the policy committee, Mr. Green's committee?

And, listen, I don't know what the answer is, so if you say, "We haven't done much yet," or whatever, that is—I am just curious. And the reason I am curious will be obvious in a minute.

But where are you at in talking with the policy folks on this?

Mr. MOSKOWITZ. So we have been talking to the committee, talking to staff. We have also talked to another subcommittee that I waived on to and talked about this. I literally just came from a Florida delegation meeting, where I addressed my colleagues to make them understand that the situation behind the scenes is much worse than we are talking about publicly. And so——

Mr. AMODEI. Are you going to get a hearing?

Mr. MOSKOWITZ. I am asking for one. I mean——

Mr. AMODEI. But they haven't responded yet.

Mr. MOSKOWITZ. They haven't responded yet. And so——

Mr. AMODEI. Okay.

So we try to be conscious about not legislating, as an appropriations committee, but I have no problem——

Mr. MOSKOWITZ. Your Member Day, Mr. Chairman, was before the policy committee, so I started here.

Mr. AMODEI. Well, that is because we tend to be crisper than the other committees.

Mr. MOSKOWITZ. Fair.

Mr. AMODEI. You can tell them I said that.

Mr. MOSKOWITZ. Fair.

Mr. AMODEI. But, anyhow, I don't have a problem with hearing the bill from a, "What are your recommendations, and what are the fiscal implications?" So it is like, we won't step on the policy people's feet, but if you are saying, "Hey, I have a better mouse trap, and I think I have a pretty good eye on what is"—you have a pretty good eye on what the problems are and what your recommendations are in terms of—because it is about money. I mean, unless I missed something, ultimately it is about money.

And so, if it helps you in those discussions—and our staff will get a hold of the Homeland people and go, “Hey, this Moskowitz guy apparently knows a little something about that, because he is out of the frying pan and into the fire in emergency this, that, and the other stuff”—I am okay with devoting some time to hearing more about it.

Or, if we really want to have fun, when FEMA presents, we will have you at the same thing, going, you know, “I love them and”—blah, blah, blah—and here is my view of the world.” Because I think it is an important discussion to have.

And, by the way, if you are under the impression that I—I am only going to speak for myself—that I am clued in on what the plan is for FEMA, you are mistaken.

Do you want to have a hearing over here?

Mr. MOSKOWITZ. Mr. Chairman, I would love to do that hearing. We can talk about, obviously, the bill and block grants, because those are dollars concerned.

While the bill would have a cost, okay, the—it would shrink the Department, which then would have long-term savings. The way I look at the bill is, if we look at what, you know—and I am not going to go too into DOGE, but—this is the E part—

Mr. AMODEI. By the way, it is “doggy.”

Mr. MOSKOWITZ. It is “doggy.” Fine.

Mr. AMODEI. Phonetically.

Mr. MOSKOWITZ. Fair enough.

Mr. AMODEI. It is not France.

Mr. MOSKOWITZ. This would be—

Mr. AMODEI. It is America. “Doggy.” There you go.

Mr. MOSKOWITZ. This bill is the efficiency piece. This is about making FEMA more efficient by getting it out of a big bureaucracy—it is a smaller agency within a big bureaucracy—and making it more efficient by returning it back to the White House, shrinking it, and then, obviously, figuring out how we can spend less dollars but still make sure that FEMA is effective to help the States that are going to need it.

Mr. AMODEI. To make it crystal-clear, if we say, “We are going to do a hearing on Moskowitz’s bill,” if that encourages the people that need to come together and solve the problem so we don’t need to hear your bill, great.

In case it is not clear, if that doesn’t get somebody’s attention to sit down and go, “Hey, what do we want to be when we grow up?” then we will have a hearing and just see what the testimony does.

Mr. MOSKOWITZ. Fair enough, Mr. Chairman. Appreciate that.

Mr. AMODEI. Thank you.

Mr. AMODEI. Rep. Gillen, the floor is yours.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 9, 2025.

HON. LAURA GILLEN, A REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS FROM THE STATE OF NEW YORK

Ms. GILLEN. Thank you so much. Thank you, Chairman, and thank you, Ranking Member Underwood.

I just want to echo Congressman Moskowitz’s remarks. It is not what I am here to testify about, but I represent Long Island in

New York, and during Superstorm Sandy, my community was completely devastated. People saw their neighbors' houses washed out to sea, and it took us years and years to rebuild.

And I can tell you, years later, when I served in local government, I was still working with FEMA to replenish our beaches and to harden our infrastructure. The work they do is so critical. So I appreciate you taking up this cause, and I echo his concerns about FEMA's process.

But, today, I am appearing before you to urge you to continue to make much-needed investments in the upcoming fiscal year to help secure our southern border.

Mr. Chairman, our immigration system is broken. For too long, the Federal Government has failed to do enough to secure our borders and to adequately enforce our immigration laws. Every day, my constituents deal with the effects of this failure, including an influx of immigrants into our State and our communities, putting a strain on our schools, putting a strain on our law enforcement, our local governments, and at times undermining our public safety.

As a result, our communities on Long Island are overburdened and our taxpayers are left on the hook. Without Federal action, we will only continue to struggle to keep up, and this cannot continue.

It is my priority in Congress to work across the aisle to secure our border, to fix our broken asylum system, to find a clear pathway to citizenship for people who want to come here, and to prevent gang members from entering our country and trafficking fentanyl into our communities.

Members of both parties should agree that we must achieve situational awareness and operational control over our southern border. That is why I urge you to invest in proven and effective methods to strengthen and enhance our border security.

That includes hiring more Border Patrol agents, deploying drones and smart technology at the border, building strategic barriers where appropriate, and supporting cooperation with State and local law enforcement to help prevent individuals from crossing illegally.

First, I urge the committee to provide the necessary funding to the U.S. Customs and Border Protection to hire an additional 10,000 Border Patrol agents.

As you know, the fiscal year 2024 funding bill called for a staffing target of 22,000 Border Patrol agents, and CBP has fallen short of that goal. At the same time, GAO has reported that CBP is expecting a huge surge of upcoming retirements in the next few years.

I agree with the President that we need to hire thousands of additional Border Patrol agents and provide incentives to help recruit and retain them, and I urge the committee to provide the resources necessary to get this done.

Second, I strongly support deploying advanced technology, including unmanned aerial systems equipped with thermal imaging and AI-enabled facial recognition technology, to help stop violent criminals and gang members trafficking fentanyl across the border.

That is why I urge the committee to provide the funding necessary to ensure that CBP Air and Marine Operations can achieve 110,000 annual flight hours in fiscal year 2026 and operate drones along the border 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Increased aerial surveillance and other technologies should be supplemented by additional funding to help construct physical strategic barriers where necessary along the border.

Third, I urge the committee to continue to invest in programs that strengthen cooperation between the Federal Government and local law enforcement to secure our border and to keep our communities safe.

That includes programs like the Department of Homeland Security's Operation Stonegarden, which provides grants to state and local law enforcement to support border security operations. This program was funded at \$90 million in fiscal year 2023 and fiscal year 2022 but was reduced by \$9 million in fiscal year 2024. I respectfully request that \$110 million in funding for Operation Stonegarden is appropriated in fiscal year 2026.

Finally, I urge the committee to provide dedicated resources to help reimburse our local law enforcement for the costs they incur in dealing with the migrant crisis.

Our local law enforcement officers know our communities best and can best work with federal authorities to ensure that enforcement is targeted and properly carried out. However, without additional funding, we are just asking our local law enforcement to do more with less.

That is why I am eager to work with you and your colleagues to help provide the additional funding to alleviate the burden on Nassau County and other jurisdictions.

Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member, thank you so much for your time today and for your work on this committee to protect our homeland and to keep our communities safe. I look forward to working with you and your colleagues on both sides of the aisle to secure our border, fix our asylum system, protect legal pathways to citizenship that will benefit our economy and our country.

Thank you. I yield back.

[The information follows:]

Testimony of The Honorable Laura A. Gillen (NY-04)
"Member Day Hearing"
House Committee on Appropriations
Subcommittee on Homeland Security
April 9, 2025

Chairman Amodei, Ranking Member Underwood, and Members of the Homeland Security Subcommittee,

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today on behalf of my constituents in the Fourth Congressional District of New York to urge you to continue to make critical, much-needed investments in the upcoming fiscal year to help secure our southern border.

Mr. Chairman, our immigration system is broken. For too long, the federal government has failed to do enough to secure our borders or adequately enforce our laws. Every day, my constituents deal with the effects of this failure, including an influx of migrants coming into our State and our communities -- undermining public safety, and putting a strain on our schools, law enforcement, and local governments.

As a result, our communities on Long Island are overburdened, and taxpayers are left on the hook. Without federal action, we will only continue to struggle to keep up. This simply cannot continue.

It's my priority in Congress to work across the aisle to secure the border, fix our broken asylum system, support legal pathways to immigration, and prevent criminals and gang members from entering our country and threatening our communities.

Members of both parties should agree that we must achieve situational awareness and operational control over our southern border. That is why I urge you to invest in proven and effective methods to strengthen and enhance our border security. That includes hiring more border patrol agents, deploying drones and “smart” technology along the border, building strategic physical barriers, and supporting cooperation with state and local law enforcement to help prevent individuals from crossing the border illegally.

First, I urge the Committee to provide necessary funding for U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) to hire an additional 10,000 Border Patrol Agents. As you know, the Fiscal Year 2024 funding bill called for a staffing target of 22,000 Border Patrol Agents, and CBP has fallen short of that goal. At the same time, the Government Accountability Office has reported that CBP is expecting a huge surge of upcoming retirements in the next few years. I agree with the President that we need to hire thousands of additional Border Patrol agents, and provide incentives to help recruit and retain them, and I urge the Committee to provide the resources necessary to get this done.

Second, I strongly support deploying advanced technology, including unmanned aerial systems equipped with thermal imaging and AI-enabled facial recognition technology to help stop violent criminals and gang members trafficking fentanyl across the border. That is why I urge the Committee to provide funding necessary to ensure that CBP Air and Marine Operations can achieve 110,000 annual flight hours in FY26 and operate drones along the border 24 hours per day, 7 days a week. Increased aerial surveillance

and other technology should be supplemented by additional funding to help construct physical, strategic barriers where necessary along the border.

Third, I urge the Committee to continue to invest in programs that strengthen cooperation between the federal government and local law enforcement to secure the border and keep our communities safe. That includes programs like the Department of Homeland Security's Operation Stonegarden, which provides grants to state and local law enforcement to support border security operations. This program was funded at \$90 million in FY 2023 and FY2022 but was reduced by \$9 million in FY2024. I respectfully request \$110 million in funding for Operation Stonegarden in FY26.

Finally, I urge the Committee to provide dedicated resources to help reimburse our local law enforcement for costs they incur in dealing with the migrant crisis. I support the 287(g) agreement between Nassau County and ICE, because our local law enforcement officers know our communities best and can work with federal immigration authorities to ensure enforcement is targeted and properly carried out. However, without any additional funding, we are just asking our law enforcement to do more, with less. That is why I am eager to work with you and our colleagues to help provide additional funding to alleviate the burden on Nassau County and other jurisdictions that participate in the program.

Mr. Chairman, and Ranking Member, thank you for your time today and for your work on this Committee to protect our homeland, and keep our communities safe. I look forward to working with you and colleagues on both sides of the aisle to secure the

border, fix our broken asylum system, and protect legal pathways to immigration that benefit our economy and our country. Thank you, and I yield back.

Mr. AMODEI. Ms. Underwood.

Ms. UNDERWOOD. Representative Gillen, thank you so much for being here with us. I am so delighted to hear your strong commitment to advancing border security, and we really look forward to working with you throughout this appropriations cycle to make sure that we have the resources dedicated so that we can make sure that the grant dollars end up in communities like yours.

You know, as we know right now, a lot of those funding programs have been put on pause or they are redirecting funds outside of the direction of the Congress. And so we look forward to working with you to make sure that this season we are able to have a strong, effective bill that gets signed into law. Thank you.

Ms. GILLEN. Thank you so much.

Mr. AMODEI. Whoever helped you get ready for this—I mean, she sounds like an appropriator. That may not be a compliment, but—anyhow.

Ms. GILLEN. I have wonderful staff—

Mr. AMODEI. Yeah.

Ms. GILLEN [continuing]. Including my staff here, Dan Marrow.

Mr. AMODEI. Nice work. Strong testimony.

My commitment to you is this: We will keep you guys abreast of what we are doing.

Is that you, Anna Lanier?

Anna Lanier here will be in direct contact with you in terms of what we are doing, so that as we go through this process and get ready to start, you know, subcommittee mark and full committee stuff, that you know what we are doing in those areas specifically.

Ms. GILLEN. Great.

Mr. AMODEI. And so it sounds like we are in the same general neighborhood anyhow, but even if it comes to words like, “I think you guys screwed up here,” there, or whatever, you have asked for and deserve and you will have complete access to what the committee is doing in those areas so that our product hopefully is as strong as it can be in terms of those areas as well as others.

So thank you for your preparation, your effort, and your time. Excellent testimony. And—

Ms. GILLEN. Thank you.

Mr. AMODEI [continuing]. We look forward to working with you.

Ms. GILLEN. Thank you, Chairman.

Mr. AMODEI. Yep.

Ms. GILLEN. Thank you, Ranking Member.

Mr. AMODEI. Anything else, ma’am?

Ms. UNDERWOOD. I think we did it. Look at this. Member Day, what a success. Mr. Chairman, congratulations.

Mr. AMODEI. Let’s declare success and go over the hill.

Ms. GILLEN. All right. Thank you both.

Ms. UNDERWOOD. Thank you.

Mr. AMODEI. Thank you very much.

We are adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 9:24 a.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

To: House Appropriations Homeland Security Subcommittee

Date: Monday, April 7th, 2025

From: The Honorable Sylvia R. Garcia (D-TX-29)

Re: Fiscal Year 2026 Member Testimony for Homeland Security Appropriations Subcommittee
Member Day

Thank you, Mr. Chair, Ranking Member, and Committee Members for the opportunity to provide written testimony for the Homeland Security Appropriations Subcommittee Member Day.

This is an important opportunity for Members of the House of Representatives to advocate for our constituents, advocate for critical investments in the communities we represent, and help shape the appropriations process for Fiscal Year 2025.

As such, I would like to highlight key community funding projects, as well as programmatic and language requests that I will submit to the Subcommittee that would significantly impact the lives of working families, children, and seniors in the Texas 29th Congressional District.

These requests represent significant investments to support the continuation of Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) grants, bolster FEMA's response to natural disasters and extreme heat, and improve the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services agency.

First, I am requesting the highest amount of funding for FEMA's Emergency Management Performance Grant Program (EMPG). This grant is a key source of funding to assist state, local,

tribal, and territorial (SLTT) governments with planning and readiness activities associated with natural disasters, including extreme heat weather events. However, most of these funds are already spoken for—and have been for decades—limiting the ability of SLTTs to innovate, especially in rural states and localities, which are historically less likely to receive funding. Increased funding will afford states, territories, and tribes greater flexibility for innovation, serving rural and underserved populations.

Within the FEMA's EMPG program, I am also requesting the highest amount of funding to support the hiring of additional Chief Heat Officers at state and local levels. Climate change is increasing instances of extreme heat events, affecting millions of people across the world. Urban areas are affected the most, as metal and concrete retain the heat in the environment. As these events continue, it is essential to rely on professionals who can help mitigate this danger—such as Chief Heat Officers. These government officials are expressly dedicated to coordinating resilience and mitigation efforts around extreme heat events. They have the authority to coordinate and task across government agencies and departments and are empowered to develop and enforce a heat action plan.

I also request the highest amount of funding to conduct national exercises on extreme heat events. Extreme heat is becoming the highest cause of death related to weather. As extreme heat persists, it is essential to prepare our communities with adequate planning and education to ensure their safety. Conducting exercises can help identify vulnerable populations, find heat-resilient facilities, and coordinate logistics that can ensure a streamlined supply of food, water, and cool air to people.

Next, I am requesting the highest amount of funding to continue supporting the Building Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) program within FEMA. The BRIC program provides billions of dollars to prepare communities that are vulnerable to natural disasters. The BRIC program helps communities improve their preparedness for hurricanes, flooding, and wildfires by funding projects that upgraded power stations, wastewater facilities, and earthquake-resilient buildings. The frequency of natural disasters makes the BRIC program more essential than ever for the United States. The recent cancellation of the BRIC program would put our communities at risk of future natural disasters. Several communities across the United States need the assistance of the BRIC program. As lawmakers, we must ensure that FEMA can ensure the safety of our communities.

Lastly, I am requesting the highest amount of funding to support the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS). For several years, the United States has welcomed immigrants from around the world. Many of these immigrants come to the United States seeking refuge from their war-torn country, and others come to provide a better future for their families. USCIS plays a critical role in maintaining the efficiency of America's immigration system. Specifically, USCIS is responsible for processing applications for visas, green cards, asylum, and naturalization processes. The rise in immigration due to global instability and humanitarian crises placed additional strains on USCIS, resulting in longer processing times and growing backlogs. This effectively leaves families, employers, and vulnerable individuals in limbo.

Funding USCIS would help the agency address the current lengthy backlog and processing time to ensure that the applications of several immigrants are properly reviewed. Furthermore, the funds

would ensure that USCIS can complete their transition to electronic filing and processing. In addition, the funds would improve the application processing of several refugee and asylum seekers who must wait for a long time to receive a reply from USCIS.

In addition, the funds would help USCIS's efforts to provide for the necessary humanitarian needs at the border while ensuring that Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officers focus on their mission. Many migrant children in CBP custody have suffered severe harm and trauma by the time they make it to the United States. Given their unique vulnerabilities, these children require developmentally appropriate care by experts specially trained in pediatric, psychological, and physical care.

Furthermore, the funds would support USCIS's Citizenship Education and Immigrant Integration Grant (CIGP) Program. This program has been part of a multifaceted effort to provide citizenship preparation resources, support, and information to immigrants and immigrant-serving institutions. The program has helped more than 300,000 lawful permanent residents (LPRs) prepare for U.S. citizenship. Unfortunately, even after important investments in citizenship preparation resources, CIGP currently serves only a fraction of eligible immigrants and immigrant-serving institutions. Funding for CIGP would not only support immigrant-serving institutions but also increase capacity for additional qualified legal service providers that would assist with the naturalization application and process. This effort would allow USCIS to adjudicate applications more efficiently and reduce casework backlogs.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit my written testimony. I look forward to working with all the Members of the Subcommittee in advancing these priorities that are important not only to my district, but working families, children, and taxpayers across our great nation.

Jeff Van Drew (NJ-02)
Homeland Security Appropriations
Subcommittee Testimony April 9, 2025

Good Morning Chairman Amodei and Ranking Member Underwood. Thank you for providing an opportunity to testify before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Homeland Security for Fiscal Year 2026.

My top priority is securing \$130 million in funding for the U.S. Coast Guard Training Center Cape May's Multipurpose Indoor Training Facility. This project is essential to the Coast Guard's objective of increasing the Training Center's throughput by 25%, from 4,000 to 5,000 recruits a year. That will make a huge difference for our national security.

This project is the cornerstone of the Coast Guard Training Center recapitalization plan. Funds will be used to design and build an integrated, state-of-the-art indoor training facility. This 67,000 square foot structure will include a 17,000 nautical square foot seamanship training facility, recreation and physical fitness facilities including an indoor track, firefighting training facilities, classrooms, and a graduation ceremony space.

This project addresses major shortcomings. The Coast Guard is currently losing 41% of training time due to inclement weather. These disruptions affect seamanship training and physical fitness training especially. The seamanship facilities are not currently able to accommodate a full 120-person recruit company, even on a good-weather day. The firefighting facilities are nearing the end of their useful life. The physical fitness facilities are inadequate and injury prone. The fitness spaces are also used for graduation ceremonies, which are often over capacity.

The proposed multipurpose training facility will integrate many capabilities into a

single state-of-the-art asset that will undoubtedly be the pride of the Coast Guard. The integrated facility will include new seamanship training, firefighting training, fitness center with indoor tracks, and classrooms. These spaces will also allow larger graduations.

Each capability will be able to fit at least a full recruit company, and the overall maximum capacity for large gatherings will increase from 600 to 1000 people. It will simultaneously address the operational and safety issues related to inclement weather and insufficient space.

This project will vastly improve the quality of training of the thousands of Coast Guard recruits that go through TRACEN every year. It will significantly increase our annual Coast Guard recruitment. This is an essential national security investment that our Nation must advance in this fiscal cycle.

There are other investments that must be made at the training center, including further investments in the barracks facilities. But now the indoor training facility is by far the most important capital need at U.S. Coast Guard Training Center Cape May. I request the committee provide the full amount of \$130 million so that the Coast Guard may proceed with design and build.

Community Project Funding – I also will be resubmitting two community projects funding requests, both through the pre-disaster mitigation accounts. One is for **Wildwood Crest Flood Mitigation**, which will construct an innovative flood control network in the back bays of Wildwood Crest. The second is for **Port Republic Flood Mitigation**, which will repair the dangerous and inadequate dam structure in Port Republic. I will be providing more specific details to committee staff. I thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

Congressman Gabe Amo (RI-01) Testimony for the Record

Subcommittee on Homeland Security

April 9, 2025

Chairman Mark Amodei and Ranking Member Lauren Underwood, thank you for inviting me to share my thoughts as the committee works on the Fiscal Year 2026 Homeland Security Appropriations Act.

I strongly urge you to maintain robust funding for our homeland security grant programs. As you know, the Department of Homeland Security has halted disbursements of various grants, including those implemented by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Freezing these disbursements has created chaos and uncertainty for programs that keep our citizens safe. These programs support first responders with training and equipment, help secure at-risk nonprofits, provide emergency prevention and mitigation services, and assist with rescue efforts after catastrophic disasters. I urge you to invest in these essential programs so our communities can stay safe.

Specifically, I request that you continue to provide:

- **At least \$500 million for the Nonprofit Security Grant Program (NSGP)** – These grants fund physical security enhancements as well as emergency preparedness training for at-risk faith-based and nonprofit institutions.
- **At least \$405 million (from FY25) Assistance to Firefighters Grants (AFG) Program** – These grants help firefighters and other first responders

obtain needed equipment, protective gear, emergency vehicles, and training.

- **At least \$405 million (from FY25) Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Grant Program** – This funding for fire departments helps recruit and retain trained firefighters.
- **Robust funding for the U.S. Fire Administration** – An entity of FEMA, the U.S. Fire Administration works to support fire departments and emergency services to prepare for, prevent, and mitigate responses to hazards.
- **Robust funding for the National Fire Academy (NFA)** – An entity of the U.S. Fire Administration, the NFA provides free and specialized training courses for firefighters and other emergency services professionals.
- **At least \$56 million for the Urban Search and Rescue (US&R) Response System** – These expert task forces can be deployed by FEMA to a disaster area to provide search and rescue assistance following a disaster.

Additionally, Congress has a responsibility to ensure that appropriated funds are spent by the Executive Branch in the manner required by statute. The Trump administration's ongoing pauses to federal funding run counter to the funding requirements in the past appropriations bills. Therefore, it is essential the Fiscal Year 2026 Homeland Security Appropriations bill include language mandating that the appropriated funds be spent as required by statute and the Constitution.

Thank you for considering these priorities in the Fiscal Year 2026 Homeland Security Appropriations Act which are critical to the residents I represent in Rhode Island's First Congressional District.

DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY APPROPRIATIONS FOR 2026

TUESDAY, MAY 6, 2025.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

WITNESS

HON. KRISTI NOEM, SECRETARY, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

Mr. AMODEI. The Subcommittee on Homeland Security will come to order. I am pleased to be joined by the subcommittee's distinguished Ranking Member, the gentlelady from Illinois—when she gets here.

Welcome, Secretary Noem.

Last week, the Office of Management and Budget released the skinny Fiscal Year 2026 Budget Request. While we await the details of the full request, the focus of the hearing, this hearing, will be a discussion of the Department's priorities for the upcoming fiscal year.

First, I want to address a few housekeeping items. Members will have differences of opinions on how the Department should be run and what policies should be in place, especially as it relates to border security and immigration enforcement. However, I am asking members on both sides to keep today's discussion civil and focused on the work we need to do as appropriators to fund the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

By the way, I guess I would be remiss if I didn't welcome the Chair of the full subcommittee, who is here.

But now I would like to turn to my colleague Ms. Underwood for her opening remarks.

OPENING REMARKS—RANKING MEMBER UNDERWOOD

Ms. UNDERWOOD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this hearing to conduct oversight of the Department of Homeland Security.

And welcome, Secretary Noem, to your first hearing here.

On this subcommittee, our job is to keep our country safe and to safeguard our values as Americans. Last year, working together, we secured consistent increases for border operations funding and helped bring encounters at the southern border down and seizures of narcotics, including fentanyl up through critical investments at our ports of entry, CBP officers, and increases to Homeland Security Investigations.

Normally, I would focus my questions for the Secretary on the details of the President's budget, but I would be remiss if I did not mention that we are holding today's hearing without an actual budget for Fiscal Year 2026 to review. And the skinny budget released last Friday is filled more with politics than facts.

So let me begin with some facts that I think are important for the American people to hear about what you are doing with their money. Because 3 months into this Administration, America's more vulnerable than it has ever been. Our Homeland is not secure.

In the first 100 days of the Trump Administration, you have slashed our Nation's cyber defenses, letting Russia, China, and Iran steal our top secrets and Americans' personal data. You have wasted hundreds of millions of dollars on illegal detention and deportation, including some people who are trying to come into this country, quote, "the legal way" within our broken immigration system, despite, by the Department's own admission, southern border encounters already at record lows; sent emails to U.S. citizens that read, "Please leave the United States immediately"; removed U.S. citizens' children, including those with terminal illnesses; raised the price tag of future disasters by cutting billions from projects across the country to make our infrastructure more resilient, including a bipartisan program that was enacted into law by President Trump himself; and taken millions of dollars away from the DHS workforce and operations for what appears to be taxpayer-funded political advertisements.

During our Member Day hearing last month, I also raised the unacceptable and unconstitutional decisions this Administration has been making with the funds provided to the Department by this committee, including the sudden and unexplained termination of DHS grants to States, universities, and nonprofit organizations.

The cancellation of the Disaster Relief Fund's Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) Program, violations of the Fifth Amendment right to due process enshrined in the Constitution and reductions in force of parts of the Department's Office of Civil Rights and Civil Liberties, Office of Citizenship and Immigration Services Ombudsman, as well as the Office of the Immigration Detention Ombudsman.

I also have serious concerns with the Administration's decision to revoke the bargaining rights for DHS personnel with an exception made for unions that have vocally supported the President in the name of efficiency and combating waste, fraud, and abuse, but without any evidence to back those claims.

Mr. Chairman, these are programs that Congress debated and ultimately funded. Our role as appropriators is to write the law and responsibly fund the government, and the executive's role is to execute that funding pursuant to the law. It is no secret the administration has ramped up immigration detention beyond what Congress funded. Increases to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) at the expense of other national security programs and initiatives that Members on both sides of the aisle voted for undermines our core work and congressional intent. DHS is cashing checks it simply doesn't have in hopes that reconciliation passes and will cover their shortfall. That is an incredibly risky strategy

and only sets up essential national security agencies for failure or violations of Antideficiency Act.

How does that secure the Homeland? There have been bipartisan discussions surrounding the organizational structure of the Department of Homeland Security. Whether it is making the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) an independent agency or transferring Components like the U.S. Coast Guard or the U.S. Secret Service to other Departments. We will never shy away from discussions about how we can improve the Department that, absent an inactive law from Congress making changes to the Department's organizational structure, this subcommittee will continue to conduct oversight over all existing DHS Components and provide for their continued funding in the Homeland Security bill.

I know that there are many areas in this bill that share bipartisan support, and I am so proud of the relationship that Chairman Amodei and I have built. I know that, even in this highly partisan environment, he and I are committed to welcoming ideas for how to improve the Department and better manage the Department.

But the Trump Administration's actions have pushed us to unprecedented and to a sobering moment.

America is a democracy, not a dictatorship. In a democracy, we are organized around the rule of law. And those laws are based on a core set of constitutional rights. You may be familiar with the Bill of Rights. It includes the Fourth Amendment, which forbids unreasonable searches and seizures; the Fifth Amendment, which guarantees the right to due process; and the Sixth Amendment, which protects the right to a fair trial and legal counsel.

As we endeavor to secure the Homeland, we must continue to protect and defend the Constitution of the United States. That is not a secondary mission.

Let me conclude and take a moment to recognize the dedication and commitment of the women and men of the Department of Homeland Security, who carry out the Department's vital mission to help protect the American people from a wide range of threats.

Again, I want to thank the Chairman for holding this hearing. Mr. Chairman, I look forward to working with you on a bill that reflects those shared priorities, keeps our country safe, and upholds our shared values as Americans. I yield back.

Mr. AMODEI. Thank you, Madam Ranking Member.

The Chair now recognizes the Chairman of the full Appropriations Committee, Mr. Cole, for his opening comments.

OPENING REMARKS: CHAIRMAN COLE

The Chairman. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. Before I go to my prepared remarks, I just want to say what a pleasure it is to see our former colleague here and how proud we all are of you—your success as a Governor, your success in this Administration in its opening days. I don't know anybody that has been more effective in less time than you have and the men and women that you lead and clearly lead so effectively. So I just want to thank you so much, honestly, as a friend and a colleague but somebody that really appreciates the public service that you have already rendered this country in multiple, multiple ways. We are proud of you.

Thank you, again, Mr. Chairman, and Ranking Member Underwood, thank you.

Madam Secretary, we really appreciate you being here today.

Let me begin by commending the brave men and women of this Department who stand on the front lines each day to protect the homeland. Under new leadership, they have been empowered to fully carry out that fundamental duty.

From day one, the Trump Administration has made clear that protecting America is not negotiable. And this White House has taken immediate action to strengthen the security of our Nation's borders and enforce existing immigration laws.

The contrast from the Biden Administration could not be clearer. Policies that allowed an open and lawless border have ended, and the message is clear: illegal migrants, including violent offenders, will no longer have an open invitation. Criminal cartels and traffickers will no longer be enriched. And the safety of our citizens will no longer be put last.

In less than a hundred days, we have watched our southern border go from chaos to closed. The decisive actions and commonsense measures of the Trump Administration have led to a historic turnaround driving illegal crossings to record lows and ensuring removal of dangerous criminals.

President Trump and his Cabinet, particularly, you, Madam Secretary, have delivered on the promise to have the most secure border in modern American history, and our Nation is safer as a result. It is imperative that investments for effective border security enforcement are strong. And I am dedicated to working with the Members on this Committee and across the Capitol to ensure the Department is properly resourced.

Secondly, I appreciate that the DHS mission doesn't end here. Living in Tornado Alley, Oklahomans are no strangers to devastation caused by natural disasters. Even now, a slow-moving storm and record-breaking rainfall is responsible for significant flooding in my state that has already resulted in the loss of life and a state of emergency declaration by our Governor.

When state and local resources are exhausted, we do rely on FEMA to bring additional capabilities that save residents, remove debris, and help our fellow citizens rebuild. This isn't a partisan issue. It is one that concerns states regardless of politics.

I look forward to a discussion on ways to reform FEMA and improve federal emergency response capability while eliminating inefficiencies and wasteful spending. Programs like the Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities or BRIC grants have provided many communities with the means to mitigate the next disaster before it strikes, potentially saving taxpayers even more money. I support efforts like these that give local communities, including those in rural Oklahoma, the resources to prevent further destruction.

Madam Secretary, I know we are both committed to ensuring safer and stronger communities across our Nation. And thank you again for being here today. I look forward to your testimony. More importantly, just thank you for the job you are doing for the American people. The results have been spectacular and immediate, beyond I think what any of us could have expected. And that is in

no small measure to the manner in which you have led. So we are grateful for your service.

With that, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. AMODEI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The Chair wishes to put on the record that I have received no requests from anybody in the Administration—the minority or the majority—that I do an opening statement. Accordingly, I will not be doing one. Not unusual.

Madam Secretary, without objection, your full written statement will be entered into the record. With that in mind, we would ask you to summarize your opening statement to within 5 minutes.

But the gentlelady from South Dakota, the floor is yours.

OPENING STATEMENT—SECRETARY NOEM

Secretary NOEM. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Ranking Member Underwood, and Members of this Committee, for giving me the honor of being before you today.

As a former colleague of the House of Representatives, I recognize the important role that you play in oversight over the Federal Government and our agencies. And I am grateful for the chance to come here and talk about all of the good work that the Department of Homeland Security has done, the employees, and the people who walk along side us each and every day to follow through on what President Trump has committed to the American people. And that is to make America safe again.

Today, I am very proud of the accomplishments that we have tackled. And we have delivered the most secure border in American history. At the southern border, we have obtained near total control with daily encounters now down over 93 percent since President Trump took office. March saw the lowest number of border encounters in recorded history in the history of the United States of America at just under 7,200. That means that there were days where we had less than 200 encounters, which, again, is the lowest in recorded history.

Under the previous Administration, U.S. Customs and Border Protection was at times encountering over 15,000 people a day, which mean efforts were diverted into processing and facilitating an invasion of our country instead of doing their jobs. This astonishing turnaround is a testament to the resolve and to the leadership of President Trump to make America safe again. And it is accomplished by the incredible work of the people of the Department.

The secure border has allowed the Border Patrol to zero in on cartels and their illicit activity. And President Trump has designated six different cartels and criminal gangs as foreign terrorist organizations. This has allowed us to use a whole-of-government approach to go after drug traffickers, human traffickers. And, in March, fentanyl traffic at the border fell by 54 percent compared to the previous year.

We are enforcing immigration laws to identify, to arrest, detain, and to remove dangerous illegal criminals out of our country. And we are prioritizing individuals that have committed crimes in our communities. Aliens are a threat to our public safety and to our national security, and especially those that are affiliated with terrorist organizations, such as Tren de Aragua and MS-13. This in-

cludes those who have final orders of removal in place are a priority for this Administration. We have also worked with President Trump on his America First trade agenda through the U.S. Customs and Border Protection actions and enforcement.

The Biden Administration hollowed out America's industrial base, and they shipped our jobs overseas. Well, President Trump is changing all of that. His actions are proving that tariffs are an effective negotiating tool to address trade imbalances. And, in fact, companies are reshoring jobs here in America every single day.

The Department of Homeland Security is reforming and rethinking Federal improvement and our involvement in emergency response and management as well. President Trump recently announced new members to the FEMA Review Council, which I will co-chair with the Secretary of Defense. Now this council is charged with fixing a broken system. And it is a system that will, when fixed, return power to State emergency management directors to make America safe again. And we are also taking steps to defend the Nation's transportation systems, which are vulnerable to targets and attacks.

The Transportation Security Administration TSA is responsible for ensuring the security of all of those that travel. In a single day, there are over 45,000 flights, and nearly 2.9 million people travel on our airlines and are passengers in the United States. We are fulfilling our obligation to enforce and to launch REAL ID in order to follow federal law that was enacted nearly 20 years ago. Validated IDs will secure travel, safeguard our elections, and make sure that we never experience and work to prevent a 9/11 attack again.

As technology advances, so do the threats to our Nation. And that is why cybersecurity is so crucial to our future. Countries like Communist China have both the capability and the intent to infiltrate and to potentially disrupt our critical infrastructure systems.

The Department of Homeland Security is responsible for 10 of the 16 different critical infrastructures. And, despite these threats, the Biden Administration instead used the cybersecurity and infrastructure security agency (CISA) to play politics and to police speech. Under President Trump, we have been working to get CISA back on mission and to make sure that they are focused on cybersecurity.

Now, the Coast Guard is the only branch of our military and our U.S. Armed Forces that is under the umbrella of the Department of Homeland Security, and it has many different missions with specialized needs going forward.

As we secure our southern border, the cartels have shifted their activities to our maritime borders. And the Coast Guard has already surpassed Fiscal Year 2024 in the amount of drug interdiction numbers that they have encountered. And they have also excelled at search and rescue and illegal interdiction.

Since the Coast Guard is facing our greatest readiness crisis right now since World War II, we need to act to make sure they have the tools, training, and equipment that they need to be the tip of the spear in our national security response. We have a plan to reinvigorate the Coast Guard, and this is a critical component of our Homeland Security mission.

Now, with Force Design 2028, which some of you may have heard about already, we will transform the Coast Guard into a more agile, capable, and a responsive force. And, since I took office, one of the responsibilities that I have is reforming the Secret Service in the wake of the July 13 assassination attempt on President Trump. We have reassessed the Secret Service's needs. We have refocused recruitment away from what the Biden administration was prioritizing with diversity, equality, and inclusion (DEI) objectives and, instead, bring people in with experience and with training that align with the Agency's zero-fail mission.

These accomplishments are just a portion, Mr. Chairman, of what the Department has achieved in just a hundred days. And, with the support of this committee, we will be able to make the Department more efficient and more effective into the future.

I want to thank Chairman Cole for his kind words. It has truly been one of my greatest honors to have been able to serve with him in his advocacy for the people in his district—but not just for the people in his district but the history to which he has represented the people of the United States. He is a true statesman that works across the aisle to come up with solutions.

I am so grateful for all of you, but I am grateful for the people that work every day in the Department of Homeland Security. They are examples of bravery and dedication, patriotism and perseverance. It is our responsibility to give them the resources that they need to meet the challenges of the day, to give them the training and equipment that they rely on to be successful for the American people. But we also have to remain accountable to the American taxpayer and make sure that we are spending money appropriately and where it should be spent to serve them the best.

So thank you for the opportunity to be here today. And, with that, Mr. Chairman, I look forward to your questions.

[The information follows:]



Testimony of

KRISTI NOEM

SECRETARY

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

Before

UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

SUBCOMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

On

“Oversight Hearing – U.S. Department of Homeland Security”

Tuesday, May 6, 2025

Washington, DC

Introduction

Chairman Amodei, Ranking Member Underwood, and distinguished Members of this Committee:

It is a privilege to present to you the Department of Homeland Security's critical work to keep our nation safe and share our priorities for Fiscal Year 2026. In the first 100 days under President Trump's leadership, the Department has established the most secure border in our nation's history, kept dangerous criminals out of America, and deported illegal aliens who threaten our people. We will not stop until there are none left.

The President's FY 2026 Budget request for DHS will establish a firm foundation upon which to surge resources in support of the Administration's border security and immigration enforcement objectives. The Administration has requested over \$175 billion for DHS as part of the reconciliation bill currently under consideration in Congress. Reconciliation would empower the DHS to implement the President's mass removal campaign and secure the border.

As we work to implement President Trump's policies, I am determined to lead the over 270,000 men and women of the Department in the most efficient and effective way possible to safeguard our nation. While the Department can seem disparate—23 component offices with broad ranging missions sets—we are united in our resolve to protect the homeland and stand ready to defend these United States against threats by air, land, sea or cyberspace. From clearing the streets of terrorists to deploying to disaster-ridden communities to help after a natural disaster, the brave men and women serving on our front lines must be fully equipped to perform their duty to keep America safe and secure.

Under President Trump's leadership, I am committed to securing our nation's borders, enforcing immigration laws, securing cyberspace and critical infrastructure, enabling transportation and trade, combating exploitation, and ensuring American resilience and preparedness.

U.S. Customs and Border Protection, for instance, is now focused on critical border security front line operations instead of serving as a pass-through agency processing illegal aliens into our country like under the last administration. The message has gotten out worldwide that America is now enforcing our laws and the border is closed. The issuing of Notices to Appear, Withdrawals, and Expedited Removals decreased by 99 percent from January 21 through April 15 of 2025, compared to the same timeframe in Fiscal Year 2024. There has been a 93 percent decrease in inadmissibility encounters throughout the southwest border since January 21, 2025. We have also seen a 94 percent decrease in encounters of unaccompanied alien children.

America is witnessing a historic decrease in illicit drug traffic due to the Trump Administration's policy changes, swift repatriation efforts, aggressive prosecutorial initiatives, and significant messaging campaigns. In March of 2025, illicit fentanyl traffic at the southwest border fell by 54 percent compared to March of 2024. The U.S. Coast Guard and U.S. Customs and Border

Protection have seized nearly 232,000 pounds of fentanyl and other illicit drugs-stopping them from ever reaching American communities.

There has been a significant decline in the number of illegal aliens coming over the border, as many are turning back before they even get here. March of 2025 saw the lowest number of border encounters in recorded history, at just under 7,200. On February 25, 2025, Border Patrol encountered a record low daily total of less than 160 illegal aliens at the southern border. Overall, border encounters have fallen by 99 percent, and there has been a 95 percent decrease in the number of estimated gotaways – the biggest threat to public safety¹.

Following the Trump Administration’s designation of six cartels and two transnational gangs as Foreign Terrorist Organizations, we have been able to use a whole-of-government approach to crack down on these vicious groups, treating them like the terrorists they are.

Under President Trump, DHS is committed to complete construction of the southern border wall, a commonsense solution to securing our border. Currently, we have more than 85 miles of new border barrier, 17 miles of which are waterborne barriers, in various stages of construction and planning. We are also working with DoD and the Texas National Guard to deploy temporary barriers to include concertina wire, razor wire, chain link fencing, and additional barriers. This is in addition to the Administration’s request for billions of additional dollars for border barrier like new primary and secondary border wall systems, waterborne barrier systems, and technology where wall is currently installed but lacks the completed systems needed.

We are committed to enforcing the United States’ immigration laws. Our priority is to identify, arrest, detain, and remove dangerous criminal illegal aliens and those with final orders of removal. We are giving illegal aliens the opportunity to voluntarily self-deport using the CBP Home app, in response and contrast to the Biden Administration’s utilization of the CBP One app, which allowed more than 1 million aliens to illegally enter the United States. Self-deportation is the best option for illegal aliens, while preserving our law enforcement resources. It saves our taxpayer dollars and allows us to focus valuable resources on dangerous criminal illegal aliens.

Our enforcement efforts prioritize illegal aliens who have committed crimes and are a threat to public safety and national security, including aliens who are affiliated with Foreign Terrorist Organizations like Tren de Aragua and MS-13. However, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement has the authority to deport anyone in the country here illegally, which is a crime.

The number of suspected gang members U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement has arrested since January 20, 2025, represents a 105 percent increase compared to the same period in Fiscal Year 2024. The number of known or suspected terrorists we have arrested from January

¹ A gotaway is an illegal entry that was detected and that all efforts to continue tracking the entry have stopped.

20 to mid-April this year represents a 700 percent increase compared to the same period in Fiscal Year 2024.²

We have secured the border, decreased drug trafficking, and arrested criminal illegal aliens, but we need Congress to secure investments in staffing, infrastructure, technology, information sharing, and public-private partnerships to ensure these successes continue.

Trade Enforcement

Our Homeland Security mission includes safeguarding the American worker. We are committed to enforcing President Trump's America First Trade Agenda. On April 2, 2025, Liberation Day, President Trump announced new tariffs on 185 countries to address the national emergency posed by the large and persistent goods trade deficits that is driven by the absence of reciprocity in our trade relationships. That day, he hammered home that the days of unilateral American disarmament in trade policy are over.

As U.S. Customs and Border Protection enforces tariffs on imports and Homeland Security Investigations performs criminal investigations on illicit trade, travel, and finance, the Department of Homeland Security stands on the frontlines of America's economic defense. We have been open and receptive to reasonable overtures made by our trading partners, who have come to the negotiating table. This has proven what we have known all along: tariffs work.

We've implemented automated systems, targeted inspections, and field guidance in the hands of frontline officers to improve tariff collections. In Antidumping and Countervailing Duty revenue collection, we secured \$1.1 billion in additional revenue as a result of targeted reviews of 774 shipments that were detected as discrepant for Antidumping and Countervailing Duty payment. Since January 20, 2025, we have collected over \$30 billion in tariffs. With a 99 percent collection rate, U.S. Customs and Border Protection has consistently shown to be an extremely reliable enforcement arm in collecting tariff revenue.

We play a critical role in enforcing U.S. laws prohibiting imports of goods made with forced labor, which is a form of human trafficking. In enforcing these laws to include the Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act, we keep these illicit goods from entry into our markets, preventing malign actors from profiting off human rights abuses and undermining U.S. businesses and their workers with unfairly traded goods. Eliminating goods made with forced labor from global supply chains makes legitimate supply chains more resilient and allows American made products to compete on a level playing field.

² ICE arrest data is current through April 16, 2025.

Transportation Security Administration

Keeping American travelers safe requires that we safeguard our inherently open and vulnerable transportation systems. The Transportation Security Administration is directly responsible for ensuring Americans can travel within the U.S. safely and securely. In a single day, the U.S. sees over 45,000 flights and 2.9 million airline passengers cross more than 29 million miles of air space.³ In addition to mention maritime and land-based public transport.

We will do what other administrations failed to do – follow the law and implement the REAL ID program to stop domestic air travel of illegal aliens, criminals, and foreign nationals using fraudulent identification. This law was passed over 20 years ago, and 81% percent of American travelers are already REAL ID compliant. We will ensure compliance and security. REAL ID was created to help ensure that no horrific attack like the one on 9/11 will ever happen again. To prepare for implementation beginning May 7, 2025, we have been working closely with States to ensure compliance and urge every American to obtain a REAL ID for smoother and more secure air travel.

The Transportation Security Administration continues to improve efficiency while enhancing security through growth of the TSA PreCheck program, accounting for over one-third of all travel volume. Over 21 million travelers have seen how easy it is to enroll in TSA PreCheck, with reduced pricing for enrollments and renewals, making it more affordable for all eligible U.S. travelers.

Cybersecurity and Combatting Cyber Crime

In the hyper-connected 21st century, securing the homeland now includes protecting our cyber infrastructure. The threat environment to our homeland through cyberspace now changes by the nanosecond, and we must keep up. The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency proactively addresses a rapidly evolving cyber threat environment and thwarts cyber-attacks from foreign adversaries and cyber criminals. These attacks continue to grow in frequency, scope, and severity, as demonstrated by the recent cyber espionage campaign by the threat actor known as Salt Typhoon, which resulted in the compromise of private communications of several high-profile individuals from adversaries and criminals who seek to do us harm.

China has repeatedly demonstrated its capability and intent to infiltrate and potentially disrupt critical systems within the United States. Chinese-affiliated actors have compromised multiple communications, energy, transportation, and water critical infrastructure organizations across the country. Every day, the Department of Homeland Security works with government, industry, and international partners to prevent, detect, and respond to cyber intrusions to U.S. critical infrastructure.

³ [Air Traffic By The Numbers | Federal Aviation Administration](#)

We have dramatically increased our cyber operations to prevent threats and address vulnerabilities within the Federal Government. This effort goes hand-in-hand with our critical infrastructure efforts, as China and other nation states are often leveraging the same tools and tactics to weaken and spy on the U.S. Our unique authorities and positioning between the Intelligence Community, law enforcement, industry, and international partners is critical to understanding cyber adversary intent and applying critical protections domestically.

U.S. Secret Service

Since the beginning of the Trump Administration, the men and women of the U.S. Secret Service have ensured the safety of protectees during more than 1,400 official visits and successfully secured the safety of visiting world leaders at over 270 protective visits. At the same time, Secret Service investigative operations have recovered hundreds of millions of dollars and bolstered the law enforcement partnerships that enable these types of operations. In the first two months of this Administration, the agency's criminal and cyber investigations have enabled the Secret Service to return over \$226,000,000 in forfeited assets to American people who were victims of crimes and incurred financial loss.

Secret Service manpower needs have been reassessed in the wake of the July 13, 2024, assassination attempt on President Trump. We have since implemented targeted recruiting for experience and training that is transferable to specialty teams. We also created a talent pipeline with military organizations whose missions align with the Secret Service's technical requirements and have advanced digital platforms to enhance job candidate outreach and engagement.

Secret Service has executed two nationwide advertising campaigns to increase recruitment, which are already yielding incredible recruiting results. Under President Trump, the Secret Service has had a 194 percent increase in applications since this period last year and have hired the most Special Agents in the agency's history. We are on track to almost double last year's law enforcement hiring.

U.S. Coast Guard

The U.S. Coast Guard is a central pillar of American national security and power projection. As a military service and law enforcement organization, the Coast Guard faces a unique set of operational challenges and opportunities, necessitating a unique posture for rapid response to a variety of evolving missions with a modernized fleet that supports these requirements. As the Arctic increases in importance to American security, the Coast Guard is uniquely positioned as the only military service possessing the fleet necessary to break polar ice and maintain sea lanes.

The Coast Guard is facing the greatest readiness crisis since World War II. We are acting now through Force Design 2028 to restore capability and deter emerging threats. With Congress' help,

we will transform the Coast Guard and deliver a future-ready force. President Trump and I are fully aligned in their directive: reinvigorate the Coast Guard or risk strategic failure.

Focused on four campaigns – Force Design 2028 will reform the U.S. Coast Guard’s personnel, organization, contracting and acquisition, and technology. Increased national demand for our Coast Guard requires a larger, more capable military workforce. This campaign will improve training systems, boost access to medical care, and modernize both the Coast Guard Reserve and the civilian management system.

As global security threats, technological advancements, and operational demands continue to evolve, the Coast Guard must adapt its organizational construct and internal decision-making and governance processes to remain relevant, effective, and responsive. We will develop a high velocity acquisition and contracting system to rapidly deliver the assets the Service needs to fulfill its commitment to the American people. The Coast Guard will accelerate the adoption of secure, state-of-the-market technologies to enhance data sharing, situational awareness, and operational effectiveness.

The great men and women of our U.S. Coast Guard are excited to support the efforts of the Administration to secure our border and strengthen our economy. The Coast Guard continues to conduct search and rescue missions, and to detect, deter, and interdict illegal migration, drug smuggling, and other malign activity before it reaches our shores.

Emergency Management and Disaster Response

The Federal Government’s role in emergency management and response needs to be both reformed and reimagined. Under President Trump’s leadership, we are reorienting the Federal Emergency Management agency’s responsibilities and eliminate the dysfunction of the current agency as it exists today. We need to enable preparedness against global and dynamic threats and hazards, while providing expeditious, effective, and impartial response to disasters. This alignment seeks to empower State and local jurisdictions and individuals to engage more actively in national resilience and preparedness.

Just four days after returning to office, President Trump directed aggressive actions to expedite response and recovery in areas recently devastated by hurricanes or wildfires. Within those first four days, President Trump was on the ground meeting survivors in North Carolina who endured Hurricane Helene and in California who endured preventable wildfires around Los Angeles County. Within days of the President’s visit, we registered 2,600 families in North Carolina that desperately needed help and reduced by nearly 80 percent the number of assistance cases stuck in bureaucratic red tape. While taxpayer dollars continue to subsidize the majority of disaster response and recovery costs, we are identifying ways to preserve these tax dollars or use them more responsibly.

The American people need action –not red tape, and the President continues to identify opportunities to enhance efficiency while expediting response to ongoing natural disasters, including severe weather, tornadoes, flooding, or wildfires across multiple States. Thanks to President Trump’s approval of Stafford Act declarations, we provided over \$58 million dollars in assistance directly to survivors and enabled rapid deployment of Incident Management Assistance Teams, emergency communication support, and Urban Search and Rescue teams, bolstering State and local disaster response operations.

President Trump remains committed to saving American lives and livelihoods, and we will institute commonsense approaches to achieve national security and resilience while empowering state and local governments and the strongest of all –American citizens.

Conclusion

As the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security, I can proudly say that with honor and integrity, we will safeguard the American people, our homeland, and our values. The achievements I share are just a few examples of what we have accomplished in just 100 days. With a job as big as the one the men and women of this Department take on every day, it is impossible to list all of the things that its 23 components are doing to protect the American people and improve operations to deliver a more responsive and efficient government.

I am grateful to the men and women of the Department of Homeland Security who exude bravery, dedication, and patriotism as they carry out their sworn duties allowing the American people to sleep better at night. We dutifully ask Congress to continue providing our men and women with the resources that they need to do their jobs.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today. I look forward to your questions.

Mr. AMODEI. Thank you, Madam Secretary. I am going to hold off on my questions until the members have got done to see if some of them are duplicative.

And so, Ms. Underwood, the floor is yours for questions.

CONSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY

Ms. UNDERWOOD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

This weekend, the President made the remarkable statement that he, quote, doesn't know whether he has to uphold the Constitution.

You, however, have taken a different position, both in your confirmation hearing and when you took the oath of office. You said that you were committed to complying with the Constitution. Do you still stand by that statement?

Secretary NOEM. Absolutely. I believe President Trump was—

Ms. UNDERWOOD. Excellent. Let's start with Article I, which gives Congress and only Congress the power of the purse. No money shall be drawn from the Treasury but in consequence of appropriations made by law. But this Administration is freezing, terminating, and even clawing back federal grants and awards that were already signed into law. These are taxpayer dollars that were appropriated by Congress for the specific purposes that we laid out.

So, Secretary, let me ask you: Do you believe the Administration has the authority to subvert appropriations law to freeze and terminate congressional funding?

Secretary NOEM. The administration and the Department of Homeland Security used our authorities that we have to evaluate every grant that was in front of us and meet statutory requirements but also to make sure that they were being spent appropriately. So what we did—

Ms. UNDERWOOD. So, of course, the President is within his authority—

Secretary NOEM. And to make sure—

Ms. UNDERWOOD. Ma'am, this is my time. Thank you so much. Of course, the President is within his authorities to drive policy decisions within the bounds of federal law and the Constitution. But that is not what you have been doing.

What I am asking is whether you believe that you have the authority to ignore appropriations law. Do you believe that the Constitution gives the executive branch unilateral authority to withhold funds appropriated by the legislative branch.

Secretary NOEM. We have evaluated grants to make sure if they are being spent appropriately, and work that is underway and was authorized has continued. Other grants that have not been started and have not been authorized or obligated, we have reevaluated. And I think you are talking specifically about grants, potentially within FEMA, that were non-disaster-related grants.

Ms. UNDERWOOD. I am talking broadly, ma'am.

Secretary NOEM. Those grants are being—

Ms. UNDERWOOD. And Article II does not give the executive the authority to withhold funds, period. And multiple courts have weighed in to agree. Multiple courts have ruled in agreement. Congress controls the power of the purse.

Secretary NOEM. We are not here—

Ms. UNDERWOOD. That is fact. That is not a question. That is a fact.

And so if the President disagrees with certain spending, Congress passed the Impoundment Act to create a legal process to seek rescissions. And we expect him to follow the law. This Administration is not just ignoring the constitutional power of the People's elected Representatives; it is also violating the fundamental right of individuals.

Do you believe that the Constitution grants everyone in our country the right to due process, including noncitizens?

Secretary NOEM. The Administration has the authority to——

Ms. UNDERWOOD. Ma'am, I am looking for a yes or no—question. Yes or no? Do you believe the Constitution——

Secretary NOEM. We have not conducted——

Ms. UNDERWOOD. Reclaiming my time. Mr. Chairman?

Mr. AMODEI. The time is yours.

Ms. UNDERWOOD. Okay. Secretary Noem, I am just looking for a yes or no here. Do you believe the Constitution guarantees due process to everyone in America?

Secretary NOEM. Due process is exactly what this Congress lays out.

Ms. UNDERWOOD. Yes or no?

Secretary NOEM. It is—due process——

Ms. UNDERWOOD. Okay. Ma'am, I'll take that as a no. Excuse me, I am trying—ma'am, I am trying to ascertain your understanding of the law as it applies to your Department. And you as its leader should be able to give us a yes-or-no answer because judge after judge has ruled that the law is not being followed.

Do you believe that the U.S. Government has the authority to deport American citizens?

Secretary NOEM. No, and we are not——

Ms. UNDERWOOD. Okay great.

Secretary NOEM [continuing]. Deporting U.S. citizens.

Ms. UNDERWOOD. Okay. Great. I am happy to hear that you do not believe that the law gives you that authority because the Federal Government has no authority under U.S. laws to deport any American citizen, and, as I know everyone viewing this hearing today knows, that several American citizens have been deported to date.

Secretary NOEM. No, that is not true.

Ms. UNDERWOOD. Secretary Noem, that is not a question.

Secretary Noem, that oath that we both swore before taking office was to protect and defend the Constitution of the United States—not the President, not a political party, the Constitution. And that is what we are going to keep doing here at the Appropriations Committee. Thank you. I yield back.

Mr. AMODEI. The Chair now recognizes the gentleman from Oklahoma, the Chairman of the Appropriations Committee, for questions. Mr. Cole, the floor is yours.

DETENTION AND REMOVAL

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Madam Secretary, again, great to have you here. In your service, you have prioritized detaining and removing literally the worst of

the worst in our country that have arrived here illegally, including those who have committed violent crimes against our fellow Americans. I think we are all in support of that effort.

Can you tell us—and you may not have this information—I am just curious how many illegal citizens have committed serious offenses against our own citizens?

Secretary NOEM. Yeah, there are tens of thousands of illegal aliens that have committed crimes against individuals in this country. And we have worked very hard to make sure that those are the individuals that we are going after and deporting as soon as possible.

There have been over 160,000 repatriations targeting these individuals, returning them back to their home countries and facing consequences and legal action because of that. President Trump has told us to make these individuals a priority and to also make sure that we are identifying those with final removal orders to remove. And, overwhelmingly, the American people have supported this.

One of the things that I would say that was unfortunate was the Biden Administration closed an office within ICE that helped us better track criminal activity by illegal aliens and to give resources to those families to let them be informed on, when cases were in court, if the perpetrator of their crime was going to be released, if they were in custody. The VOICE Office within ICE was opened under the first Trump Administration, and President Biden close that office, I believe, to cover up exactly how many crimes were committed against people in this country by illegal aliens.

We have reopened that office. We believe that that data would be helpful. And they are continuing to work with people who have been victims of illegal crimes and illegal alien activity in this country. But those data and that information, I don't think we will ever truly know how much crime was committed and how many were committed against American citizens because the Biden Administration refused to track those victims and those crimes as they were perpetuated.

The CHAIRMAN. Well, I commend you for reopening the office. Let me just, as a quick followup, ask you. Again, this may be information that is not readily available. And I am curious if we know how many illegal aliens have actually currently have final orders for removal from an immigration judge, and we just haven't had an opportunity to, you know, execute those orders?

Secretary NOEM. Well, that is the challenge that we have is that we have literally millions of illegal aliens that have overstayed or are here illegally that need to have a final order as issued. We have hundreds of thousands that are being—going out and targeted and being removed from this country today that ICE is working every day in coordination with all other areas of our government to get them removed from our country. But we do need—have a backlog because this was not a priority under the last Administration. So we have up to a million cases that are backlogged that need to be processed by an immigration judge in an immigration court in order to make sure that we are having those final removal orders, and that we can take action on them.

REAL ID

The CHAIRMAN. Now, I want to commend you. You mentioned in your statement about pushing on the REAL ID Act. I know that is not an easy thing to do. And I am sure, when the day comes, we are about 30 percent of the people, as I understand it, that travel still don't have that documentation. Amongst the things you have to consider are what kinds of ideas are acceptable. I would encourage you, as you do, that to look carefully at Tribal IDs. I know certainly, in South Dakota, but in Oklahoma, we have a lot of our citizens that use those as primary sources. And, clearly, they need to meet the standards you lay out. But whatever you could do in that regard to both keep those folks informed and work with them so they get into compliance would be very appreciated.

Secretary NOEM. We do—tomorrow is the day that REAL ID will finally be enforced. It has been a law that has been in place for over 20 years. Eighty-one percent of the travelers that travel by airline in the United States today are already compliant. So they have IDs that already—they will be able to use just like they normally always have been. We will be honoring passports, other federally recognized IDs. Tribal IDs will be recognized. So thank you, Mr. Chairman, for that.

And what will happen tomorrow is folks will come through the line and will be issued their ID and show it. If it is not compliant, they may be diverted to a different line, have an extra step, but people will be allowed to fly.

We recognize that this is a security issue. Congress has had many, many years to reevaluate it and decide if they wanted to change the law or to stop it. And the Biden Administration chose that it should go into place on May 7, and we intend to follow the law.

So we will make sure that it is as seamless as possible and that travelers will get to stay on their intended itinerary. But we are telling people that this law will be enforced, and it will allow us to know individuals in this country, who they are and that they are authorized to travel.

BRIC GRANT'S

The CHAIRMAN. I am about out of time. So I am going to mention a quick thing and then probably submit it for the record so you have time to respond.

I am very interested in the BRIC grants, which again we did pass when President Trump was there. I would love to be updated as you figure out how you are going to reform those. But they have been extraordinary valuable. I think the communities—and like all grants they can be used correctly or misused. I don't have any problem with evaluating things. Particularly, in the last frenzied days of any administration, sometimes a lot of stuff slips through that you wish hadn't in retrospect.

But please know that there is strong bipartisan support for that program, as there was when President Trump, you know, introduced it and worked with—signed it into law back in 2018.

So I would love to know more when you can about your plans to reform those grants but hopefully keep them operating.

Secretary NOEM. You bet. Thank you.

The CHAIRMAN. Thank you very much.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. AMODEI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I recognize the gentleman from Texas. Mr. Cuellar, the floor is yours.

Mr. CUELLAR. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

LAREDO BORDER AND PORT SECURITY

Madam Secretary, it is good to see you. I was going to show you, but I think the rules don't allow me to show you just something. Because I just want to talk about basics. But hopefully we can sit down later, and I can show you what I am referring to.

I want to talk about some of the basics. I live at the border. I have lived all my life there. I want to talk to you about River Rotes. I want to talk to you about carrizo cane, technology that is needed, aerostats—and cameras are not working in some infrastructure. Basics that are needed for border security.

My area, Laredo, it is the largest inland port, bigger than L.A., bigger than any other place in the country. We get 18,000 trailers a day. We are about to expand from 8 lanes to 18, plus another bridge. We got two of them, two rail bridge. So trade is very important to us.

But, when we talk about illegal crossings, we have been the second lowest crossing in the country, and we still are up there. I think right now the latest numbers, 30 people maybe, 40 people a day coming through my area, which is almost nothing. So thank you for that.

River Rotes. The River Rotes, that I wish I could show this just to show you, but the River Rotes go this way. Let's say the river is here. The River Rotes—I mean, the rotes go this way. So Border Patrol can go here, but they can't go across. So what we are asking is for River Rotes to follow the river itself. And I think that will be a big investment, a good investment that we need. So one is a River Rotes.

The other thing is the carrizo cane. The carrizo cane—I know you got some folks from—people that are very familiar. But the carrizo cane will grow almost the size of this. And it is not good for Border Patrol. I think Tony Gonzales and folks that are from the border understand. You know, we ought to get rid of that carrizo cane on our river, but get the Mexicans to do that. I will show you the maps, and I know you have been out there. But it shows you the carrizo cane is on both sides. If we can clear that up, get the Mexicans to do that, that would be good for Border Patrol.

So River Rotes, carrizo cane. Technology, in my area, only one-third of the cameras are working. And, if you ask some of the other Border Patrol, they are not working. Basically, they are using the RVS, which is an old model. They are trying to get the ASD towers, were more—better to use or whatever technology. But this old technology is like going to a car, and you fix it, and they keep coming. The same thing they are doing right now; they keep bringing folks that were coming in to fix it up. One-third of the cameras are working. Two-thirds are not working. That is not right. Procure-

ment process needs to be better so they can move faster to buy that technology.

And, finally, there are dead spots. Even now, with the modern technology, Border Patrol can be in certain areas and dangerous areas, and they don't have the technology and radio that is working.

Aerostats, the military has a lot of them in surplus. The problem is, in the past, past, past administrations, they have hired contractors that, you know, Homeland was paying too much money. So we need to look at those aerostats that are available from the military surplus itself.

Border Patrol, I think, right now, we got 19,327. We funded 22,000. And we need to hire more. All told, the men and women in blue were at 26,334. We are still below the money, so we need to hire those officers.

So those are some of the things that—and I know I gave you a whole bunch of things—but there are the basic things that are important to Border Patrol.

Last point, as we try to hire new Border Patrol, I know the reconciliation has something that will affect them that has to do with Social Security supplement. I have talked to a lot of Border Patrol agents, and right now they are crunching the numbers: "Do I retire at the age of 52 or go out 57? What is going to happen with that supplemental?" So instead of focusing on the border, they are human beings, and they are focusing on that. I know that is another committee. But those are the basics that I know I don't have enough time, but I would love to follow up with you and your folks on.

Secretary NOEM. Absolutely. I will certainly do that, Congressman. And I want to thank you for talking about the technology needs and the investments that we need at the border in order for these agents to truly do their job and do it with excellence.

I will tell you that recruitment of CBP is up over 50 percent. So, as we have allowed them to go back and do their jobs, we have had more and more interest in people, more applications coming in, and I think that is a fantastic trend that, as people talk about how discouraging it was over the last several years, by them not having their hands tied, that now that they actually get to secure the border and work for the American people, that they are recruiting more and more help to be assisting along the way. Thank you. And we will follow up on the rest of these conversations.

Mr. CUELLAR. Thank you. I yield.

Mr. AMODEI. Thank you, Mr. Cuellar.

The gentleman from Florida, Mr. Rutherford, the floor is yours for questions.

287(G) PROGRAM

Mr. RUTHERFORD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And,

Secretary Noem, I have to say—it has already been mentioned a couple times—the amazing speed with which you all turned around the southern border. And I know that a big piece of that was your endorsement of the 287(g) program. You know, I fought with Secretary Mayorkas, your predecessor, to try expand that program. He refused to do it. Even though his Acting ICE Secretary said in a

hearing before this committee that 287(g) was the best thing since sliced bread because it protected officers and the community. And so I want to thank you for that.

You all came in, and overnight it seems added 300 agencies to the 287(g) program. That is an amazing accomplishment. And I think that is a reason for a lot of the success that you have seen there. In fact, my own agency, where I had started 287(g) back 15 years ago, we were part of Operation Tidal Wave and just great success in Florida with all the sheriffs and the chiefs coming together: 1,120 illegal aliens taken off the street, 63 percent of which, Madam Secretary, actually had criminal arrests and convictions prior to that.

So two questions about 287(g): Number one, what can we do to help you get more agencies involved? And, number two, what do you need from the standpoint of technology? You just mentioned the technology. What can we do to help you get those agencies trained and the technology that they need to get into those databases so that we can actually run these 287(g) programs, which are better than sliced bread——

Secretary NOEM. Yeah.

Mr. RUTHERFORD [continuing]. At top efficiency?

Secretary NOEM. Yeah, well, thank you, Congressman, for talking about this program because it is incredibly important to our strategy of having the enforcement that we need to really address the criminal activities that we have seen out on the ground. 287(g) is a partnership between our officers, ICE, CBP, that brings everybody to the table. It is an agreement that is signed with local law enforcement or State law enforcement that allows us to operate in a task force model to go out and make sure that we are having more bodies, more people, a part and backup of these operations on the ground going after dangerous criminals.

We have today, I believe, 598 agreements out there across the country, over 6,200 different officers that that has brought alongside of us to work alongside of us to protect our communities. And they have done incredible work.

You referenced what was done in Florida in Operation Tidal Wave. Those 1,120 dangerous criminals are off the streets now today. And they are people that were here illegally, broke our laws, and now they are having the opportunity to face consequences and to go home to their home countries.

I would say that we are looking for more agreements like that across the country and will continue to build on it. What Florida did by having a whole-of-state approach is what we want to build out and model in every other State as well. And we have had partnerships from the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives (ATF), Department of Justice (DOJ), the State highway patrols. We have had obviously ICE, U.S. Marshals, CBP, local law enforcement, cities, county sheriffs, people who have committed their whole life to upholding the law, and having the scales of justice apply equally to everybody are a part of this team. And it has been wonderful to see people jump in and be a part of it to make sure that we have not just the authorities that we need to go out there and to work but also to have the local knowledge and people in their community

that really want to be a part of the solution and making them safe again.

RECALCITRANT COUNTRIES

Mr. RUTHERFORD. Well, we look forward to continuing that. I want to ask very quickly—I don't have much time left—but I want to ask about these recalcitrant countries that—you know, we have 1.2 million deportation orders out there that are waiting for these countries to take them back.

I was shocked, under the Biden Administration, that Secretary Mayorkas claimed he couldn't send them home because they wouldn't take them. But now I understand that, now that you are in charge of DHS and the Trump Administration and the State Department working together, that there has been some change in that. And can you talk a little bit about how that is going?

Secretary NOEM. Yeah, so the Department of State is the entity that negotiates travel documents and the ability to repatriate people back to their home countries. And they have done phenomenal work in giving us the opportunity to do that.

There are some countries that are still refusing to take their own citizens. And I would reiterate that every single country has a responsibility to take their citizens back. And that has always been something that has been an international commonsense agreement that has existed. Many of the countries today, even as they are working with us, aren't taking their citizens home very quickly. They may limit us to one or two planes a week. Mexico had a limitation on us for quite a period of time, even a limitation on what kind of aircraft we could use.

And so working with those countries is a diplomatic job that consistently needs to be stayed on top of. So many times, while we have people that are brought into our facilities and ready to be returned home, getting those travel documents and the permission to return them to their countries is incredibly important.

Mr. RUTHERFORD. Thank you very much for getting them out.

I see my time has expired. I yield back.

Mr. AMODEI. The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Hawaii.

Mr. Case, the floor is yours for questions.

Mr. CASE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Madam Secretary, I appreciate your rosy report on the Department of Homeland Security. I have a different view on where the Department is today and where you—and by “you,” I am going to refer to the President, the Administration, and you as Secretary—are taking it, as reflected into your actions and budgets, not just in your words. But I think it is important that we start by some points of agreement.

First of all, I think you would agree—I hope you would agree that 270- or so thousand members of the DHS workforce—if that is where the figure is now, and we——

Secretary NOEM. Yeah, we just posted it.

Mr. RUTHERFORD [continuing]. We would like to find out what the figure is at some point spread across your 22 departments. They all deserve our praise for their dedication for serving our country every day. And they also deserve our professional respect.

I think we would also agree that the efforts to legally reduce illegal immigration and illegal drugs over the past couple of years across our borders are paying off and should be continued. So I agree with you on those things.

FISCAL YEAR 2026 BUDGET

Overall, however, and focusing on the budget—because this is the Appropriations Committee—what little you have shown us thus far of your Fiscal Year 2026 budget. It looks like you are definitely overfunding some efforts, mainly for messaging purposes, at the expense of some other efforts that are really critical, such as cybersecurity, disaster prevention and mitigation, transportation security.

And you are using budget gimmicks to misdirect and conceal your intent. On your budget gimmicks, you claim a 65 percent increase in DHS' overall budget, targeted at the border, drugs, and the Coast Guard. But all of that increase or more is loaded into your separate reconciliation bill. You have essentially, for purposes of this committee, level-funded DHS and loaded all of the extra money into reconciliation.

First of all, aside from completely sidetracking this particular committee, which is supposed to be doing that funding, you should know, if you don't already, that this is not an appropriate use of reconciliation. It is intended to maintain the illusion of responsible budgeting. It certainly is holding needed DHS increases, which many of us would support in other situations, hostage to your overall reconciliation plan of continuing tax cuts for billionaires and slashes in critical programs like Medicaid.

So the question I have—and it is a rhetorical question since I am making a statement here—is, why don't you just come into the committee and say it is straight, "We need a 65 percent or more increase in DHS to actually protect our national security"?

Your increase is also heavily skewed to the border, generally, and CBP specifically—some 20 billion, all of it in reconciliation. And nobody disputes the CBP needs help. I have been to the border three times myself. I have spent time with the agents. And certainly personnel and equipment costs are necessary.

But a question that I have from an oversight perspective is, if you are claiming success at the border without spending all of this extra money which you are there for, which you are now asking for, do we need to do that at the expense of other programs, and I mean the nonpersonnel stuff?

You are also loading half of your reconciliation increase into the U.S. Coast Guard, \$21 billion. And everybody agrees that the Coast Guard needs help. It is critical in the Indo-Pacific, where you have already actually withdrawn from the Indo-Pacific, which I think was a tremendous mistake. Why don't you just ask for that in your base budget rather than trying to hide and extort it in reconciliation?

Your budget also ignores and even attacks other critical functions of DHS, the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, or CISA, which I think we would all agree is critical to direct national defense but also civilian infrastructure, which is the most exposed right now, and the reliance of foreign countries on our expertise to help them with their cybersecurity, and yet you propose

to reduce CISA by 20 percent in your base budget. And I don't think that you can claim that it is all somehow Biden misdirection.

FEMA, another example of misbudgeting, in my view, you, first of all, collectively have directed very incorrect and outright mean criticism at FEMA, which is just undeserved by the FEMA. And it is time to put the political campaign behind us and acknowledge that FEMA is doing a good job.

They did an outstanding job in Maui. And I sat with them in Maui when they were trying their very best and did their very best while their President was criticizing their work. We don't need this, and further we certainly need to fund them adequately.

Transportation Security Administration, the same basic observation, a critical agency which you have not adequately funded.

So, fundamentally—my time is running short. Obviously, this is a critical agency. It deserves to be led responsibly and transparently. It deserved to be budgeted transparently and responsibly. And, until we get there, I do not feel safer under your leadership at DHS.

Secretary NOEM. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman. If I can respond quickly. Thank you for your comments. And I would like to respond to you. If I don't have time today, I will in writing or in answers to other questions.

But we have focused on making sure that we are going forward with a Department of Homeland Security that focuses on what our mission is, and that is to secure America's Homeland and to do that while being accountable to taxpayers.

So every single component I have, 23 different departments, we have gone back to their mission statements on what they were intended to do and put them back on mission.

So, in CISA, instead of doing censorship, misinformation, disinformation, they are back to securing our critical infrastructure. TSA, all we are doing there in the reductions is reducing empty full-time equivalents (FTE) that were never filled or don't have Transportation Security Officers (TSO) in them now and asking for TSA officials to do work that they were intended to do and not to do unskilled technical work by monitoring exit lanes.

So I could go through all of them that you mentioned. FEMA as well, the President has indicated he wants to eliminate FEMA as it exists today and to have states have more control over their emergency management response. He wants to empower local governments and support them in how they respond to their people. So thank you for identifying what you are concerned about, and I look forward to having conversations with you so that I can answer the questions that you have and reassure you that this Department of Homeland Security is accountable, but it is also going to fulfill the mission for which it was created after the horrific events of 9/11. Thank you.

Mr. AMODEI. Thank you. The floor belongs to the gentleman from Washington State, Mr. Newhouse, for your questions.

IMMIGRANT WORK VISAS AND PAROLE PROCESS

Mr. NEWHOUSE. Well, I thank the gentleman from Nevada and the lady from Illinois as well.

Thank you, Secretary Noem, for being here to discuss. This is our agency, the Homeland Security.

I want to focus on a couple of things. I have spent a lot of time working on—and, when you were in the House, you did too, and I want to thank you for that. That has to do with agricultural labor. I was very delighted to hear President Trump in early April make several, I thought, were very important comments about the agricultural labor force, as well as some of the, what you call, hotel, entertainment kind of workers, whose current workforce certainly lack a legal status. I am talking about H-2A and H-2B.

He proposed a plan to allow undocumented agricultural workers an opportunity to touch back with the ability to come back to the United States with achieving a legal status. I can't overstate the importance, as you know, of agricultural labor force to produce food and fiber in our country.

So I wondered, if you could, provide any kind of an update that you could share with us on the discussions there at the Cabinet level. But, also, in that same vein, a major cattle producer and processor in Washington and Idaho recently shared some of their concerns with the—I believe it is called the termination of parole process for Cubans, Haitians, Venezuelans, and Nicaraguans. Apparently, the workforce there—up to 15 percent of their workforce is made up of people from those countries.

And so I wanted to give you an opportunity to either speak with us about that or follow up with my staff later.

Secretary NOEM. Thank you so much for talking about the important programs that we have to facilitate a workforce in this country that have contributed so much in certain industries and different areas going forward.

President Trump has been very clear that he believes that people that are here illegally need to go home. He has backed that up with his policies that you don't get to come into this country and have the law applied to some people and not others, that the scales of justice should apply equally to everyone, and that individuals who are here illegally need to face consequences for that and go home.

I think one of the reasons that you have heard us recently talk about self-deportation is because our preference is that the individuals who are here illegally self-deport. We will facilitate purchasing their plane ticket and a stipend once they return to their home country. So they have the opportunity to do exactly what you talked about by a touchback. They have the opportunity to come back to America then and to do it the right way. They will face the consequences for breaking our laws originally. But we want everybody to have the opportunity to be a part of the American Dream. If individuals who are here illegally wait until we have to go out and find them, arrest them, deport them, spend up to \$17,000 by getting them back home to their home countries, President Trump has been very clear: They will never get the chance to come back.

So I would encourage everyone in this country that is in these industries to proactively tell the story. That is why you have seen us aggressively carrying the message to people that the United States is now following the law, that we are now securing our borders, and that we are getting people out of our country who have

broken our laws. But, if you do work with us, that you will have the opportunity to come back.

Those visa programs are ones that we continue to have discussions with the Administration with many of you on. There is some latitude given to the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security. But I will remind you that Congress consistently maintains the authority to determine how many are issued in this country and if they are issued into the future. And so we always will follow that as that goes forward.

And, as you talk about the importance of what the work we do at the Department of Homeland Security, I know that working with these folks that are in these different industries, that we will continue to have those conversations with all of you.

When we talk about different policies that the Department is following, many of times it is Congress—it is the House of Representatives and Senate who sets the policy that we are following and gives us the authority to do and take the actions that we are.

Mr. NEWHOUSE. Very good. I look forward to working with you on that. And, just in the short amount of time I have left, the Harbor Maintenance Tax.

Secretary NOEM. Yes.

HARBOR MAINTENANCE TAX

Mr. NEWHOUSE. A lot of countries are essentially bypassing that, bringing goods, importing them to the United States through either Canada or Mexico and foregoing to pay any kind of tax that way. And, you know, certainly we have a lot of illicit drugs coming through. We need to get a handle on that as well. In your testimony, you highlighted the importance of the CBP enforcing tariffs on imports. This seems to me to be an appropriate place to put a lot of time and energy. I am going to—just so you know, I will have some legislation here shortly addressing this kind of stuff. But I wanted to draw your attention to a lot of work, the efforts that other countries are going through to avoid paying that tax.

Secretary NOEM. Yeah, thank you for pointing that out and for talking about it in this Committee Hearing because I think a lot of people don't realize that that is one of the factors that we are dealing with, too, at the Federal level is having other countries unfairly manipulate their processes to avoid paying what is due to the American people.

Since President Trump has been in office, CBP has made 21 different enforcement actions on tariffs. So they have put in place that many adjustments and changes to other countries as goods and services come into this country and have done it with excellence. I will remind everybody that CBP is the oldest law enforcement agency in the country and has collected tariffs for many, many, many years. And so they have adjusted and done well with President Trump negotiating with these countries to finally treat our consumers and our country fairly when we have been so mistreated in trade agreements in the past.

Mr. NEWHOUSE. Well, thank you.

Secretary NOEM. But that is a part of the discussion that the President continues to have with these other entities that have manipulated that.

Mr. NEWHOUSE. I very much appreciate it. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. AMODEI. The gentlelady from Texas. The floor is yours for questions.

DEPORTATIONS

Ms. ESCOBAR. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Madam Ranking Member.

Secretary Noem, thanks for being here. I appreciate it.

I represent—I am proud to represent my border community of El Paso, Texas. Born and raised there. Third generation. Border resident. My kids are fourth generation. I have a lot of questions, and I have structured them in a way that they should be a simple yes or no. So I am going to ask that you please respond as simply as possible so I can get through as many of my questions as possible.

My first question is, when the Department of Homeland Security makes a mistake, will you assure this committee and Congress that DHS, that you will acknowledge that mistake, take accountability for it, and rectify it, most importantly?

Secretary NOEM. Yes.

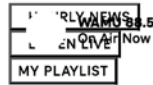
Ms. ESCOBAR. Thank you. And I will follow back up with that question. I want to first—one of the first topics I want to talk about is what Donald Trump, President Trump said recently: Homegrown are next.

And I would like to enter into the record an NPR story, “‘Homegrown are next’: Trump hopes to deport and jail U.S. citizens abroad.”

[The information follows:]

11/21/25, 4:27 PM

Trump hopes to deport and jail U.S. citizens abroad : NPR



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'Homegrowns are next': Trump hopes to deport and jail U.S. citizens abroad

APRIL 16, 2025 · 11:56 AM ET

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Brian Mann

4-Minute Listen

PLAYLIST

TRANSCRIPT



President Trump met with President Nayib Bukele of El Salvador in the Oval Office on April 14. Trump and Bukele are exploring a proposal to send U.S. citizens to be held in Salvadoran prisons, a move that critics describe as dangerous and unconstitutional.

Win McNamee/Getty Images

<https://www.npr.org/2025/04/16/nx-s1-5366178/trump-deport-jail-u-s-citizens-homegrowns-el-salvador>

1/20

11/21/25, 4:27 PM

Trump hopes to deport and jail U.S. citizens abroad : NPR

President Trump says his administration is actively exploring a proposal to detain U.S. citizens and send them to prisons in El Salvador. Speaking Monday, minutes before a press briefing alongside El Salvador's president, Nayib Bukele, Trump could be heard embracing the concept.

"The homegrown are next, the homegrown. You've got to build about five more places," Trump said to Bukele, an apparent reference to prison space that would be needed in El Salvador to house U.S. citizens.

El Salvador is already holding hundreds of people in a maximum-security prison. They were flown from the U.S. in recent weeks after being detained for allegedly lacking legal status or having gang affiliations.

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Critics say many of those individuals were deported with limited or no due process, some in defiance of court orders by U.S. judges.

Responding to Trump on Monday, Bukele suggested his country is prepared to incarcerate U.S. citizens. "Yeah, we've got space," El Salvador's president said.

The proposal has drawn condemnation from some legal scholars, who said it would represent an unprecedented encroachment on the civil liberties of U.S. citizens.

LAW

11/21/25, 4:27 PM

Trump hopes to deport and jail U.S. citizens abroad : NPR



Supreme Court backs Trump in controversial deportations case

"It's obviously unconstitutional, obviously illegal. There's no authority in any U.S. law to deport U.S. citizens and certainly not to imprison them in a foreign country," said David Bier of the Cato Institute, a libertarian think tank based in Washington, D.C.

"The problem of course is [Trump] already has illegally deported hundreds of people by just not giving the courts an opportunity to stop him," Bier added. "I think that's the real fear, now that he is going to try to evade judicial review of deportations of U.S. citizens."



Alleged gang members seen in a cell at the Terrorism Confinement Center (CECOT) in Tecoluca, El Salvador, on April 4. Following the deportation of hundreds of migrants from the United States to El Salvador, it became a resource for the Trump administration in implementing its immigration policy. The Trump administration is now weighing whether it's legally possible to send U.S. citizens there.

Anadolu/Getty Images

11/21/25, 4:27 PM

Trump hopes to deport and jail U.S. citizens abroad : NPR

Not everyone is voicing opposition to Trump's concept of detaining U.S. citizens and sending them overseas.

NPR contacted three prominent conservative legal scholars. All declined to comment. We also contacted three conservative legal think tanks. One declined to comment; two others didn't respond.

NPR could also find no instances of Republican lawmakers in the House or Senate commenting on the idea.

"I'd do it in a heartbeat"

This isn't the first time this idea has come up since Trump took office. Posting on the social media platform X in February, El Salvador's Bukele said his country has "offered the United States of America the opportunity to outsource part of its prison system."

"We are willing to take in only convicted criminals (including convicted U.S. citizens) into our mega-prison (CECOT) in exchange for a fee," Bukele added, posting photographs of densely packed inmates crouched with hands on their heads.

His post was amplified the same day by Trump ally Elon Musk, who described the proposal as a "Great idea!!" Speaking about the concept in February, Trump said: "I'd do it in a heartbeat."

<https://www.npr.org/2025/04/16/nx-e1-5366178/trump-deport-jail-u-s-citizens-homegrown-el-salvador>

4/20

11/21/25, 4:27 PM

Trump hopes to deport and jail U.S. citizens abroad : NPR

Asked again about the idea during Monday's news conference, Trump confirmed he has ordered U.S. Attorney General Pam Bondi to explore whether it might be a legal and cost-effective way to house American prisoners.

Trump also suggested his administration might send U.S. citizens to be incarcerated in other countries.

"We have others we're negotiating with, too," he said. "If it's a homegrown criminal, I have no problem. Now, we're studying the laws right now — Pam is studying. If we can do that, it's good."

"Any of us is vulnerable to basically being kidnapped"

During an appearance Monday on the Fox News show *Jesse Watters Primetime*, Bondi seemed to embrace it: "These are Americans who he [President Trump] is saying who have committed the most heinous crimes in our country, and crime is going to decrease dramatically."

But numerous legal scholars contacted by NPR described the policy idea as crossing a bright line in the U.S. government's treatment of American citizens.

"One hopes that the administration won't go down this path," said Lauren-Brooke Eisen, senior director of the Justice Program at the Brennan Center, a progressive think tank at New York University. "There are profound ethical questions that this

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Trump hopes to deport and jail U.S. citizens abroad : NPR

move would signal about how we treat human beings who are U.S. citizens. Courts will almost certainly prevent this from happening."



A man is detained by federal agents as Immigration and Customs Enforcement conducted raids on Feb. 24. The Trump administration has cracked down on migrants, including many in the U.S. with legal status. Now the White House is exploring a proposal to deport U.S. citizens to be incarcerated overseas.

Houston Chronicle/Hearst Newspapers/Getty Images

In a letter sent to the U.S. State Department in February, Sen. Jon Ossoff, a Democrat from Georgia, urged the Trump administration to abandon the idea.

Ossoff cited horrendous living conditions documented in Salvadoran prisons, where inmates often lack access to proper sanitation, temperature control and even potable water.

"It would be a moral and legal travesty for the U.S. government to subject anyone to such conditions," Ossoff wrote.



POLITICS

4 things to know about the Alien Enemies Act and Trump's efforts to use it

<https://www.npr.org/2025/04/16/nx-s1-5366178/trump-deport-jail-u-s-citizens-homegrown-el-salvador>

6/20

11/21/25, 4:27 PM

Trump hopes to deport and jail U.S. citizens abroad : NPR

The American Civil Liberties Union has also described the concept as a legal nonstarter:

"You may not deport a U.S. citizen, period," ACLU attorney Lee Gelernt, deputy director of the group's Immigrants' Rights Project, told NPR in February. "The courts have not allowed that, and they would not allow it."

But during a White House press briefing April 8, spokeswoman Karoline Leavitt signaled that the proposal is still being seriously considered: "The president has discussed this idea quite a few times publicly. He's also discussed it privately," she said.

"The president has said if it's legal, right? If there is a legal pathway to do that, he's not sure, we are not sure — it's an idea he has simply floated and has discussed," Leavitt added.

Some judges and legal scholars are clearly concerned that the Trump administration could move forward with the proposal despite legal and constitutional barriers.

In a statement released last week, Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor said the Trump administration's legal arguments around deportation cases suggest the U.S. government already believes it "could deport and incarcerate any person, including U.S. citizens, without legal consequence, so long as it does so before a court can intervene."

11/21/25, 4:27 PM

Trump hopes to deport and jail U.S. citizens abroad : NPR

Speaking last week with NPR, Laurence Tribe, a Harvard University professor emeritus of constitutional law, offered a similar warning:

"What that means is that literally any of us, whether we are from Venezuela or were born in the United States, whether we are immigrants or not, whether we are citizens or not, any of us is vulnerable to basically being kidnapped by masked agents of the United States government who don't tell us why they're picking us up, perhaps never to be seen again because we're located somewhere in a dungeon, a prison cell, rotting away, whether it's in El Salvador or anywhere else in the world," Tribe said.

The U.S. has incarcerated American citizens before in ways that challenged or violated constitutional norms, including the incarceration of roughly 80,000 Japanese Americans during World War II and the detention of Jose Padilla, a U.S. citizen held for years without trial after being accused of terrorism activities in 2002.

But some legal experts interviewed for this story said deporting Americans to serve prison time in foreign countries would cross an alarming new line, effectively stripping U.S. citizens of constitutional and legal protections.

They also noted that this proposal is being explored by U.S. officials at a time when Trump has talked about "locking up" his political enemies, directing the Justice Department and the FBI to open criminal probes into opponents' activities.

"We will expose and very much expose their egregious crimes and severe misconduct," Trump said during a speech March 14 at the Justice Department's headquarters.

Bier, of the Cato Institute, said he has been "shocked" by the lack of pushback against Trump's proposal from Republican leaders and members of the conservative legal movement.

"It's unthinkable. It's absolutely a reflection of where Donald Trump has taken the Republican Party and the conservative movement," he said.

Correction

April 16, 2025

11/21/25, 4:27 PM

Trump hopes to deport and jail U.S. citizens abroad : NPR

An earlier version of this story misspelled the show *Jesse Watters Primetime* as *Jessie Waters Primetime*. And an earlier version incorrectly said roughly 120,000 Japanese Americans were incarcerated during World War II. In fact, of the roughly 120,000 people of Japanese ancestry incarcerated, two-thirds, or roughly 80,000, were U.S. citizens.

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Ms. ESCOBAR. I was happy to hear your acknowledgement that that is not legal. But I am curious about the reconciliation bill and the appropriations requests that you will make. Will any of the funding, either through appropriations or through reconciliation, be used to execute this policy idea of Donald Trump's, which is deporting U.S. citizens abroad?

Secretary NOEM. We have not deported any U.S. citizens. And so that false media narrative that you have heard out there just simply isn't true. What I would say—

Ms. ESCOBAR. Well, so my question, yes or no. Will the reconciliation for appropriations be used for that?

Secretary NOEM. The reconciliation dollars that we have asked for is \$175 billion that will be focused and is reflected in—

Ms. ESCOBAR. But, yes or no, will it be used for those purposes which Donald Trump acknowledged—a policy—

Secretary NOEM. We are going to continue to use the authorities and follow the Constitution to implement policies to make sure—

Ms. ESCOBAR. All right. Reclaiming my time.

I would like to now focus on U.S. citizens who were deported. In fact, three children so far, likely more children, one of those children with cancer who was deported without the medication necessary to address that child's cancer. Again, a U.S. citizen. The lawyers have said that they were not given—the family was not given an opportunity to make plans for the kids, and so they were deported—essentially, again, U.S. citizens.

I have a question about the forms that ICE is supposed to utilize when engaging with parents who have children who—the parents who are being deported and the U.S. citizen children. One of those forms is ICE form 71-078 or the caregiver designation at arrest form.

Were any of the individuals who were deported who had U.S. citizen children deported with them, were they given an opportunity to sign that form?

Secretary NOEM. The specific cases that you are referencing with these children, it was the parents' choice to take the children with them.

Ms. ESCOBAR. And did ICE—

Secretary NOEM. Which it is followed through with the Administration to keep families together.

Ms. ESCOBAR [continuing]. Follow through on the policy?

SECRETARY NOEM [continuing]. That is why we have—

Ms. ESCOBAR. Ma'am, ma'am, reclaiming my time. I told you at the top of this—ma'am, reclaiming my time. I said that the questions are really simple. Yes or no, was that form used in any each those cases?

Secretary NOEM. I will get back to you on that specific form. I don't know the number. But I do know these mothers went on the record asking for them and in the—

Ms. ESCOBAR. Reclaiming my time—

Secretary NOEM [continuing]. Reiterated they wanted to keep their children with them.

Ms. ESCOBAR. Ma'am, the second form—reclaiming my time. I would like you to avoid the filibuster so I can get to all of my questions.

Secretary NOEM. I am answering your questions—

Ms. ESCOBAR. So the second ICE form that I would like to ask you about is ICE form 71-76, which is also—it is pre-removal parental interest election form. Can you get back to me on that.

Secretary NOEM. Sure.

Ms. ESCOBAR. Were all of the parents allowed to sign that? Are the parents allowed to speak to lawyers before they are deported or to speak to their U.S. citizen spouses before they are deported.

Secretary NOEM. They are given the opportunity to—

Ms. ESCOBAR. So you can guarantee that every one of those parents—

Secretary NOEM. We followed all the normal policies and procedures of—

Ms. ESCOBAR. So they were allowed to talk to a lawyer, that is a yes?

Secretary NOEM. Every case was handled exactly as it is authorized—

Ms. ESCOBAR. That is a yes.

Secretary NOEM. Everything was handled appropriately and correctly in every single case—

Ms. ESCOBAR. But did they all get to talk to a lawyer? Okay. Reclaiming my time.

Mr. Chairman, unfortunately, I am out of time. I have a number of other questions we will get to in the next round. Thank you.

Mr. AMODEI. The gentleman from Arizona, Mr. Ciscomani, the floor is yours.

Mr. CISCOMANI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you, Secretary Noem, for being here with us today and for your testimony and your leadership—your leadership and that of all the men and women that you serve with as well in the Department of Homeland Security.

Like you, I come from a border state. And, though the northern and southern borders are vastly different, I know you understand firsthand the challenges that our communities at the border face as well as the value that they bring also to our States and our region.

The security that this Administration has been able to deliver to our southern border in such a short period of time is astounding and so well-appreciated by those who live and work in these communities. I know I hear it all the time. This is the number one feedback I get from my constituents regarding the results that we have seen from this Administration. And your leadership has played a key role in that. So thank you.

GOTAWAYS AND TECHNOLOGY

In the district that I represent, which is much of the Tucson sector of Border Patrol, we have historically seen high numbers of gotaways. I understand there have been about 65,000 gotaways this fiscal year. What resources—or what resource investment for both technology and infrastructure are you planning to make in how those will be reduced and numbers for the future? The gotaways, of course, are troubling. We have seen a lot of the reported numbers come down. But these gotaways, that is—I know it is a key issue for you as well and a focus.

So, on that—and then particularly can you speak to the technology that we will be using in these rough terrain areas, like southern Arizona, which is so different from other border areas, including my friends in Texas. When you go to Arizona, it is just broad terrain, rough, some areas hard to even build any kind of barrier wall. So technology plays a big role there. Can you speak to that?

Secretary NOEM. Yes. Thank you so much for talking about the fact that, as we have secured our border and as we have addressed the challenges and in the areas of the southern border and northern border where we saw a lot of folks crossing illegally and we have put more resources in those areas or what was necessary to really follow our federal law and keep the American people safe, we have seen that some of the traffic has pushed to other areas, maybe areas that weren't well-traveled before, and now got-aways are trying to take advantage of that.

They also have pushed heavily towards the maritime borders and out into the waters. The Coast Guard is seeing much more traffic. They are also seeing the cartel activity out there of trafficking of drugs and human beings and technologies that they are having a difficult time keeping up with.

The Coast Guard has been neglected for many, many years, and they don't have the airframe and they don't have the cutters to keep up and even to manage and maintain the horsepower needs that they have to catch and interdict some of the smuggling activities that are going on.

You referenced some of the rough terrain and what we need to do as far as CBP and investment on this border. Frankly, we are going to use the latest and greatest technology that would be available to us as far as surveillance equipment, cameras, satellite images when possible, and also the Aerostar, like Congressman Cuellar was talking about, some of those technologies in areas to help those vulnerable areas have more eyesight to truly know what is crossing there so that we can interdict it before it comes into our country.

I would talk exclusively, too, about, you know, how we have been able to diplomatically work with the country of Mexico. President Trump's strong leadership has helped Mexico be more proactive than they ever were before too. And so, in my conversations with government officials, they have indicated to me there could be as many as 500,000 to 600,000 illegals that never reached our border because, when they got to Mexico and heard that our border was closed, they turned around and went back.

So a combination of solutions is needed. You absolutely have to have a President that cares about keeping us safe—we now have that in President Trump—but also making sure that we have the people and the equipment necessary for CBP and for ICE to do their job, but then the technology, which you referenced, which is needed. We have scanners that we need at ports of entry so that we can scan our shipments, our rail, and even our airfreight. Much of that, we don't necessarily know what is coming in in containers and small packages.

Those technologies are critically important and why you see a request in increase in funding to address those challenges that simply were neglected for too long under the Biden administration.

Mr. CISCOMANI. Excellent. Thank you so much for that.

You know, you mentioned the diplomatic conversations as well. I think that is something that doesn't get enough attention—

Secretary NOEM. Right.

Mr. CISCOMANI [continuing]. Of the power of strong leadership in the White House now and the reaction of not only Mexico but the rest of Latin America on this. I think that is key. And we want to partner with Mexico and other countries on this.

AGENT MORALE AND RECRUITMENT

With the little time that I have left, do you mind just speaking of the morale of the agents and your efforts on recruiting and retention? I think that goes hand-in-hand with the technology piece as well.

Secretary NOEM. Yeah, the morale of the Department of Homeland Security agencies and departments and the employees that work there is fantastic. We have incredible numbers in recruitment, people who want to be a part of the Agency that are signing up and submitting applications.

I referenced earlier that CBP has over 50 percent—I believe it is a 54 percent—increase in recruitment. ICE, as well, is maintaining and excelling at its recruitment efforts and getting officers and people who want to be a part of the team or coming out of retirement.

The Coast Guard is at a 108-percent increase of its recruitment—people that understand the mission. And they want to be a part of the many different skill sets that the Coast Guard can bring to partnering with our military departments but also going out there and helping at the border and continuing on with their search-and-rescue mission.

And then you look at the Secret Service. Because of the recruitment efforts that we have had and putting those agents back on focusing hiring expertise and hiring experience, instead of DEI programs, the Secret Service recruitment is up almost 200 percent. The applications we have gotten have been fantastic. By telling our story and that they can be a part of an agency that protects the most powerful in the world, it truly has been inspirational.

So I believe that some of the narrative that the Democrats have used to attack the Department of Homeland Security just simply isn't true. The people that are wanting to come and work for us are inspirational, and they are true Americans.

Mr. CISCOMANI. Thank you for that.

Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. AMODEI. The gentleman from Texas, Mr. Gonzales, the floor is yours for questions.

Mr. GONZALES. Thank you, Chairman.

And thank you, Madam Secretary, for being here. I hope you know how committed this Committee is to working alongside you and the President to get this done. I mean, here we have the chairman of the full committee sitting throughout the entire duration. So this is just the first of many things.

And I want to thank you for making your first official trip as Secretary—you went to the border, right? You went to Del Rio, in my district, and you saw it firsthand.

STATE REIMBURSEMENT FOR BORDER SECURITY

You are not new to this. As Governor, you were very active along that. So, on that note, I want to get your opinion on States being reimbursed for some of the funding, particularly Texas.

What are your thoughts on Texas getting reimbursed for some of the funding that we have had to pay for this?

Secretary NOEM. Yeah. It has been incredible, the partnership that Texas has put together with the Federal Government and how they stepped up so many times. When the Biden Administration did not secure our border, Texas filled the gap.

And when I was Governor, I deployed my National Guard there to facilitate and help as well, as did other Governors in the country, and did what we could to get by until we had a new President that truly cared about keeping America safe.

There have not been any decided decisions on reimbursing states, but I know many of the Governors have asked for it. And we have appreciated their help. And so that is an ongoing conversation with every, you know, new agreement or new ask we have of states. If we are asking them to commit to the 287(g) program, seeing what we can do to help meet their financial needs is incredibly important.

If it is asking the National Guard to step up or even past spending that they have incurred, I know that President Trump is appreciative of the efforts and the partnerships and wants to continue those conversations.

Mr. GONZALES. Yeah. You know, representing nearly half of the southern border, we have been ground zero for it.

Secretary NOEM. Yeah.

Mr. GONZALES. And Texas—and it is not just Texas. I mean, you mentioned your home state. Everyone has really pitched in in a big way. And it is not fair; for the last 4 years, a lot of our states have been on our own and had to pay out of pocket. I think it is a great opportunity for the Federal Government to reimburse some of these states. I am certainly committed to making sure Texas gets reimbursed for some of the funding we have done along the border.

CONVICTED-CRIMINAL ILLEGAL ALIENS

I will tell you what. It was very difficult to get anything out of your predecessor every time he came before this committee, other than lying to us and saying the border was secure when we know it wasn't.

One thing that we did get out—last year, I submitted a letter to the ICE Director asking him how many convicted-criminal illegal aliens were in our country. And this is what I got back. This is literally part of his response: “Your letter requested the number of non-citizens on ICE’s docket convicted or charged with a crime. As of July 21, 2024, there were 662,566 non-citizens with criminal histories on ICE’s national docket.”

That was nearly a year ago. Do you, by chance, have any updated numbers on how many convicted criminal aliens we still have loose in the country?

Secretary NOEM. We believe we have more than that and are continuing to do an assessment. And, of course, every day, we continue to see crimes in this country that are perpetuated by individuals that we didn't necessarily know were here.

What I will tell you is that the President, under his leadership, has already arrested and is prosecuting and held accountable over 250 known terrorists, people who are on the known terrorist watch list. We have over 65,000 individuals that just ICE alone has arrested that are criminal aliens that are being held accountable for their crimes in our communities.

We also talk extensively about different Governors that we have been able to work with. Many of them have people within their facilities that have committed crimes that—they have been arrested, and they are holding and detaining them. If they are illegals, many times they are facing their consequences in their jail and prison time before they can be returned to their country.

So, you know, by virtue of being in this country illegally, you are breaking the law and you are a criminal. And we have seen the previous Administration pervert and manipulate their data and information to give us numbers that don't necessarily square with what the facts are on the ground. So there are many, many more criminals in this country, and we are going to continue to target and go after them to make sure that we are protecting families.

Mr. GONZALES. Yeah.

I will tell you what. The last Administration was terrible at transparency.

Secretary NOEM. Uh-huh.

Mr. GONZALES. And I think this is a great opportunity for President Trump, along with yourself and other Secretaries, to just be transparent to the American public, show them what we are dealing with. Once again, when we got that number back, you know, it was jaw-dropping to see there.

My last point. I only have 26—or, limited time left. You know, myself and Michael Guest, my good colleague from Mississippi, both sit on the homeland authorizing side. We have been working very hard through reconciliation.

One of the things that I would highlight for you—we talked about many things—is infrastructure, particularly checkpoints. Checkpoints not necessarily along the border but in our interior, both at the southern and the northern border, I think are very, very important. Please don't lose sight of that. In Eagle Pass, in particular, that checkpoint is way outdated for the amount of traffic that has been in there.

I would flag that for you. I look forward to working together and chatting more on how we build this out.

Secretary NOEM. Absolutely.

Mr. GONZALES. Great. Thank you.

With that, Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. AMODEI. The gentleman yields back.

The chair recognizes Mr. Guest from Mississippi.

Mr. GUEST. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Madam Secretary, first, I want to thank you, the men and women that you serve with, for the incredible success that you have been able to accomplish in just a short period of time.

SOUTHWEST BORDER STATISTICS

Just looking, statistics—and I believe that that is the greatest measure when we are looking at whether or not agencies are successful or not, comparing statistics from one agency to the other, one year to the other.

We know that, last month, CBP reported 11,017 encounters across the southwest border. Looking back a year, so March of 2024, under the Biden-Harris administration, 189,000; March of 2023, 193,000; March of 2022, 222,000.

So, looking at just the metrics of what you and your men and women who serve with you have been able to accomplish, again, I believe it is incredible.

So, when you leave here, please return to those men and women and thank them on behalf of all, not only the Members of Congress, but all the people from across this great Nation who are in gratitude for their continued service.

SOUTHWEST BORDER INVESTMENTS

As Representative Gonzales said, he and I both serve also on the authorizing committee. And, last week, we were able to mark up legislation that included roughly \$46 billion for additional walls, barriers along the southwest border. And I know that that is something that, particularly between Republicans and Democrats, we have had a fundamental disagreement.

And I would ask if you would just kind of take a moment to talk about the importance of the investment in walls and borders, barriers, along the southwest border, and how not only does that make our Nation safer but the importance that it is providing to the men and women who serve at CBP to make sure that they can better perform the duties that we have tasked them with.

Secretary NOEM. Well, thank you for talking about the importance of having not just enforcing of our laws in this country but also infrastructure and security procedures that give us a wall. And that wall may look different based on what the topography is or the geographical location in this country on our southern border but also on our northern border.

And then when you talk about our maritime borders as well, we can't neglect the fact that we have needs there and infrastructure that would help us make sure we know what is coming into this country, who is coming into this country, and if it is appropriate and if they should be.

Since President Trump has been in office, we have installed 77.8 miles of new border. That includes steel bollard fencing, but it also includes temporary border and some waterborne as well.

We have 11 contracts that have been awarded to put in over 40 miles of new border as well, and we still have 5 contracts that are pending. And I want to thank you for focusing resources to continue to make sure that we are building infrastructure and building in wall and making sure that we are having what we need for each area to address the concerns that are there.

That border wall will be built—that is steel—in areas that it is appropriate for, but the other areas may require us to do buoys if we do have, you know, waterborne areas such as the Rio Grande and places like that that it is required; and then having technology and cameras and the ability to see distances where we may not have the ability to put in fencing and even concertina wire and panels that would be used and are putting in temporarily right now as well.

So the diversity of what happens is incredibly important. We are addressing the needs as they see fit. But we are going to continue to move forward with putting up that infrastructure, because it does slow down traffic, it sends a message, and it gives our CBP officers more opportunities to truly address the security concerns that we have had in the past.

EMERGENCY RECOVERY IN MISSISSIPPI

Mr. GUEST. And, Madam Secretary, in the last roughly minute that I have, I want to address an issue that is near and dear to my State.

March the 15th, we had a series of tornadoes that came through Mississippi. Half a dozen individuals lost their lives that day. It impacted roughly 20 counties, so roughly a quarter of our State was impacted.

Shortly after the storms, I, along with many of the other elected officials, we went and we visited those areas that were impacted, and I will tell you that some of the damage has been extreme.

Our Governor and MEMA quickly requested disaster assistance, but at this point the review of that process is still pending. And I understand that that takes time, and I don't want to rush anything, but I would ask you if you could make sure that you could do everything to expedite that request. It is impacting my local jurisdictions with debris cleanup. It is impacting people as they seek to recover. So I would just ask that you would personally see if anything could be done to expedite that request.

And, with that, Mr. Chairman, I would yield back.

Secretary NOEM. Yes. I—

Mr. RUTHERFORD [presiding]. The gentleman yields back.

Secretary NOEM. Yes. I will certainly get back to you and follow up with that. I am not sure if that decision is still with us or at the White House, but I will follow up with you.

And I want to thank you for talking about the fact that you are sitting there waiting for the Federal Government to respond. President Trump's heart is with the American people and recognizes they don't deserve that. If we had the ability to give resources to a State so they could respond in a more timely manner and do a better job than where the Federal Government has failed, it would be entirely appropriate.

So thank you for that, and I will follow up with you.

Mr. GUEST. Thank you.

Mr. RUTHERFORD. Thank you, Madam Secretary.

The chair now recognizes the gentlelady from Iowa, Mrs. Hinson.

Mrs. HINSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Good morning, Madam Secretary. Thank you so much for joining us.

BORDER AND SECURITY CHARGES BETWEEN ADMINISTRATIONS

I really appreciate your commitment to getting Homeland Security back to mission. You know, we saw such a straying from that in the previous Administration. And President Trump's border-security promises were really delivered on day one and continue to be executed on, so I just want to say thank you for that.

Under your leadership, those illegal encounters at our southern border are dropping to historic lows, our immigration laws are finally being enforced, the border wall is back under construction. DHS is finally working again on protecting the Homeland. No new laws, but we have a new President and a new Secretary. So I want to say thank you.

Last year, before this Committee, Secretary Mayorkas, at the time, came before us pushing the Biden administration's \$4.7 billion Southwest Border Contingency Fund. All that really was was a slush fund, we know, designed to bypass Congress and bankroll those failed policies and sanctuary cities doing their bidding.

He claimed it was to manage surges, but those surges were of their own doing, sending a clear signal to the illegal immigrants, the traffickers, and the cartels that our border was open for business for them. That wasn't enforcement; that was actual chaos at our southern border by the taxpayers' dime.

So I see that as just one of the many blatant attempts for Secretary Mayorkas, at the time, and President Biden to misuse those taxpayer dollars intentionally without accountability.

But, again, under President Trump and your leadership, we have reversed course there. Programs like the Shelter and Services Program that enabled that abuse have been gutted, and their funding is now going to real border enforcement.

So I would like to drill down a little bit, Madam Secretary, on the misuse of those dollars under the last Administration. Can you walk us through some of the specific programs or activities under the Biden Administration that enabled this crisis and how you have worked to unwind those programs?

Secretary NOEM. Well, it was—the Shelter and Services Program, which you referenced specifically, those dollars were taken and manipulated to facilitate illegal activity and housing for illegal aliens and criminals that were in this country and gave them a place to set up shop and to conduct their trafficking, their drug dealing, and also their crimes against their communities that they live in.

The prime example is the Roosevelt Hotel in New York City, filled with hundreds and hundreds of illegal aliens, many of them criminals, part of foreign terrorist organizations such as TDA. And, in fact, Laken Riley's killer stayed there. And paid for by the American taxpayer, courtesy of Joe Biden and those who supported him and his leadership in this country.

That is what we are working to address, is to make sure that those dollars no longer continue to be used in a such a manner and that programs like that that have been misused are used for ways that secure this country, and really follow through on what the mission of the Department of Homeland Security is, and that is to keep the American homeland safe and secure, and to protect our communities.

We have many of the grants and different dollars that we have out there being reevaluated. We are also utilizing several different programs and working with other different Cabinet Secretaries to make sure that our housing programs, our food assistance programs, our shelter services programs, even programs within other agencies—that if people are illegals and that it wasn't the authority of Congress and never the determining decision by Congress to make them be people who took advantage of those programs or to have access to them, that that was ended, that no longer was this President going to allow money to be diverted different than what was authorized, to be utilized to facilitate people who are in this country illegally and breaking our laws.

Mrs. HINSON. Yeah.

And you mentioned the number on the terror watch list already held accountable, 250. And we know there are more. And I think that Americans need to understand you are doing that work to help keep us safe, apprehend these dangerous people that were just let to roam free in our country.

I certainly, as a Midwest mom, you know, like you, understand that we need to prioritize that and make sure you have the resources necessary for detention beds as well as the enforcement side.

AUTHORITIES AND CONGRESSIONAL ACTIONS

So, as we work through Fiscal Year 2026, the considerations that we need to be taking a look at, and reconciliation as well, what additional authorities or potential congressional actions do you see as necessary to making sure you can execute on your mission?

Secretary NOEM. You know, I would say, the Department of Homeland Security is one of the largest agencies in the Federal Government but has one of the smallest budgets. And it really is about, when you look at what you are doing for Fiscal Year 2026 and when you are looking at the reconciliation package, is to really determine where your priorities are, where Congress's priorities are. What is the responsibility of the Federal Government? What did our Founders task us with, as far as ensuring for the American people, and what rights remain with the people and with the State? And every decision that gets made here should be facilitated through that lens to make sure we are spending money appropriately.

I always say and have said for many, many years, no matter what topic comes up, what program, what agency, there are always going to be lobbyists who show up. There are very few people who show up in the room to lobby for the American taxpayer. And the job that you do in oversight is incredibly important.

And I come to this role today not only as a wife and a mom and a grandma but also as a business owner, someone who has been an employee for many different people, served in Congress, served in our legislature, but also as Governor. And people need leadership that recognizes what the priorities are.

And so every different Component that I have under my responsibility we are putting back on mission and making sure that they are fulfilling the duties to which they were created.

So thank you for considering the reconciliation package. Considering the amount of people that are in this country illegally, many of them perpetuating crimes, we need the resources to continue doing what President Trump has promised the American people, to get these individuals out of our country and make sure that they come into our country—if they self-deport, when they come back, that they do so the right way and that they can be a part of the American Dream in the future.

Mrs. HINSON. Thank you again to you and President Trump for redirecting those resources where they are intended to go. I really appreciate that.

And, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. AMODEI [presiding]. The Chair now recognizes for a second round the ranking member from Illinois, Ms. Underwood.

NATIONAL SPECIAL SECURITY EVENT ON JUNE 14TH

Ms. UNDERWOOD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Secretary Noem, you have designated the Army's 250th birthday parade in Washington, D.C., on June 14th as a National Special Security Event, meaning DHS will use taxpayer funding to help with enhanced security and support.

June 14th is also President Trump's 79th birthday.

At the same time that this Administration is canceling critical cybersecurity and disaster recovery funding under the guise of so-called waste and abuse, it is being publicly reported that this event will involve a full military presence crossing the Potomac from the Pentagon to Constitution Avenue.

We recently received your fiscal year 2025 spend plans for the Secret Service, but the costs for this event were not included. What do you estimate you will be spending on this, and how do you plan to pay for it?

Secretary NOEM. I can get those details and get back to you. I don't have them with me today, but I will certainly take that as a follow-up to your question.

Ms. UNDERWOOD. Okay.

Do you plan to designate NSSEs for the birthdays of other branches of our armed services that do not share their birthday with the President but also happen to be celebrating their 250th anniversaries in 2025?

Secretary NOEM. I will look and work with the Administration and with the different departments and agencies to identify what would be appropriate for all of those and will continue to keep you updated on that as well.

CYBERSECURITY

Ms. UNDERWOOD. Now I want to focus on CISA for a moment.

America is under constant and growing threats from cyber criminals and foreign adversaries, as we are still seeing with Salt Typhoon.

Last week, you said we should, quote, "just wait" for the President's "grand cyber plan." But you have not waited to erode the Department's cyber defense capabilities by removing resources and personnel from CISA and other components. Meanwhile, bad actors

are burrowing further into the critical infrastructure of this country.

On what date can we expect to receive the President's cyber plan? And why are you moving forward now with workforce reductions and other changes to relevant DHS components without it?

Secretary NOEM. Yeah, CISA's mission is to hunt and harden and to work with our State and local entities on critical infrastructure, so to support cybersecurity infiltrations that would happen from enemies and bad actors when it comes to electrical grids, water systems, support those states, those small and medium-size businesses that can't afford that kind of defense system themselves and to go and walk alongside of them.

I think one of the most alarming things that I heard when I was first nominated for this position but before I was sworn in—I got briefings from CISA and from the leadership team and the people that were there. And one of the things that they shared with me was that they were aware of Salt Typhoon and Volt Typhoon but they didn't know necessarily how they had happened yet or how to stop them into the future.

That was alarming to me. It was alarming to me that we had the Nation's top, leading cybersecurity agency that didn't know how to stop the People's Republic of China (PRC) and our enemies from coming in and hacking into our systems.

Ms. UNDERWOOD. Ma'am—

Secretary NOEM. And if we think a pandemic was scary, wait until the PRC and China comes in and shuts down our electricity—

Ms. UNDERWOOD. Obviously.

Secretary NOEM [continuing]. And our water. So that is what—

Ms. UNDERWOOD. So when are we getting the President's cyber plan?

Secretary NOEM. That is what CISA is focusing on, is making sure that we are approaching cybersecurity—

Ms. UNDERWOOD. Ma'am—

Secretary NOEM [continuing]. From the importance that it is, and it is always—

Ms. UNDERWOOD [continuing]. I had a direct question.

Secretary NOEM. Yes?

Ms. UNDERWOOD. Do you know when the President's cyber plan will be released?

Secretary NOEM. It will be coming out shortly, and that is the President's prerogative.

Ms. UNDERWOOD. Okay.

Secretary NOEM. I have been advising—

Ms. UNDERWOOD. Thank you.

Secretary NOEM [continuing]. Him on what that—

Ms. UNDERWOOD. Thank you.

Secretary NOEM [continuing]. Will look like—

Ms. UNDERWOOD. Despite the growing cyber threats, your budget cuts nearly half a billion dollars—half a billion dollars—from the main agency charged with protecting our Federal networks and so much more.

So, if you are so outraged by the threat of the PRC in our Federal networks, why are you cutting half a billion dollars?

When you recently spoke at the RSA Conference, you said that we needed to put CISA, quote, “back on mission.”

Secretary NOEM. Uh-huh.

Ms. UNDERWOOD. But let’s be clear: That mission is designated for you. We in the Congress told you in the Department and CISA how to execute on that mission. And you all have been moving money away from CISA. And that does not help achieve that mission.

MENTAL HEALTH FOR DHS PERSONNEL

Lastly, Secretary, as a nurse, I have always prioritized taking care of the health of our DHS workforce and giving them the tools that they need to do their jobs, not just physically but mentally.

DHS has made great strides in recent years here with popular programs that provide personnel and their families with the resources that they need and the support for the mental health of our agents and officers.

I hope that these programs can continue for Fiscal Year 2026. And I am curious if you agree that this is a priority for the Department, and will we see continued funding for it in the budget request?

Secretary NOEM. Absolutely we will continue to focus on the priorities of the healthcare needs of all of our employees.

Ms. UNDERWOOD. Great.

Well, although we disagree on many other issues, I hope that taking care of the hardworking men and women at DHS can be an area of shared values and bipartisan success, and I am looking forward to working on them together.

I yield back.

Secretary NOEM. Thank you.

Mr. AMODEI. Thank you, Madam Ranking Member.

The floor now belongs to the gentlelady from Connecticut, the ranking member of the Appropriations Committee, who got here as quick as she could.

Thank you, and the floor is yours.

Ms. DELAURO. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman. My God, this is twice in one day here. So it is great to see you. We are just—we are hearing-hopping here.

So thank you so much and I want to thank Ranking Member Underwood for holding the hearing today.

And welcome to you, Madam Secretary, and thank you for appearing before the subcommittee today.

I just wanted to begin with a message to your workforce, if I might. And that is, I am grateful, very grateful, for the work that they do, from search-and-rescue efforts of the Coast Guard, to our first responders who are on the ground after natural disasters, to those keeping us safe in the air and on the ground and at sea.

I want to start with some big-picture questions, because I think we know very little of the details about where the \$646 million cuts within FEMA’s grant programs will come from.

Secretary NOEM. Uh-huh.

FEMA'S BRIC PROGRAM

Ms. DELAURO. It is no secret that there are numerous reports of you—and if we need to correct the record—stating that you want to, quote, “eliminate FEMA” within the Department of Homeland Security.

I am concerned about the direction that the Administration is taking with regard to FEMA, canceling programs like BRIC, a program enacted into law by President Trump in his first term, without any evidence of waste, fraud, and abuse, alongside the freezing of grants, and now a 2026 budget request targeting even more of FEMA's resources.

And just right now, in terms of looking at the cancellations, the Science and Technology Directorate, Centers of Excellence, and Office of University Programs. As I mentioned, the FEMA administered grant programs frozen, virtually all grant obligations pending a review, as it determines whether it will try to choke off funding for unacceptable political reasons. Resources for states and communities to respond to disaster, secure firefighting equipment, protect against terrorism, secure our ports, and much more is being held up.

And, as I mentioned, the cancellation of the BRIC program—funding to support hazard mitigation, reduce the toll of future disasters, save lives—that money is not going out. Research has shown mitigation efforts like BRIC save a minimum of \$6 for every dollar invested and save more than double when including mitigation of economic impacts.

So federal disaster relief should be readily available across the United States regardless of where you live. Natural disasters happen everywhere. They should not be concerned about the Federal Government turning their back on them when they need the help the most. We need to give constituents what they need when they are facing tragedy, that they will not be stranded due to political discord.

My ask of you is: What is your plan with regard to FEMA? Are you planning to eliminate FEMA?

Your testimony references that you want to, quote, “eliminate dysfunction of the current agency.” I am unclear, I don't know if my colleagues are clear, on what you mean by “dysfunction.” And I am concerned that you are causing more dysfunction within the workforce that should be preparing itself for the pending hurricane season.

Secretary NOEM. Well, thank you for your question and the discussion on this topic today.

President Trump has been very clear since the beginning that he believes that FEMA and its response in many, many circumstances has failed the American people and that FEMA as it exists today should be eliminated and empowering states to respond—

Ms. DELAURO. What—

Secretary NOEM [continuing]. To disasters with—

Ms. DELAURO. What—

Secretary NOEM [continuing]. Federal Government support.

Ms. DELAURO. If you will just—with all due respect, where is the evidence of the failure of FEMA?

I don't know about everybody else on this; my state, Connecticut, was hit very, very hard with Superstorm Sandy. Every community in some way or another has been hit by that. And FEMA, on the ground. People come in, work with the families, deal with getting the funding out.

Where is the evidence——

Secretary NOEM. Ma'am——

Ms. DELAURO [continuing]. Of the failure of FEMA?

Secretary NOEM. Congresswoman, we still have claims open from Hurricane Katrina. We have fire claims that are still unpaid to people who said they were due them 7 to 8 to 10 years old that have never been paid by FEMA.

So one of the worst things that the Federal Government can do is to stand up in front of the American public and say, "We will be there, we will walk alongside you in the most horrible time of your life," and then never follow through on it.

Ms. DELAURO. Well, then——

Secretary NOEM. What the President has said is he is sick and tired of federal agencies that pick and choose who wins and who loses. He wants to make sure that the Federal Government's commitment, when it makes a commitment, that it follows through. So he is going to empower states and local——

Ms. DELAURO. Well, the Federal Government is abdicating its commitment to the American people who find themselves——

Secretary NOEM. It did, certainly, under Joe Biden's Administration. But now——

Ms. DELAURO. Let—let——

Secretary NOEM [continuing]. President Trump is going to make sure——

Ms. DELAURO. Let me just say this to you. The Office of Professional Responsibility——

Secretary NOEM [continuing]. That communities are ready for disasters.

Ms. DELAURO. The Office of Professional Responsibility—because I knew you were going to go there. As you know, FEMA's Office of Professional Responsibility—under the Biden Administration, there was no evidence, no direction by agency or field leadership to discriminate against disaster victims based on political affiliation——

Secretary NOEM. I will give you all the evidence you need.

Ms. DELAURO [continuing]. Which was a charge.

Secretary NOEM. I will follow up with you——

Ms. DELAURO. Well, and I will follow up. I will follow up. And I will follow up with my colleagues, quite frankly, and to really listen to people whose states and communities have been devastated and what role FEMA has played.

I don't know how many millions and millions of dollars went out in Louisiana. Actually, I have asked my staff to calculate that, when Katrina hit. And the response was overwhelming.

Secretary NOEM. Uh-huh.

Ms. DELAURO. And the response has been overwhelming. If you want to make corrections, that is fine. We all agree with that.

Secretary NOEM. Yeah, we can point to thousands and thousands of——

Ms. DELAURO. Well, let's just——

Secretary NOEM [continuing]. Instances where FEMA——

Ms. DELAURO. If you wouldn't mind getting this Committee——
[Crosstalk.]

Ms. DELAURO. If you wouldn't mind getting this Committee the information and the evidence, where you talk about the dysfunction of the agency, and where it has really failed. That would be important to those of us, you know, who are appropriating dollars.

And it would appear that the Administration, overall, has a way in which they are looking at dismantling the Federal Government. The states will never have the amount of money—because the Federal Government isn't going to pass that money to the states to be able to deal with what happens. It is when the Federal Government comes in and is able to give a hand to do that.

And I think it is very clear from what you said that both yourself and the President really want to dismantle the Federal Government and the agencies that have provided service to the American people for decades.

I thank the chair for your time and yield back.

Mr. AMODEI. Thank you, Madam Ranking Member.

Mr. Rutherford, the floor is yours for round two.

Mr. RUTHERFORD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Madam Secretary, as a sheriff and a first responder in the State of Florida, we have had many hurricanes, and FEMA has come in and assisted, but I can tell you, in the State of Florida, we pretty much handle those events through our regional domestic security task forces.

Secretary NOEM. Uh-huh.

Mr. RUTHERFORD. One of the problems that we have with FEMA—and we have even talked about it up here—is, how do we get FEMA to pay the bills that are due instead of cities and the states having to pay the interest on all of that money for years?

So those are some of the areas where I know the frustration levels are off the chart. And so that is one of the things I would love to work with the folks across the aisle on, is, let's address these things. Because it is not that FEMA shows up and everything is okay. It is quite the contrary, actually.

FOREIGN TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS

But I do want to ask about this. In your written statement, you mention the designation, the Administration's designation, of the six cartels and two transnationals as terrorist organizations. And, you know, these FTOs, foreign terrorist organizations, that designation is critically important.

And I know a lot of discussion has been had about CISA, but can you talk just a little bit about—to put some minds at ease, I think—how is it that this designation—I am sorry—that this designation—so sorry about that——

Secretary NOEM. You are good.

Mr. RUTHERFORD [continuing]. But how this designation actually helps with the Administration being able to work, sharing information between the civilian and the military, to actually go after these folks who are killing our citizens with their drugs.

I think it was 2023 we had over 107,000 Americans die of poisoning coming across the southern border. They are also looking to weaponize drones to be used against our law enforcement officers at the southern border. They are the ones helping to finance all of this—or were—financing all of this mass migration.

That designation, I think, is critically important, and I don't think people appreciate it enough. Can you talk about that?

Secretary NOEM. Yeah, certainly, Congressman. And thank you for the question, because it is critically important to what President Trump has done by defining exactly who these people are and what these organizations do and what they are trying to do to the United States of America.

By designating these gangs and cartel members as foreign terrorist organizations, it allows us in a new way to partner law enforcement activities and consequences in partnership with other Cabinet areas within the Federal Government, including the Department of Defense, all military branches underneath that, as well as coordination and sharing of information and a whole of government approach to how we conduct enforcement operations.

It also gives us an opportunity to access background information, criminal records, that we need and that we can share internationally as well.

And, clearly, when you look at the cartels and their activity, their partnership and their facilitation of other countries and their software, their technology to launder money for the Chinese, the PRC businesses that are out there that are seeking to destroy the United States of America, that partnership that they have built over the years and the sophistication to which they operate we have to be prepared for.

We have to recognize what they are, what level they are at, how they are continuing to recruit members and affiliates, and how more and more dangerous they get to be the longer that they operate in the United States without consequences.

So that partnership that we have with the Department of Defense, our military, and all branches, but then also bringing all of the authorities of the President of the United States to the table to go after these criminal organizations really recognizes them for what they are. They are terrorists. They are perpetuating terror and fear in our communities. And we have to make sure that we take them out now.

Mr. RUTHERFORD. Yeah. They are not just drug organizations anymore.

Secretary NOEM. Correct. Correct. They are laundering—

Mr. RUTHERFORD. Thank you very much, Madam—

Secretary NOEM [continuing]. Money, trafficking individuals, killing our children.

And, you know, I have said this for many years about China. China doesn't just steal our IP, manipulate their currency, build up their military to someday have a conflict with the United States of America. They are systemically killing our next generation of Americans. They are using a poison—

Mr. RUTHERFORD. Killed over 60,000 just with fentanyl.

Secretary NOEM [continuing]. Yes—to infiltrate our country and to kill off our—

Mr. RUTHERFORD. Thank you very much.
 Secretary NOEM [continuing]. Young Americans, knowing it weakens us far into the future.
 Mr. RUTHERFORD. Thank you, Madam Secretary.
 And I yield back, Mr. Chairman.
 Mr. AMODEI. Thank you, Mr. Rutherford.
 Mr. Cuellar, the floor is yours for 5 minutes for a second round.
 Mr. CUELLAR. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
 Madam Secretary, let me go back to the basics, what I think are needed.

LAND BORDER SECURITY

We talked about carrizo cane, river roads. But there is also—in the middle of the river, there are islands. And I have them in the Laredo area; I have them in the Starr County. I don't know if my colleagues have. The bad guys will come in and use those islands and then jump over.

We have talked to the International Boundary and Water Commission and our Border Patrol folks. That is one area that we ought to focus on, to get rid of those islands. And it would be better for the flows of the river.

Secretary NOEM. Right.

Mr. CUELLAR. Water can go down there to other places. So islands in the middle of the areas.

The other thing is buoys. Actually, years ago I brought it up to Border Patrol, but I said, as long as you talk to the International Boundary and Water Commission so it can be okay. I know the State of Texas had one, but it was, like, a quarter of a mile, and the river is 1,200 miles, so it is like a stamp in the middle of a football field.

So we have to look at areas that they will be necessary, if we use that, but as long as the International Boundary and Water Commission is involved.

CBP RETENTION AND RECRUITMENT

Retirement—I will go back to the retirement. There are other committees that are looking at this retirement. But there will be, to be exact, 2,325 Border Patrol agents that will be eligible to retire this year. They are looking at that change. Depending on what they do, the other committee, we could lose a lot of folks by the end of the year. So we have to make sure that the other committees are working with you.

I would say also that—you said that recruitment is up 50 percent, but we have to close the deal—that is, actually hire the Border Patrol agents. And one of the big problems is the polygraph. The polygraph exam is the biggest problem to hiring Border Patrol agents on that end. We can follow up on that particular issue.

POA TECHNOLOGY

Port technology not only in between but at the ports. Eighty-six percent of the people that are caught at checkpoints and at the ports of entry are not illegals; they are actually U.S. citizens, according to the U.S. Sentencing Commission. So we have to put the

technology also at the ports of entry so we can move legitimate trade and commerce.

Playing defense on the 20-yard line, I have been talking about this, and I think you all are doing some of that. I would rather play defense on the 20-yard line with Mexico, Guatemala, and the other places than our 1-yard line.

There is language that we have proposed, but, with all due respect, the prior Administration was not interested in this, but there is language that can give you certain authorities where you can play more on the 20-yard line, which is, again—because the more people we stop over there, the less people will come to our border itself.

Technology. I know that we have talked about technology, but the drone threat is very real. In fact, just to let you know, a couple weeks ago, a Border Patrol drone in the Laredo Sector was taken down by the cartel operators, which means that cartels now have technology that can take down law enforcement drones. And they do the surveillance; they know what we are doing.

And by the time we get through our procurement process to get our drones, you know, years are gone. They don't have any procurement rules. They just go to Best Buy and buy all the best buys, and they just use off-the-shelf things. So, you know, I hope we can look at that technology also.

The other thing is, again—and I am sorry——

Secretary NOEM. No.

Mr. CUELLAR [continuing]. I have been communicating with the Border Patrol unions on this, that the dead zones that we talked about, it is a real problem. It is a real problem. There are areas where they can't even talk and communicate. So those dead zones are very important.

Finally, I think it was brought up, the infrastructure. Let's not forget about the basic infrastructure. And I am talking about checkpoints—Eagle Pass, Freer, Laredo. And I know we have already put \$15 million and are doing a design in the Laredo one. That checkpoint—because Laredo is the largest inland port. But if that checkpoint was a port of entry, it would be the fourth-largest port in the whole country.

The reason we had a problem where some migrants died on those trailers is because Border Patrol will look and, if the lines are a mile long, they will just wave them, and the bad guys know—have an idea of where to put them. So they waved that trailer with the migrants that died in San Antonio.

So checkpoints, like Mr. Gonzales has mentioned——

Secretary NOEM. Uh-huh.

Mr. CUELLAR [continuing]. The basic stuff is very, very important.

Secretary NOEM. Uh-huh.

Mr. CUELLAR. Finally, I will just close up with the border wall. On the border wall, again, I think you said “where appropriate,” which is important.

Secretary NOEM. Uh-huh.

Mr. CUELLAR. The State of Texas—I have always said, don't condemn—but maybe if you would look at the possibility of leasing. The State of Texas put it in the law, don't condemn land, but you

go ahead and you ease them. And now there are landowners that preempted the Federal Government, because the state will lease out and not condemn itself on that.

So I can go on on the border wall for a long time, but keep in mind that the largest—and I will close with this point—the largest amount of people that got here before this last flow were visa overstays. And, by the way, the biggest violator was Canada. I am not asking for a wall with Canada, but it was visa overstays, especially from Canada.

So we just have to look at data-driven solutions, and I look forward to working with you.

Secretary NOEM. Absolutely. Thank you, Congressman.

Mr. CUELLAR. Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. AMODEI. The gentleman from Washington State, Mr. Newhouse, the floor is yours.

Mr. NEWHOUSE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Before I get cut off by the gentleman from Nevada if I talk too long, I just wanted to extend an invitation to you, Madam Secretary, to come out to my district to visit the Spokane Border Sector as well as the Oroville Station.

Secretary NOEM. Absolutely.

Mr. NEWHOUSE. And, also, it is inland Washington, but we have a Coast Guard navigation team at Kennewick.

Secretary NOEM. Fantastic.

Mr. NEWHOUSE. So, as sharing border states, it would be a good thing for you to see.

I just wanted to say one thing. The recent skinny budget proposed notable cuts to CISA, as you have heard many of my colleagues mention several times. I just wanted to mention that, last summer and in March, I believe, CISA provided some farmers and ranchers in my district a briefing and training on protecting food from farm to table with cybersecurity, a protective emphasis workshop. And I just wanted to encourage you to look at that. I think it was very well-received, and I think it would be a good program to continue using.

SANCTUARY JURISDICTIONS

Let me ask about sanctuary jurisdictions. I believe state and local partnerships truly are important for the agents and the officers at DHS to execute their mission. How have sanctuary jurisdictions or state or municipal governments hindered the agency's mission to protect the Homeland?

Secretary NOEM. Well, I would say, every day, it is thwarting our efforts to be able to go out and help make our communities safe and secure.

There have been times where we have gone out and targeted bad actors and criminals in communities that are guilty of rape, murder, violence, domestic abuse, drug trafficking, human trafficking, and when we have gone in to do those operations, we have not had the backup of local law enforcement.

We are not able to have leaders that have walked alongside of us in support of securing their communities and been there for ICE agents that are out there putting their lives on the line—

Mr. NEWHOUSE. Yeah.

Secretary NOEM [continuing]. To help secure and get these bad criminals off their streets.

And those individuals are protecting them with, you know, their decisions, their political rhetoric. They are also filing lawsuits against us and the authorities that we are exercising to try to jam us up in court, rather than giving us the opportunity to go out there and really follow through on what our commitment has been to this country.

So the sanctuary jurisdictions have been fighting this Administration in trying to do what the American people asked President Trump to do in November, and that was to make their communities safe again.

I will tell you that, when I have been out on the front lines with many of these agents when they have been doing operations in the early morning sweeping up criminals, they are doing the hard work and many times in partnership with local——

Mr. NEWHOUSE. Sure.

Secretary NOEM [continuing]. Law enforcement and cities. So we appreciate that partnership where we can get it.

In sanctuary cities, it becomes much more of an operation that has to have more people. We have to commit more ICE agents, more federal officers there, because the local community has not and the leadership there has not been supportive.

And then, also, I would say, it makes it more dangerous. We have seen violence against our ICE officers go up over 300 percent. And I think that is because of the rhetoric out there by local mayors and Governors who have, you know, put out misinformation and perpetuated lies about law enforcement and what they are trying to do to help communities.

I remember, the morning I was in New York City, we were conducting ICE operations on known criminals that were guilty of violent abuses and breaking the law. We had community members that were walking by on the street that were taking their kids to school, and when they would walk by, they would say, "Thank you. Thank you for being here."

Mr. NEWHOUSE. That says a lot.

Secretary NOEM. Yet their leadership——

Mr. NEWHOUSE. That says a lot.

Secretary NOEM [continuing]. Was not there to support and back up our operations.

So I would ask people in these communities to challenge their mayors, challenge their Governors to come to the table and to help us. Because I don't know of anybody who wanted to raise their kids in a community that was filled with criminals, where it wasn't safe to go out at night, and where they couldn't walk their kids to school and not have to worry about if they were going to get there safely.

Mr. NEWHOUSE. Thank you.

TARIFFS

I am going to switch topics really quick in the short amount of time I have left: tariffs.

Secretary NOEM. Yes.

Mr. NEWHOUSE. We both come from agricultural states. I fully recognize the importance of tariffs to help level the playing field and provide a fair opportunity for our producers to compete in the world market. But I also remember, in 2018, retaliatory tariffs on agricultural products which felt the brunt of those efforts.

Could you talk just a little bit, if I could, without putting you—it is not a “gotcha” question, but I just wanted to express the concern that agriculture doesn’t need any more challenges right now.

Could you talk a little bit about some of the conversations maybe that you are having at the executive level about retaliation?

Secretary NOEM. Yeah. Thank you for that.

I have worked on food policy for 30 years. So I not only am a farmer and a rancher, but I immediately started working on state and federal programs, and I recognize that our food policy in this country is a national-security issue. And keeping farmers out on the land producing our food is imperative to making sure that we can feed ourselves and another country doesn’t control us by controlling our food supply.

So President Trump recognizes this, and we have spoken for hours about the importance of having farmers here in this country growing our food and having many farmers, not allowing just one or two big companies or conglomerates to control that supply, because it makes food affordable and available to every single American.

President Trump, if you remember, back during that period of time, was there for farmers. He helped them with assistance when those retaliatory tariffs came into place. And he recognizes that this negotiation that we are having now with these countries has to happen to level the playing field.

We have been treated unfairly in trade agreements for many, many years. When I was in Congress, I served on the Ways and Means Committee, which many people referred to as “the committee that has the most ways it can be mean,” because it has taxes and trade and tariffs and all the different jurisdictions as far as what can happen.

But I would say, specifically, working on trade agreements while I was there, I recognized how we could come to a trade agreement and facilitate that, but then we also would—as soon as our shipments of soybeans hit the shores of China, they would reject it for different sanctions or regulations such as sanitary or phytosanitary reasons and would manipulate how they interpreted those agreements and didn’t adhere to them anyway.

So President Trump is all-in to make sure that we rectify the wrongs of the past and make sure that we are treated fairly and get our jobs back home here in America.

So, so far, CBP has collected over \$32 billion worth of tariffs since April 2nd has gone into place. And they have adjusted and done that, and these countries are feeling the pain enough that they are coming to the table and having negotiations with this administration to make sure that we are treated fairly and our farmers and ranchers are treated fairly in the future.

Mr. NEWHOUSE. I appreciate that.

Mr. Chairman, I will yield back.

Mr. AMODEI. You don’t have any time to yield back.

Secretary NOEM. I know. I am sorry.

Mr. AMODEI. Thank you.

The gentlelady from Hawaii, the floor is yours for 5 minutes.

Ms. ESCOBAR. Texas.

Mr. AMODEI. Texas.

Mr. NEWHOUSE. Hawaii?

Mr. AMODEI. Well, you know, it went so long, you might want to double-check that.

Ms. ESCOBAR. Not even close, Chairman.

Mr. AMODEI. There might be an ocean coming there from a different direction.

Ms. ESCOBAR. There might be.

Mr. AMODEI. The floor is yours for 5 minutes for followup questions as long as they are not like Mr. Newhouse's. Thank you very much.

Ms. ESCOBAR. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman.

WORKING CONDITIONS OF DHS EMPLOYEES IN EL PASO

Madam Secretary, I have a question related to something more close to home for me in the community in El Paso with DHS employees.

For decades, CBP employees who work at our land ports of entry have been contractually allowed by CBP to have an off-site location for their union. And this off-site location is completely funded by union dues, not by taxpayer money. And, again, this was something agreed to in their contract.

I was shocked and alarmed to learn that they were told by DHS they could no longer be off-site and they were forced to come into a DHS facility in El Paso. It is a conference room, media training room.

So that part of their contract, that longstanding agreement, was violated, in my eyes.

Are you aware of this at all?

Secretary NOEM. I have heard about it, but I have not—I don't know the details of that agreement. So I can follow up with you and get that back to you. And if you would lay out the concerns for being co-located, I think that would be fantastic for me to know.

Ms. ESCOBAR. We will. We will make sure to communicate with your team. Would love to work with you on this.

The same has not been true for the Border Patrol union. So there is a—there is disparate treatment.

And, additionally, just to very quickly lay out why: It is important for union members to be able to speak to their union leaders in private. And being located in a small conference room, media training room, offers no privacy.

There are other issues, but I look forward to working with you on that.

Secretary NOEM. I do know that, you know, the difference in the two unions is important, and there is—I will look at how these were interpreted.

And I also know that the one union is located under the Treasury union as well, and that defines some requirements for how it is regulated and set out going forward. So I will see if that is the

determining factor on why there was a difference in how the locations were determined.

Ms. ESCOBAR. And I would ask, Madam Secretary, that you please allow the El Paso union to continue to be housed off-site. It is their preference. It doesn't impact the budget or appropriations. They pay for it. So I don't see a reason why this longstanding, decades-long situation should be changed. So I would ask for your support for that, please.

Secretary NOEM. I will look into it.

Ms. ESCOBAR. Okay. Perfect.

ICE RAID ON U.S. CITIZEN HOME

I also wanted to ask you about this NBC News story, and I will enter into the record this article as well, "U.S.-citizen family 'traumatized' after ICE raided their Oklahoma home in search of someone else."

And according to the local affiliate, KFOR, which was reporting on this story, immigration agents raided the home last week. They had a search warrant for the home, but the suspects listed on the warrant were no longer living in the home. The family was forced to wait outside in the rain during the search. A mother and her girls, all U.S. citizens, their money was taken, their laptop, their cell phone.

I asked you at the top of our first round if you believed it was important for DHS and if you would attest to the fact that DHS needs to rectify any mistakes.

Secretary NOEM. Uh-huh.

Ms. ESCOBAR. If this were a mistake, will you ensure that this family, this U.S.-citizen family, gets its property back in a timely manner?

Secretary NOEM. Well, in that particular situation, the warrant for that situation was on the house and the facility, not on the individuals that were there. And so that house was being used for human smuggling. And so those operations—

Ms. ESCOBAR. By a prior—

Secretary NOEM [continuing]. Were conducted against the facility. And, even in that situation, there were some individuals there with the same last names and some other similarities.

And so we are—

Ms. ESCOBAR. But if it were a mistake, Madam Secretary—

Secretary NOEM [continuing]. We are continuing—

Ms. ESCOBAR [continuing]. If it were a mistake—

Secretary NOEM. We believe everything was done appropriately—

Ms. ESCOBAR. Okay.

Secretary NOEM [continuing]. And we will continue to make sure that it is done and handled appropriately.

Ms. ESCOBAR. All right. Well, I appreciate you looking into it. Not my constituents, but—

You had mentioned in your testimony and you have said previously that the focus of your agency is to go after the worst of the worst, people who are here illegally. But we have seen reporting and spoken to individuals—"we" meaning Congress—that, in fact,

there have been abuses on that front. People with legal protections have been deported.

I laid out in the first round, U.S.-citizen children. I don't know, and I asked, and you said you would get back to me, about whether parents actually filled out the ICE forms that are normally used for those processes.

U.S.-citizen families with nothing to do with human trafficking and now DHS employees as well, in my view, have been subjected to an abuse of power.

And we all swore an oath to the Constitution. This is a democratic republic. Rule of law is important. Due process is important. And, ultimately, that will be my North Star, not just in this hearing but throughout everything that I work on as a Member of Congress.

I thank you, Madam Secretary.

And, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. AMODEI. I want to thank the member. And I want you to know that, during the course of your questioning, we have moved your district back into Texas—

Ms. ESCOBAR. Thank you.

Mr. AMODEI [continuing]. And everything is good.

Ms. ESCOBAR. My flight is shorter now as a result. Thank you.

Mr. AMODEI. I was just hoping you weren't paying attention. I thought the folks out on the islands could use some help.

But we will go on from there.

Mr. CISCOMANI, the floor is yours for a second round of questioning.

Mr. CISCOMANI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Secretary Noem, so the first set of questions that I had were more on the security side. I want to shift gears a little bit.

As a matter of fact, I just guided a group of freshmen Members on the Republican side to the border in Arizona with the intention that they see the full picture of the border. We have, obviously, the security aspect that has been key and central to the conversation. Then we have trade and commerce at the border. And we have immigration, as well, going on.

So it is important that, I think, my colleagues and everyone that is maybe not from a border district can understand that there is a lot more that happens at the border than just one aspect of it. I call it the three buckets of the conversation around the border.

LEGAL IMMIGRATION SYSTEM

So, with that in mind, as an immigrant myself, I know how complex the immigration system is. I became a citizen in 2006, and then 16 years later I became a Member of Congress. No other country in the world will give you that opportunity. I believe in the American Dream and fighting for that American Dream that so many people still seek.

There has been much media attention, again, on the increase in deportations and removal of aliens, which I remain fully supportive of.

That being said, I think we should also be highlighting and incentivizing those who are going through the process legally and those that are seeking to come to the country through the legal

channels and make that process less burdensome in order to disincentivize the use of cartels and bad actors.

In my family's experience, it took us 13 years from the moment we came into the U.S. to the moment we became U.S. citizens. There have to be some improvements——

Secretary NOEM. Yeah.

Mr. CISCOMANI [continuing]. Around these guidelines.

So can you speak on how your budget request will facilitate easier legal pathways for potential immigrants?

Secretary NOEM. Yeah, absolutely. And you have correctly identified part of the problem that we have had in this country for many, many years, is that it takes far too long for a person to legally come through our immigration process and to become a U.S. citizen. And that needs to be fixed.

And that was broken when I was here on the Hill, and it was broken when I was Governor, and I still see as a Department of Homeland Security Secretary that that is an issue that needs to be solved.

We need to make sure that we are getting more immigration judges. I have been having conversations with our Attorney General, Pam Bondi, and with the Department of Justice on what we can do to get more judges to the table so that we can process not just backlogged claims but illegal applications to come to this country, as well, and then more immigration courts.

So, when you look at not just the Fiscal Year 2026 request but also reconciliation dollars, it is to address the needs that we have to address the invasion, secure the border, to make sure that our ICE officers have enough backup, help, equipment, and tools going forward to make sure that we are addressing what has happened here criminally, illegally, but also addressing within our other agencies what we can do to make that we are processing those legal applications and getting that taken care of.

President Trump is determined to do that. And we have that addressed in the budget request from the different Cabinet Secretaries and agencies to make sure we have the resources to start getting after that backlog.

Mr. CISCOMANI. Excellent. Excellent.

WORKFORCE NEEDS

You know, on the same topic, when we look at immigration and we look at workforce as well, those are very much attached. And I just had Secretary Lori Chavez-DeRemer——

Secretary NOEM. Yeah.

Mr. CISCOMANI [continuing]. In Tucson yesterday. We visited different sites that work on this. We spoke at length about the need for more robust workforce programs and ways to ensure that workforce needs to meet our communities' needs. Still, the utmost constant thing I hear from industry of what they need is workforce.

Can you speak to any plans the administration has to create additional avenues to meet these through immigration, potentially?

Secretary NOEM. So you are talking about meeting workforce needs——

Mr. CISCOMANI. Yeah, workforce needs.

Secretary NOEM [continuing]. As far as through visas and green cards?

Mr. CISCOMANI. Yeah.

Secretary NOEM. You know, I would say that the President recognizes the value in what we have had in programs in the past but also recognizes how they have been misused and how Congress, many times, lays their prerogative on how many are authorized, how many are directed through law that the Secretary has the latitude to issue, and will continue to work with you to find solutions that really meet the needs that we have in this country.

You know, the President believes that we have a workforce here that deserves jobs that pay very well, with benefits and a future here in the United States of America, but also that we need to continue to keep the American Dream open for immigrants who want to come here legally.

So having the opportunity to make sure we are doing thorough vetting of people and partnering with other countries and having access to their background checks to make sure they can participate in our visa programs is very important.

And as long as we have the ability to do that and continue to know who is coming here, why they are here, and if they have the opportunity to become citizens, then it is something that would be a benefit to this country if the President recognizes that the need is there.

Mr. CISCOMANI. I think that is very well-put. I think having that balance always of making sure our border is secure, we know who is coming in, that opens a door and allows us to focus on an immigration system that works for the people coming in but primarily for our citizens and what the country needs, and that has to do with workforce as well.

So, with that, thank you so much for partnering with us on that. And finding multiple solutions to this problem in different areas at the same time is not easy, but you are doing a masterful job, so thank you so much.

Secretary NOEM. Thank you.

Mr. CISCOMANI. And, with that, I yield back, sir.

Mr. AMODEI. Thank you, Vice Chairman, for not challenging the Dan Newhouse award.

And now I would like to recognize the gentleman from—oh, she is gone—from Texas, Mr. Gonzales.

The floor is yours for a second round.

Mr. GONZALES. Thank you, Chairman.

And thank you, Madam Secretary. Some could argue you have one of the toughest jobs in Washington, right? We had Elon show up with two hats. Maybe you should have shown up with three hats, right?

Secretary NOEM. Yeah.

Mr. GONZALES. Part of DHS that I worry about is, it is the Swiss Army knife of the Federal Government. It seems like everything is in there.

And we alluded to this earlier. How did DHS start? It started after 9/11, when Islamic extremists murdered Americans. And so I worry—and we covered a lot of topics today.

Secretary NOEM. Uh-huh.

Mr. GONZALES. And I know the border gets a lot of attention, and I know there is a lot going on in the cyber space. But I think back to some of the fundamentals, and I think back to 9/11, and I worry.

I look ahead, and I see, you know, the World Cup coming our way, and I see the Olympics coming our way. I want us to make sure that we are not only focused on today but we are also focused on tomorrow. Please, keep that at the forefront of it.

At the end of day—you know, right now, we are feeding Tomahawks to Houthis every day in Yemen, and it reminds me a whole lot of pre-9/11, right? I spent 5 years in Iraq and Afghanistan. No one knew about al-Qaida. No one knew where Afghanistan was on a map. It is very eerily similar. And the American people are really counting on you to make sure we are safe.

OFFICE OF IMMIGRATION DETENTION OMBUDSMAN

On that note, I mean, DHS has lost its way over the course of the last several years and the last Administration, and I want to flag for you an office in particular: the Office of the Immigration Detention Ombudsman.

I mean, this was literally an office funded by taxpayer dollars that had billboards up throughout Texas that said, and I quote, “Your brother in immigration custody has rights. We are here to help.” I mean, it is complete nonsense. And, once again, where are our taxpayer dollars going?

So, as you are—once again, you are off to a very fast start. Much appreciated. But as you are going through these and you are tackling these different—please look at that program.

Secretary NOEM. Yeah.

Mr. GONZALES. You know, I know in our Fiscal Year 2025 budget, we zeroed that out, but unfortunately we couldn’t get that over the finish line. So I would ask for you to really take a look at that.

Secretary NOEM. Congressman, we have looked at that already. We have recognized the abuses that happened. And, many times, that office was perpetuated on suing themselves and coming up with ways to cost the taxpayer more and more money.

So we have put them back to the size that they should be and addressed how it was misused and abused, and we will continue to do so into the future to make sure that that isn’t weaponized against the American people in the future.

Mr. GONZALES. Thank you for that.

HSI-LED TASK FORCES

And I also want to thank you for something that is working. These HSI-led task forces work. You have seen it all throughout the country. It is, how do we pool our resources? This isn’t a federal issue, it isn’t a state issue, it isn’t a local issue. It is all of us. We are all in on this together.

And, in my experience, those task forces really work. So, when it comes to funding, when it comes to legislation, once again, please, if you would—they are working. I am hearing it from constituents all over the country, my good friend Juan Ciscomani. I know it is working in Arizona. It is certainly working in Texas.

OPERATION STONEGARDEN

And then the other thing I want to mention is Stonegarden funding.

Secretary NOEM. Yeah.

Mr. GONZALES. Once again, this is an area that I believe is a force multiplier. It gives funding to our local law enforcement that are acting in the immigration space. This works.

One of the issues that I see is, sometimes it is a little too stringent. It is a little too—it almost—like, the Federal Government is discouraging local law enforcement from being involved.

Maybe that is something we can tackle together, or I would love to hear your ideas—not now, but as you work through things—on how we can, once again, make sure that our programs are working for the American people, not against us.

Secretary NOEM. I agree. Yeah, I think that would be fantastic. I have heard it is a highly effective program, and if there are ways to get more participants and streamline it, I would love to hear your ideas.

Mr. GONZALES. Thank you, Secretary.

And, Chairman, I yield back my minute of time.

Mr. AMODEI. Thank you for being a leader.

The Chair now recognizes the Ranking Member of the entire committee with an excellent sense of patience. The gentlelady from Connecticut, the floor is yours.

Ms. DELAURO. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member.

DHS AD CAMPAIGN

Madam Secretary, earlier this year, the administration unveiled a thinly veiled propaganda ad about border security. It was about \$200 million, paid for by American taxpayers, I might add. And the ads are supposedly about border security, but, honestly, if you see the ad, it is like a political ad. And all of us know what political ads look like. Even the conservative Cato Institute says the ads are a perfect example of wasteful government spending that The Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) should cut.

I also might add that—and this is a direct quote. And, Madam Secretary, it says that, earlier this year, President Trump had instructed you on how to fashion the campaign.

“He said”—and, again, I quote—“I want you in the ads, and I want your face in the ads,” Noem recalled at the Conservative Political Action Conference, adding that Trump told her for the first ad: ‘I want you to thank me for closing the border.’”

Now, that is politics, quite frankly, at its worst.

I understand that, on April 30th, your Department awarded an additional \$6.7 million to a political consulting company called People Who Think, bringing their total award for this ad to \$11.6 million. Your Department has also awarded \$35.5 million for this ad to a company called Safe America Media. And my understanding is that you used funding originally appropriated for CBP and U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) for these awards.

This sounds like a payout to Republican political consultants to fund ads that do more to tout the President than to secure the bor-

der. You know, how were the contracts awarded? A competitive process? If so, why does USA spending say that the contracts were given an exclusion from the DOGE group's limitation on spending awards?

This is \$200 million. Somebody just talked about billboards. This is a \$200 million ad campaign, taking the money from CBP and USCIS, to promote a political advantage. It is really kind of the height of arrogance.

You are looking for more money from us to do that, but you are going to take a portion of the money that we have given you and you are going to spend it on political advertising. I mean, that really is—in Yiddish, the word is “chutzpah”—it really is—that you, you know, engaged in here.

So I know you are going to try to——

Secretary NOEM. Would you like me to answer?

Ms. DELAURO. Yeah, I would. And I foresee that you are going to tell me that these were all competitively bid——

Secretary NOEM. They were.

Ms. DELAURO [continuing]. Et cetera. You know——

Secretary NOEM. They went through the exact same process as any other ad campaign would be done. Absolutely.

And I would tell you that it is not \$200 million and that President Trump was very clear from the very beginning that he recognized that the fake news in this country was not going to tell the truth of what work had been done at the border to secure this country.

And these ads aren't only playing in the United States. They are playing in other countries——

Ms. DELAURO. Sure. No, I understand.

Secretary NOEM [continuing]. Where we have the largest invasion——

Ms. DELAURO. That is not the point. You can agree——

Secretary NOEM [continuing]. Coming into the country from.

Ms. DELAURO [continuing]. Or disagree on the policy, but——

Secretary NOEM. And, overwhelmingly, if you look at the data on the ground in these countries where these ads have been playing——

Ms. DELAURO. With all due respect——

Secretary NOEM [continuing]. The flow has stopped.

Ms. DELAURO. With all due respect——

Secretary NOEM. Even when I was in Mexico and having conversations——

Ms. DELAURO. Excuse me, Madam Secretary——

Secretary NOEM. Yes.

Ms. DELAURO [continuing]. The time is mine.

With all due respect, this is a political ad campaign, and it really—let's just not try to sugarcoat it. I just heard somebody talk about billboards and you talking about use of taxpayers' dollars. These are taxpayers' dollars as well.

FEMA BRIC PROGRAM

Let me move to the program I mentioned earlier. This is the BRIC program.

Secretary NOEM. Uh-huh.

Ms. DELAURO. In early April, FEMA cut the Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities Program, claiming, and I quote, “Under Secretary Noem, DHS is eliminating waste, fraud, and abuse,” end quote.

When the Committee staff asked for evidence of waste, fraud, or abuse in this program or the authority used to end the program, FEMA said that “the due diligence for these projects can take a long time” and failed to give examples that met U.S. Government Accountability Office’s (GAO) definition of waste, fraud, or abuse.

The legal authority you used to cancel most of these projects was also not provided. And I am just going to make this flat-out statement: You do not have, nor does the President have, the legal authority to abrogate what the Appropriations—

Secretary NOEM. Correct.

Ms. DELAURO [continuing]. Committee appropriates. The power of the purse—it is in the Constitution.

And I think, if I heard right, in the last couple of days, the President wasn’t sure that we should abide by the Constitution. But we try to abide by the Constitution, those of us who raised our right hand and said we will abide by the Constitution.

There is no legal authority, there is no inherent authority to claim the appropriations funds can be used for other than what they were appropriated for.

I don’t know that you—can you—we asked basic questions from your agency on a central program that the communities rely on. You all can’t—you just say, “Waste, fraud, abuse,” and you think that that covers it. Well, Madam Secretary, I will tell you, it doesn’t.

Secretary NOEM. Congresswoman, I will get you all the—

Ms. DELAURO. We are going to challenge that. And you have no authority.

Secretary NOEM [continuing]. Statute references that we are operating under the authority that the Department of Homeland Security has—

Ms. DELAURO. You have no authority—

Secretary NOEM [continuing]. And that these—

Ms. DELAURO [continuing]. To abrogate these funds.

[Crosstalk.]

Ms. DELAURO. It is the prerogative of the Appropriations Committee.

Secretary NOEM [continuing]. Are being reevaluated to make sure that they—

Ms. DELAURO. The power of the purse resides—

Secretary NOEM [continuing]. Are being spent appropriately—

Ms. DELAURO [continuing]. Here—

Secretary NOEM [continuing]. The way you all directed they be spent.

Ms. DELAURO [continuing]. And not there. Keep it in mind, because it is the Constitution of the United States.

Thank you.

Secretary NOEM. I am very familiar with it.

Mr. AMODEI. I am happy to have this conversation take place off the clock, but now we are going to move to the gentleman from the Magnolia State for your second round of questioning.

Mr. GUEST. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ms. Noem, I want to let you know what a refreshing hearing this has been, to have someone who comes before this committee who is plainspoken, who has a desire to secure the border, a desire to enforce the law, to have someone in your position who is willing to get out from behind a desk, to leave Washington, to go there and be there on the front lines with the men and women who serve.

I just want to thank you for not being the typical bureaucrat who routinely would come before this committee time and time again under the Biden-Harris Administration who really had no idea because they had not been down there serving and alongside the men and women who were serving.

So thank you for your leadership, and thank you for being plainspoken, and thank you for what you stand for.

INTERIOR ENFORCEMENT AND DETENTION BEDS

As we continue to secure the border and as we see those numbers continue to hold, I believe at some point that DHS will be able to reallocate resources to the interior——

Secretary NOEM. Uh-huh.

Mr. GUEST [continuing]. That once those resources have been reallocated, that we will see those numbers of interior enforcement—— we will see those numbers increase.

And one of the things that we have to do, as we are contemplating this appropriations package for next year, is we have to figure out the number of detention beds. And I know that the detention beds have been something of a contention with the previous Administration. They always came in with an extremely low number of detention beds, knowing that Republicans then would always plus-up that number to make sure that we had the number necessary.

And so I guess my question is, as we are looking at putting next year's budget together and as we are looking at funding detention beds, what is the number of detention beds that you feel, Madam Secretary, that you are going to need going forward?

Secretary NOEM. The President has been clear from the beginning with his advisors in the White House on homeland security that we need much more capacity in detention beds in the country.

We have upwards to 50,000 people that are in detention centers today that are moving out of the country, moving to go home to their countries, that we are negotiating and working on travel documents and repatriation with, but we have the ability to go out and act quicker in this country, but need the space in which to hold them until those processes can take place.

So we need upwards to an additional 50,000 beds, 60,000 beds, in order to make sure that we have the ability to not slow down enforcement operations and bring bad actors and criminals and those with final removal orders into our authority so that we can move them out faster.

So, you know, the whole——

Mr. GUEST. And, Madam Secretary, if——

Secretary NOEM. Yes?

Mr. GUEST. I am not trying to cut you off, but a lack of detention beds could be a real deterrent to your men and women being able to perform the mission——

Secretary NOEM. Absolutely.

Mr. GUEST [continuing]. That they need to do.

Secretary NOEM. Absolutely.

Mr. GUEST. And so, if Congress wants to get serious about protecting the American people, then we are going to have to fund not only the manpower that you need, but we are going to have to fund the detention beds so those individuals can be detained——

Secretary NOEM. Yeah.

Mr. GUEST [continuing]. They can be brought before a judge, and then they can be ordered to be removed. Is that correct?

Secretary NOEM. That is correct.

And I would also just clarify and make a point that the request from reconciliation, \$175 billion, is for this term of this President, for the 4 years. And you see in the numbers that were released by OMB this last week that the \$43 billion that would be the increase into this budget is from the reconciliation, one-quarter percent of what that total would be.

CENTERS OF EXCELLENCE

Mr. GUEST. And I want to switch gears in my last minute and a half and talk about DHS Centers of Excellence.

Secretary NOEM. Uh-huh.

Mr. GUEST. I know that those are where DHS partners with academic institutions really across the Nation. Some of those institutions include Texas A&M; my alma mater, Mississippi State University; the University of Nebraska; Arizona State.

And I know, as DHS is seeking to kind of realign mission areas, I have seen that there is consideration of either reducing funding or in some cases cutting the Centers of Excellence.

I want you to know that, while I am very—want to make sure that I am a great steward of taxpayer money—particularly at the center at Mississippi State. I have been there firsthand. I have seen the great work that they have done on unmanned aerial systems. I believe that they are an incredible return on our investment.

But I would like to just ask you very quickly if you could share a little bit about how the Department plans to invest in these critical research functions that I think are important to the mission of DHS.

Secretary NOEM. Yes. And that is the evaluation that is happening. And two of those have already been reevaluated, in Nebraska and Alaska, and we will continue to do that with the rest of the allocations that go to Centers of Excellence throughout the country.

But we have to look at how these dollars are being spent to align with the mission that is the Department of Homeland Security—cybersecurity, terrorism defense, building out and hardening our systems to protect our national security.

So that is what is undergoing now in your state, and we will continue to evaluate that and stay in communication with you.

Mr. GUEST. Thank you, Madam Secretary.

And I yield back.

Mr. AMODEI. You know, for a guy from the Magnolia State, you had a hard time getting into schools in Mississippi, I guess, huh? You named every school in the Nation except Mississippi State or something like that.

But that is not the purpose of this hearing.

The gentlelady from Iowa is recognized for your second round of questions.

Mrs. HINSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you again for your patience, Madam Secretary.

And we know, obviously, states like mine, Iowa, and South Dakota are not necessarily border states, but certainly every State did become a border state under the previous Administration, with that chaos we saw. And the consequences of that porous border really reached far beyond the Rio Grande River there—the deadly fentanyl coming into our communities, the adversaries taking advantage and exploiting our immigration system.

And so that is what I kind of want to touch on, is the adversaries and what they were able to do, specifically China.

Secretary NOEM. Uh-huh.

BORDER ENCOUNTERS OF CHINESE NATIONALS

Mrs. HINSON. To put it in perspective, in the first 7 months of Fiscal Year 2024, more than 27,000 Chinese nationals were encountered at the southern border. Under President Trump, we have seen that number drop significantly, reflecting that clear shift in deterrence and enforcement.

So can you walk us through what specific mechanisms have been put in place to ensure that these individuals from adversarial nations are now being thoroughly vetted and how that process has changed since the previous Administration?

Secretary NOEM. Yes.

And, you know, every country is being treated the same as far as how we are treating the folks that are there and here illegally. People that came into this country from China and from other countries are all being vetted and their background checks being gone through.

And I would say, some of the reasons that we have had to reevaluate some of the programs that were abused under the Biden Administration is because countries weren't participating with us, they weren't sharing their information.

One of the things I have challenged Canada with in a lot of the discussions that we have had over recent months was they weren't taking their own citizens back home that were here in this country illegally and they weren't sharing all of the criminal background checks of individuals who were in our country illegally. They weren't telling us who they were or what they had done, if they had human smuggling in their background or crimes. And so that was some of the access that we were asking them for. We were grateful that they addressed, for instance, designating a fentanyl czar.

But that information-sharing is critically important. And we do not have that kind of partnership with China.

We didn't just see Chinese nationals infiltrate our country over the southern border; they are coming over the northern border as well. And we see needs in the Great Lakes region and people coming in. It is easy to access Canada, and, once they do, then they drop down into our vulnerable areas. So we have continued to maintain resources and strengthen them at the northern border as well.

But we work closely with INTERPOL that has an agreement with many different countries to do vetting and background checks and criminal background information-sharing on folks across the world. But many of the times when the State Department is negotiating on repatriation and travel documents, they are having discussions on what we can do to share information.

When I made trips to El Salvador, to Colombia, and to Mexico, those trips were made so that I could get those governments to share more information with us. In fact, one of the things that we did while we were there was sign new agreements with those countries to share more data and information, to have them give us biometric information that they collected, to give us more thorough travel documents of individuals that were of concern here and had been breaking our laws.

And so having those discussions gives us more information to make sure that this country is safer into the future.

Mrs. HINSON. Do you feel like those conversations have helped to inform broader national-security efforts——

Secretary NOEM. Absolutely.

Mrs. HINSON [continuing]. Cross-departmentally?

And, you know, when we think about the real risk here, it is these international, transnational criminal gangs, the cartels——

Secretary NOEM. Absolutely.

Mrs. HINSON [continuing]. State-sponsored networks. You know, obviously, we talk about the Chinese nationals, and the reason the PRC is not cooperating and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is not cooperating is because they are intent on infiltrating our country.

Secretary NOEM. That is correct.

Mrs. HINSON. So do you feel like all those relationships are really helping us to strengthen the intel that we are able to gather.

Secretary NOEM. Absolutely. We have seen many, many times where information that we got on somebody who was here that may have been on our terrorist watch list, suspected terrorist watch list, or someone who was a very dangerous part of a foreign terrorist organization, that information may have been shared with us from other country because of those security agreements that we have in place.

And when countries do not adhere to sharing that type of information, they don't get the privileges necessary that have been granted to them in the past. And we have seen that with visa overstay, we have seen that with lack of information-sharing, that perhaps they don't get to continue in programs that are under the purview of the Department of Homeland Security because they haven't been willing partners to help us secure our country.

Mrs. HINSON. Yeah. Certainly, accountability is back——

Secretary NOEM. Yeah.

Mrs. HINSON [continuing]. And I appreciate that. So thank you so much, Madam Secretary.

Secretary NOEM. Thank you.

Mrs. HINSON. I yield back.

Mr. AMODEI. Thank you.

Madam Secretary, you have been kind of a marathon runner. It is 12:30. And I have endured all these questions along with you.

Secretary NOEM. Good.

Mr. AMODEI. And so, now, I am not going to be a hypocrite and ask a bunch, but I am going to highlight a couple things, since you have a bunch of your staff here.

Secretary NOEM. Yeah.

INFORMATION SHARING TO COMMITTEE

Mr. AMODEI. Because we are kind of at the going-forward place, and so information, as you have just alluded to, in terms of international stuff is important here as well.

Several people have talked about the BRIC program in FEMA. And what I think is missing in the evaluation is—you know, your initial reaction is, “Okay, so a bunch of stuff got canceled,” and so it is like, “Okay, why?”

And it is like, listen, if there was an analysis done and it was like, “Hey, this flunked it; it was”—whatever, whatever. The answer that we don’t want is, “Well”—and I am not saying you guys did it.

Secretary NOEM. Uh-huh.

Mr. AMODEI. But it is like, “Hey, we ran an algorithm, or OMB did something or whatever, and it got canceled.” So it is like, well, then tell us who at OMB so we can go to them and say, “We would like to know why you did that,” which I think is a legitimate thing.

So what I think I am going to do is, instead of saying, you know, the hard question, “Will you commit to do a case-by-case review”—it is like, you guys have other stuff to do than a case-by-case.

What I am thinking about doing—and the Committee Members that are still here, thank you for—is to say, “Listen, each member, you got three things you want an answer, a specific answer, for? Give them to us to transmit on, and they will do that analysis.”

Secretary NOEM. Right.

CYBERSECURITY EFFORTS AGAINST CHINA

Mr. AMODEI. So that is my thought on that.

I am not a CISA guy; you know that. I mean, I can barely use one of these all—God knows who is listening right now.

But, anyhow, having said that, when I see—when I see—and I get elections and redirection and all that other sort of stuff. But when I see, here we go—and we have got Chairman Green and other folks going, “My God, China is kicking our butt” and blah, blah, blah. And it is like, well, we did this many through—not that you didn’t—but, anyhow—this many retired, this many got this, this many got that. And then I look at the skinny budget, and it is like, by the way, we are taking more.

And I think somebody got into it. It is like, what is the plan so when—and you have been there long enough; you know this—when

somebody goes, "Hey, you guys presided over cutting a half a billion dollars in CISA to do other stuff. What was that based on?"

Secretary NOEM. Uh-huh.

Mr. AMODEI. Clearly, we don't want to be in the position and won't be in the position of, "Well, I don't know. That is what they said they needed."

Not that there is a trust factor there. There is not. But it is like, we need some building blocks for whoever the CISA people are, whatever. It is like, what is the plan for us to be kicking China's butt or whatever you want to—however you want to describe it, and how we are still okay on that civilian-sector stuff?

Secretary NOEM. Uh-huh.

Mr. AMODEI. And, by the way, that is stuff we need because, when it comes to markup for this Committee to transmit it on to the bigger Committee, I mean, we need solid ground for that sort of stuff.

TSA SCREENING ACTIVITY

TSA, same thing. I will tell you, what I have heard so far is that the state of the equipment that they are using, whether they are screening your purse or your checked baggage or whatever—I am familiar with one situation where it is like, hey, the equipment is 15 years old. Nobody services it in that neighborhood. They have to have somebody come over the hill from California. And, by the way, that takes a while. And, in the meantime, they are not screening the bags before they go on the plane, or it takes forever.

So I am going to be focusing on, what are you doing to upgrade—just the same as you are on the border. It is like, what are you doing to upgrade that technology?

ICE OPERATIONAL TEMPO

And the last thing I have before we get to—thank you, Jesus—closing statements, the last thing is—and we have gotten around the edge of it. When we talk about ICE operational tempo—

Secretary NOEM. Uh-huh.

Mr. AMODEI [continuing]. I can't tell you how quick it is going to take me to get Amodei from apprehended through whatever the process is and on a plane going back to where he belongs. But we need some structure for, "Hey, we are just blowing and going, and we will just let you know."

It is like, somebody—I would think that there would be an idea to say, "Listen, this may change, but right now, from what we know from running the outfit for 4 months, this is kind of our average from 'stack them and rack them' and 'three hots and a cot' to 'we are going to the airport,'" some basis that when you are asked that question—not you, but us—"What are you doing with detention beds," it is like, "Well, listen, they have got 51,000 now, but here is what we think the operational tempo is going to be." And, by the way, if it changes, then all it takes is, whoop, we got an uptick, we got a downtick, but we don't expect it to.

But some sort of thing to say, "Listen, the average cost of shipping somebody out, it takes us—we need a detention bed for 6 days on the average," or whatever it is. I don't—and that is the problem, Madam Secretary. I don't know what it is.

Secretary NOEM. Yeah.

Mr. AMODEL. So when we say—and, you know, if somebody says, “Hey, well, how many more beds do you need,” it is like, I get you are trying to responsive, but there is no ability to go say, “Here is what the number is based on. It may change, but here is what it is based on right now.” And so that would be necessary on this stuff.

So, listen, they wrote this stuff, and they did a great job—thank you. “Before we wrap up,” “reconciliation,” “significant investments”—yeah, okay, that is all good. Somebody said that.

I know the Department hopes to be made whole with reconciliation, but, in the meantime, you need to live within your means.

It is our job, as Members, to make sure the Department is appropriately spending the money Congress provides as well as to ensure the Department has the resources that it needs to execute its mission on an annual basis.

That work begins in earnest today as we begin the 2026 process. We will move quickly but not hastily, working with every Member, to produce a bill that will pass the House and floor, as we have done in the last few years.

I expect the Department to be a good partner in the process, and I ask you for your commitment that communication between this Committee and your Department will be significantly better moving forward. That is not a, “What does he mean by that?” It is like, we need better communication.

Secretary NOEM. Uh-huh.

Mr. AMODEL. I am interested in going forward.

We expect to receive routine briefings and reports from DHS on time, and any changes in programs and policy—it is your absolute prerogative to make changes; please tell us—to be proactively communicated so that we can work collaboratively and to secure the Homeland.

Here is my promise to you: We won’t surprise you. Please don’t surprise us. While everybody else is good with that, sometimes—you know, I am a lot older than you are, so sometimes I react poorly.

For the get-back questions that Members of the subcommittee had today, we ask that you respond in 15 business days. There will be some additional questions members provide in writing. We ask you to respond to those in 30 days.

Mr. AMODEL. And here is the part that you have been waiting for.

I would like to thank you, Madam Secretary, for being here today.

The subcommittee stands adjourned.

Secretary NOEM. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[Whereupon, at 12:38 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBCOMMITTEE HOMELAND SECURITY
U.S. HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Oversight Hearing – Department of Homeland Security
Tuesday, May 6, 2025

Representative Newhouse

1. Cybersecurity Information Sharing Act

To: Secretary Noem

Congress passed the Cybersecurity Information Sharing Act of 2015 as Title I of the Cybersecurity Act of 2015. The legislation established an important cybersecurity information sharing structure that allows the federal government to collect and disseminate threat information and enables private sector entities to voluntarily share that information with the government, as well as among themselves. Recent events and the ongoing threat posed by foreign pervasive cyber operations underscore the importance of timely public-private information sharing.

Question: Important provisions of the Cybersecurity Information Sharing Act of 2015 expire in September 2025. Can you briefly discuss the value and impact of voluntary information sharing? Does the Administration support the Act's extension and for how long? If not, what reforms might the Administration seek to fit the evolving threats of today and into the future?

RESPONSE:

- Voluntary information sharing among government and private sector entities is fundamental to the Department's cybersecurity mission.
- The Cybersecurity Information Sharing Act of 2015 is critical to defending U.S. critical infrastructure from cyber threats and enabling critical information sharing and operational collaboration between public and private sectors, and within the private sector. Allowing the Cybersecurity Information Sharing Act of 2015 to expire undermines years of operational efforts to secure government and critical infrastructure networks developed through sharing enabled under this law.
- Specifically, this law incentivizes private sector and State, local, tribal, and territorial entities to voluntarily share cyber threat indicators or defensive measures among themselves and with Federal agencies for cybersecurity purposes by providing liability

protection, an antitrust exemption for private entities sharing with each other, exemptions from Federal and State regulatory use, and preservation of applicable privileges for shared information. Two instances of the importance of voluntary information sharing are the Salt and Volt Typhoons:

- *Salt Typhoon* – Private sector victims shared cyber threat information with the U.S. Government, subject to the protections provided under the Cybersecurity Information Sharing Act of 2015, about a nation state actor that compromised their systems. This allowed the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency to work with federal partners to validate intelligence, coordinate defensive actions, and collaborate with industry.
- *Volt Typhoon* – Volt Typhoon is a People's Republic of China state-sponsored cyber actor that prepositioned itself for disruptive or destructive cyberattacks against many different parts of U.S. critical infrastructure in the event of a major crisis or conflict. The Department's operational response relies heavily on cyber threat indicators from third parties and victims shared pursuant to the Cybersecurity Information Sharing Act of 2015. Without this information, Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency's response activities — including victim notifications, proactive engagements with critical infrastructure, and release of cyber defense guidance — is significantly hindered. In one case, a critical infrastructure operator informed Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency of potential Volt Typhoon activity on their network, leading to a proactive hunt by Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency, which informed a joint cybersecurity advisory for network defenders to identify and evict the adversary from their networks.

Yes, the Administration supports the reauthorization of the Cybersecurity Information Sharing Act of 2015. This legislation is critical in transforming our nation's ability to share cyber threat information between the government and private sector and within the private sector. The Administration supports extending the effective period for 10 years, consistent with when Congress first passed this law. We support extending the law without changes.

Representative Ashley Hinson

2. Interoperable Communications

To: Secretary Noem

Recently, we have seen operations or events where different law enforcement, military, and local public safety agencies are working together, but they lack interoperable communications. You recently mentioned your goal of fixing the communication problem. This Committee has funded low-cost, interoperable mesh networks for CBP and ICE to use in the field and multi-agency operations with great success.

Question: Does the Department plan to expand low-cost, interoperable mesh networks across other DHS components to solve the persistent interoperability situation?

RESPONSE:

The Department of Homeland Security, through coordination and efforts of the Department of Homeland Security Office of the Chief Information Officer Joint Wireless Program Management Office, continues to collaborate closely with U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, U.S. Customs and Border Enforcement, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, U.S. Secret Service, and the Science and Technology Directorate to enhance mesh capabilities by leveraging both commercial vendors and government-owned networks to expand interoperable communications based on the Component operational needs. For example, the Joint Wireless Program Management Office is deploying a point-to-multipoint data transport system in collaboration with U.S. Customs and Border Enforcement, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement Homeland Security Investigations, and the Drug Enforcement Administration at the Southwest Border in the Rio Grande Valley Area of Responsibility. This enables end-user communication devices operating in mesh environments to connect to these tower nodes, allowing multiple components to effectively use this data transport system.

Furthermore, to address interoperable communications challenges the Joint Wireless Program Management Office:

- Assessed the feasibility of a 5G Network-as-a-Service model using Government C-band (4400-4940 MHz), known commercially as 5G Band n79. This model offers several benefits, including reduced cost, risk, and schedule by leveraging existing, scalable commercial cellular infrastructure. It also includes Wireless Priority Services and interoperability with Land Mobile Radio mission-critical services, providing extensive coverage inside and outside areas of responsibility, including mobile routes and temporary setups. This approach overcomes capacity limitations encountered with commercial networks and simplifies the allocation of service costs to the government.
- Exploring use of Advanced Wireless Services to pilot more efficient and cost-effective solutions, leveraging existing capabilities to develop emerging low-cost solutions that can be scaled across Department of Homeland Security Components.

The Department of Homeland Security Office of the Chief Information Officer remains committed to advancing interoperable communication solutions by leveraging existing technologies, exploring innovative and cost-effective approaches to meet operational needs of all Department of Homeland Security Components.

House Appropriations Ranking Member DeLauro

3. Allegations of FEMA Dysfunction

To: Kristi Noem, Secretary

During your testimony you indicated that you would follow-up with all the evidence we need to prove the “dysfunction of the current agency [FEMA]” cited in your written testimony. Since that time the Administration has fired the head of FEMA, Cameron Hamilton, for testifying before the House Appropriations Committee that “As the senior advisor to the president on disasters and emergency management and to the secretary of Homeland Security, [he did] not

believe it is in the best interest of the American people to eliminate the Federal Emergency Management Agency.”

Question: Please provide evidence of the dysfunction at FEMA cited in your written testimony.

RESPONSE:

- The Federal Emergency Management Agency is actively addressing the dysfunction and mission scope creep that has impeded our ability to deliver on our core mission. Some examples of dysfunction that we found include the following:
 - A Federal Emergency Management Agency employee was terminated for discrimination against survivors for their political affiliation and three others in their chain of command were removed for lack of leadership. Discrimination against survivors because of their political views is not tolerated.
 - Programs like the Targeted Violence and Terrorism Prevention Grant were weaponized against individuals to deny them their First Amendment rights.
 - The Shelter and Services Program facilitated mass illegal alien migration and supported radical non-government organizations, cities, and states breaking federal law.

Question: Please provide evidence of the “thousands and thousands of” examples of failures by FEMA referenced in your testimony.

RESPONSE:

- The process for survivors applying for and receiving aid is burdensome, technologically outdated, and slow. Survivors are told to appeal, which leads them to believe the process is over when it’s simply a need for additional documentation. This has caused delays in the process for weeks at a time and unfortunately, some to give up on requesting the much needed help altogether because they believe their case has been denied due to poor communication and a burdensome process by FEMA.
- Delivery of disaster housing for survivors is inefficient and expensive. It takes far too long to place survivors in housing units, generally due to complicated implementation requirements and guidelines. The Federal Emergency Management Agency’s hoteling program is confusing for survivors to navigate. It is often hard to find an available hotel room, and survivors are commonly deemed ineligible without clear communication or explanation.
- The Public Assistance process is complex, requires a policy guide hundreds of pages long, and requires communities to hire expensive consultants to ensure access to funds. Funding can take years to obligate, delaying recovery and ultimately increasing costs. State and local partners spend months arguing with the Federal Emergency Management Agency about what costs are eligible, instead of focusing on rebuilding their communities.
- The Federal Emergency Management Agency manages hundreds of open disasters, many dating back over a decade since they were declared. There are billions of dollars in unliquidated balances against open projects. The Federal Emergency Management Agency is

also overcommitted in the Disaster Relief Fund and requires additional funding to meet current needs, while previously obligated funds go unspent.

- Over the years the Federal Emergency Management Agency suffered from extreme mission creep, responding to migrant issues, train derailments, and other non-traditional incidents. This reduced agency focus on its traditional mission, resulting in delayed assistance and poor customer service.

Question: Please provide evidence of the “waste, fraud, and abuse” cited in your response tied to FEMA federal grant funding.

RESPONSE:

- We must reduce inefficiency and waste while empowering states and communities to better use local knowledge and resources for disaster preparedness and response.
- The previous Administration prioritized promoting equity over disaster response. Focusing on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion above all else resulted in millions of dollars spent in areas that do not increase support for survivors but instead reduced funding available for response, recovery and mitigation efforts.
- In addition, some programs lack authorization from Congress and duplicate state and local efforts.

4. Immigration Enforcement Costs

To: Kristi Noem, Secretary

We know that multiple Departments including Defense, State, Treasury, and Justice are deploying their own resources related to immigration enforcement and border security, but I think there is a real lack of clarity on who is paying for what. For example, it sounds like the Department of Defense is paying for portions, but not all, of the costs associated with the operations to and at Guantanamo Bay. We are hearing that the State Department is paying for the U.S. government’s detention of individuals at CECOT in El Salvador, but less clear on who is paying for the flights there. As Ranking Member it’s critical for me to know where the taxpayer dollars we appropriate are ultimately spent.

Question: Can you clarify what the Department of Homeland Security is paying for specifically with respect to operations to and at Guantanamo Bay as well as El Salvador and any other country outside of the United States that you plan to initiate detention operations with.

RESPONSE:

U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement facilitates flights to El Salvador or other countries for individuals who are detained. Removals are facilitated via charter flights and also commercial flights. The Department of Defense has also assisted with removal flights.

For individuals who are not detained and seek to return home voluntarily, the Department of Homeland Security defers to the Department of State.

As for the Naval Station Guantanamo Bay, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement obligated approximately \$10.5 million for costs associated with the Migrant Operations Center, travel, and supplies.

Question: Of the amounts the DHS is spending please clarify the amounts in FY 2025 and projected for FY 2026.

RESPONSE:

For questions concerning funding with respect to El Salvador or other countries, the Department of Homeland Security defers to the Department of State.

Regarding cost associated with Naval Station Guantanamo Bay, please refer to the table:

Activity	January 21, 2025 through May 7, 2025 Actuals	Fiscal Year 2026 Projection
Migrant Operations Center Detention Facility Costs	\$9,577,433	\$28,732,299
Travel	\$720,335	\$2,161,005
Supplies	\$226,053	\$678,159
Total	\$ 10,523,821	\$ 31,571,463

Question: Please include the analysis of alternatives and cost benefit analysis performed prior to the Department's request for assistance to the Department of Defense mandated pursuant to Section 540, Division C, Public Law 118-47 as operating under Public Law 119-4, Section 1101.

RESPONSE:

President Trump issued several executive orders to address the crisis at our southern border and to secure the border. The Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Homeland Security were directed to take all appropriate and lawful action to achieve operational control of the southern border of the United States. In response, the Department of Defense is providing support with military personnel and resources to secure the border at no cost to the Department of Homeland Security. Given the President's direction, the Department of Defense is providing support on a non-reimbursable basis; therefore, the Department has determined that Department of Defense support is the best most cost-effective alternative for these Requests for Assistance.

The Department of Homeland Security will work with committee staff on the report scope to ensure legal requirements are satisfied.

Representative Escobar

5. Cost Benefit Analysis and Alternative Analysis

To: Secretary Noem

As you may know, it is currently written in statute that DHS needs to provide this committee with alternative analysis and cost benefit analysis reports on any request DHS makes to the Department of Defense for assistance with border security operations. To my knowledge, these reports have not been given to the committee despite asks from committee staff.

Question:

- Has DHS been performing these analyses for any of the requests they have in with the DoD?
- Will you commit to providing these reports to the committee pursuant to the law?

RESPONSE:

President Trump issued several executive orders to address the crisis at our southern border and to secure the border. The Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of Homeland Security were directed to take all appropriate and lawful action to achieve operational control of the southern border of the United States. In response, the Department of Defense provides support with military personnel and resources to secure the border at no cost to the Department of Homeland Security. Given the President's direction, the Department of Defense provides support on a non-reimbursable basis; therefore, the Department has determined that Department of Defense support is the most cost-effective alternative for these Requests for Assistance.

Yes. The Department of Homeland Security will work with committee staff on the report scope to ensure the legal requirement is satisfied.

6. Processing Coordinators

To: Secretary Noem

Secretary Noem, as you've noted, DHS is set to receive a \$175 billion dollar increase in budget authority through reconciliation. That is why I was alarmed when I read the bill and saw it does not allow any of that funding to be used for processing coordinators. These coordinators have been critical to ensure CBP agents are able to do their jobs and get back on the frontlines when we experience mass surges at the border

Question: What is the Department's plan is for existing processing coordinators and why this huge boost in funding will not be used on them?

RESPONSE:

As a result of President Trump's mandate to secure the southern border, illegal alien encounters have plummeted by over 90 percent. The current quantity of processing coordinators is sufficient to support frontline U.S. Border Patrol agents.

QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBCOMMITTEE HOMELAND SECURITY
U.S. HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Oversight Hearing – Department of Homeland Security
Tuesday, May 6, 2025

Representative Tony Gonzales (TX-23)

1. Review of the DHS Centers of Excellence program

To: Department of Homeland Security Secretary Kristi Noem

Texas A&M University is home to the Cross-Border Threat Screening and Supply Chain Defense (CBTS) Center of Excellence, a DHS-funded research hub focused on the intersection of border security and supply chain resilience. The Center was recently terminated pending further review, and Texas A&M AgriLife Research is formally requesting that DHS reverse the decision. CBTS conducts research that directly supports national security priorities. With Texas sharing a 1,254-mile border with Mexico and hosting 28 international crossings, the Center develops advanced tools—such as artificial intelligence—to enhance frontline threat detection. Since 2020, CBTS has trained more than 30,000 Customs and Border Protection agents and educated students across key homeland security disciplines, including cybersecurity and cyber threat intelligence.

Question: Given this body of work, what is the current status of DHS's review of the Centers of Excellence program, and when can we expect an update on the future of CBTS and its ongoing research initiatives?

RESPONSE:

I believe strongly in the work and performance of the Centers, including work performed by the Cross-Border Threat Screening and Supply Chain Defense Center of Excellence. However, we must find efficiencies when balancing typically longer-term research with the immediate needs of the Components. The Centers of Excellence will transition to emeritus status with no continued annual funding from the Department of Homeland Security. The expertise and capabilities afforded through the Department of Homeland Security Centers of Excellence remain available via utilization of their Basic Ordering Agreement. Basic Ordering Agreements are a streamlined funding mechanism that allow the government to fund directed research for more immediate impacts through emeritus Centers of Excellence. The Science and Technology

Directorate will continue to resource research activities with a range of performers, including academia, to assess emerging vulnerabilities and anticipate future threats within priority mission areas.

**DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY
APPROPRIATIONS FOR 2026**

WEDNESDAY, MAY 7, 2025.

**OVERSIGHT HEARING: THE FEDERAL EMERGENCY
MANAGEMENT AGENCY**

WITNESS

**CAMERON HAMILTON, SENIOR OFFICIAL PERFORMING THE DUTIES
OF THE ADMINISTRATOR, FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT
AGENCY**

Mr. AMODEI. Good afternoon. This is the time and place posted for the meeting of the House Homeland Security—Appropriations Homeland Security Subcommittee. I am pleased to be joined by the subcommittee's distinguished ranking member, the gentlelady from Illinois, Ms. Underwood.

Welcome, Mr. Acting Administrator Hamilton. I thank you for being here. While we await the details of the full fiscal year 2026 budget request, the focus of the hearing will be on FEMA's priorities, a deeper dive into the \$646 million in cuts to grants, and the \$26.5 billion request for the disaster relief fund mentioned in the skinny budget.

I guess it will be no secret to anybody who has been to a couple of these meetings that I am still waiting for anybody on the committee to ask that I do an opening statement. And since we haven't had that request, I am going to now defer to my distinguished ranking member, Ms. Underwood, for your opening statement.

Ms. UNDERWOOD. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this hearing to conduct oversight and discuss the fiscal year 2026 budget priorities of the Federal Emergency Management Agency. I would also like to welcome Mr. Hamilton, the senior official performing the duties of the FEMA administrator to his first hearing before our subcommittee. Thank you for meeting with me yesterday ahead of today's hearing.

First and foremost, I would like to thank the dedicated FEMA workforce as well as emergency managers across the country who help our communities and constituents before, during, and after disasters. Last year, there was a major disaster declaration every 4 days affecting over 40 percent of Americans. The data is clear: disasters and extreme weather are getting worse and will continue to do so driven by climate change.

From Hurricanes Beryl, Debby, Francine, Helene, and Milton in the 2024 season, to the 2025 Eaton and Palisades fires in Los Angeles that my colleagues and I visited in January. Disasters are getting bigger, more frequent, and more expensive. But the bare

bones budget for fiscal year 2026 released last week proposes a \$646 million cut from fiscal year 2025 levels to FEMA's initiatives that support State and local governments. I am concerned that this will cut critical grant programs that firefighters, first responders, and hospitals in rural communities like mine rely on.

I am also concerned that this will cut resources for houses of worship and faith-based organizations, including nonprofit security grants and the national domestic preparedness consortium. Your budget suggests that it provides duplicative efforts of existing Federal and State programs without evidence.

Similarly, your termination of the Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities, or BRIC program, in early April rips away desperately needed and life-saving resources that communities need to protect themselves from future disasters. This short-sighted approach would raise recovery costs for taxpayers and local communities while leaving our constituents less protected.

On the topic of disaster recovery costs, the disaster relief fund, or DRF, is on the brink of depletion, and is expected to run a deficit of about \$9 billion in fiscal year 2025. That is before assuming any costs associated with future disasters that may occur this year.

Hurricane season begins in 25 days. The growing demand on the DRF creates uncertainty and reliance on implementing immediate needs funding measures to remain solvent ultimately limiting when and how the public receives help from FEMA. More broadly, we have bipartisan concerns after the comments from Secretary Noem and President Trump regarding the future handling of FEMA as an agency.

Without a budget request with enough detail to review, public reporting and statements by the Trump administration are our main window into what may be on the horizon for the Department. And when it comes to FEMA, Secretary Noem said that she wants to eliminate it, and President Trump said that it could, quote, "go away."

Let me be clear. Eliminating FEMA would cause catastrophic and needless suffering to the American public. State emergency management leaders have gone on the record since those comments. They are not equipped to handle the roles FEMA currently plays martialing emergency resources from multiple Federal agencies, providing flood insurance, conducting damage assessments, and distributing billions of dollars in recovery funds. Pushing disaster response and recovery fully back to the States is dangerous and unrealistic. I hope to hear today about your plans to improve the agency with fiscal year 2025 dollars as well as what your highest priorities are for fiscal year 2026 and the funding needed to realize those priorities.

Thank you, Mr. Hamilton, for being here today, and I look forward to your testimony and answers to our questions.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. AMODEI. Thank you, Madam Ranking Member. I am going to defer my questions, Mr. Hamilton, until the end, so with that, we will go ahead and return to Ms. Underwood while she is warmed up.

Ms. UNDERWOOD. Opening statement.

Mr. AMODEI. We are going to skip his and skip mine. I don't know what—it turns out they are right, so why don't you go ahead. This room is such a great one.

So let's try this again from the top, Mr. Hamilton. First of all, I would like to request FEMA assistance in getting me on track for this meeting, and then after that, while we will make your full statement available as part of the record, you have the floor for the next 5 minutes for your opening statement. Please proceed.

STATEMENT OF CAMERON HAMILTON

Mr. HAMILTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, for your time. If you would prefer, that I don't make an opening statement for the sake of everyone, I am more than happy to accommodate, but Chairman Amodei, Ranking Member Underwood, members of the subcommittee, I want to thank you for the opportunity to speak before you today specifically on FEMA and our priorities.

I am a combat veteran, a former Navy SEAL, a husband, a father, an experienced public servant, and also a man of deep faith. I have served under five different administrations for two decades in various capacities in counterterrorism operations, response and recovery, emergency management, and executive leadership, yet the highest honor of my career is serving right now in the Trump administration keeping the American people first.

I am now currently serving as a senior official performing the duties of the administrator, which is the longest acronym ever, SOPDO, of the Federal Emergency Management Agency. FEMA was established to provide focused support in truly catastrophic disasters, yet at times, we have strayed far from that core mission and evolved into an overextended Federal bureaucracy attempting to manage every type of emergency no matter how minor. Instead of being the last resort, FEMA is all too often used by States and public officials as a financial backstop for routine issues that frankly should be handled locally. This misalignment has fostered a culture of dependency, waste, inefficiency while also delaying crucial aid to Americans who are in genuine need.

Red tape, bureaucratic inertia, and top-down micromanagement have turned this disaster recovery into slow, costly, and frustrating processes. It was for this very reason I was hired, to refocus this organization in order to better serve the American people under President Trump's mandate.

Thanks to President Trump and Secretary Noem, we are now in power to restore accountability and federalism to disaster relief. FEMA must return to its core foundational role: supporting States only when disasters truly exceed their capacity. Simplifying recovery processes and safeguarding taxpayer dollars through common-sense reforms.

Under the previous administration, FEMA's top goal was to make equity the foundation of emergency management, which I believe personally is an abhorrent distraction from helping those in need. Politics have no place in emergency management, which is why I directed the termination of additional personnel who fell short of that standard in the wake of the Florida Trump sign scandal my first week on the job.

I have also directed FEMA to focus on three operational priorities and have led to a savings of nearly \$3 billion for the American taxpayer. Building SLTT capacity, focusing on survivors, and maintaining operational readiness are the goals that we now currently hold of which you can find on FEMA's website.

First, FEMA must return to its roots where response to disasters are locally led, State-managed, and federally supported. More than 60 percent of Americans have less than \$1,000 in their bank account, and are incapable of recovering from disasters without assistance. State, local, Tribal, and territorial partners need mentorship to build their disaster preparedness, response recovery capacity, as well as resources when they are overrun by disasters. Delaying this timely and effective and life-saving assistance should never be impacted by the bureaucracy of Washington, D.C.

Secondly, we must focus on survivors using innovative tools, creative methods, and as the President has said, FEMA needs to cut red tape and must communicate with greater speed and clarity. I recall stories of a woman who lost her home and her husband in the same incident and event only to then call me crying struggling about how she is navigating her application for assistance.

When you hold someone in your arms, as I have before, who is bloodied, covered in dirt, and there—and has seen quite literally their worst day, there is little else you think about other than giving them your best in those challenging moments. The American people deserve better. They deserve to be treated with the highest priority, which is why I have directed my workforce to review and improve all methods of our customer service through technology and any means necessary.

Third, we must enhance our operational readiness to build a national resilience plan using risk-informed decision making. Communities look to FEMA in their greatest times of need and it is imperative that we remain ready to respond to those challenges. I am a prudent steward of taxpayer resources. My workforce will prioritize efforts to identify and recover excess funds from contracts, grants, and mission assignments. We will also closely monitor the DRF to ensure that we have firm communication with Congress on a timely basis.

In my current role, I have been intentional in my meeting with the FEMA workforce at headquarters, at each of our regions, and it has been an honor to serve alongside them. I have also met with countless disaster survivors hearing their stories and concerns. I joined Secretary Noem in her travel and visit to North Carolina as well as Kentucky, and we have instituted critical reforms, but we still have much more work to do as we enter hurricane season.

FEMA needs a top down reform, and I encourage that President Trump has directed the creation of a FEMA review council to conduct deeply needed comprehensive review of this agency. The President has also issued many executive orders to streamline government, and Secretary Noem and I are committed to ensuring those executive orders are carried out in both letter and spirit.

Emergency management is at a critical crossroads in our Nation as we seek to improve the methods of serving Americans first. This committee has a vitally important voice in that process with oversight and provides us with the resources necessary to achieve and

implement efficiencies. I look forward to answering each of your questions. Thank you.
[The information follows:]



TESTIMONY

OF

CAMERON HAMILTON
SENIOR OFFICIAL PERFORMING THE DUTIES OF THE ADMINISTRATOR
FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY

BEFORE

THE

HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE -
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY
UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, D.C.

ON

“Oversight Hearing – The Federal Emergency Management Agency”

May 7, 2025
Washington, D.C.

Chairman Amodei, Ranking Member Underwood, and Members of the Subcommittee: Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today on the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) priorities.

I am the Senior Official Performing the Duties of the Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

The Federal Emergency Management Agency was established to provide focused support during truly catastrophic disasters. It has strayed far from its core mission and evolved into an overextended federal bureaucracy attempting to manage every type of emergency – no matter how minor. Instead of being a last resort, FEMA is now frequently used by States as a first responder and a financial backstop for routine issues that should be handled locally. This misalignment has fostered a culture of dependency, waste, and inefficiency, while delaying critical aid to Americans in genuine need. Red tape, bureaucratic inertia, and top-down micromanagement have turned disaster recovery into a slow, costly, and frustrating process. Thanks to President Trump and Secretary Noem, we are now empowered to restore accountability and federalism to disaster relief – FEMA must return to its rightful role: supporting States only when disasters truly exceed their capacity, while empowering local leadership, simplifying recovery processes, and safeguarding taxpayer dollars through commonsense reforms.

Consistent with this vision and guidance provided by President Trump and United States Homeland Security Secretary Noem, I have directed FEMA to focus on three operational priorities.

First, the nation must return to its roots where response to disaster is locally led, State managed, and Federally supported. Building State and local capacity is a critical step towards empowering jurisdictions to lead and manage. Such empowerment requires substantial planning and preparation; therefore, the nation will continue to rely on resources from the Disaster Relief Fund (DRF) before, during, and after disasters. It is essential that FEMA have sufficient funding in the DRF to provide timely support to communities and American citizens during their time of greatest need.

As the President has said, FEMA needs to cut the red tape. We should never let the bureaucracy of Washington, D.C. delay timely and effective delivery of life-saving or life-sustaining assistance. It is crucial that FEMA help and mentor State, local, tribal, and territorial partners to build their disaster resilience, preparedness, response, and recovery capacity, and provide resources and assistance when they are overwhelmed by the scope of a disaster. This means expanding our partnerships, improving our programs, and enhancing our technology to deliver the resources communities and Americans need during their darkest days. The more our partners build resilience, with federal help as appropriate, the more prepared our nation and our fellow Americans will be in the future.

Second, we need to focus on survivors. We have to find the most innovative and creative methods available to deliver assistance to each and every survivor who qualifies for it. We must communicate to survivors with greater speed and clarity, and through more modern means. As

the President has said, FEMA needs to remove cumbersome processes to enable more expeditious response to disaster, so people can return to their homes and so communities can rebuild. Updating our information technology systems is key to accomplishing this priority. Our personnel must stay ready and prepared to respond to a disaster at any moment, whether a hurricane, tornado, flood, or other event. I can assure you the FEMA workforce is focused on assisting survivors during the most traumatic days of their lives. I can recall a story about a woman who lost her home and her husband all in the same event, only to struggle to navigate her application for assistance. The American people deserve to be treated as the highest priority, which is why I have directed my workforce to review and improve on all methods of customer service.

And third, we must enhance our operational readiness by leveraging advanced information technology tools to build national resilience against global and dynamic threats and their associated risks in perpetuity. Our communities look to FEMA during their greatest times of need, and it remains imperative that we remain ready to respond to these challenges. This means modernizing FEMA's antiquated systems and assets used to execute our mission efficiently. FEMA requires funding resources and the expertise to improve and replace dated information technology and security services. Upgrades to these systems will directly enable and sustain mission essential functions, disaster response and recovery, agency operations, and other mission-related activities that rely on such services. In tandem with the IT modernization efforts, FEMA also requires additional support to the Integrated Public Alert and Warning System. Collectively, these enhancements will better position FEMA to put vital resources in the hands of the workforce, our partners and the communities as they work to recover from a disaster.

Our focus at FEMA is about making sure that resources are brought to bear to help communities on their worst day, ensuring we cut red tape. It's about making sure that, when Federal assistance is warranted, we deliver assistance to survivors rapidly, regardless of political affiliation, race, or creed.

To that end, we've increased resources for disaster response and recovery, making available within the DRF funds that were previously set-aside for Building Resilient Infrastructure and Communities (BRIC) projects that would not take place for many years. As prudent stewards of taxpayer resources, we will prioritize efforts to identify and recover excess funds from contracts, grants, and mission assignments. We will also closely monitor the DRF balance and will continue to communicate with Congress on a regular basis regarding funding in the DRF.

I can attest to the fact that the DRF's sustainability is vital to the ongoing work that these communities and American citizens endure across our country.

In my current role, I have been intentional in meeting with FEMA employees at headquarters and at each of our FEMA regions, and meeting with disaster survivors. I joined Secretary Noem on her visit to communities in North Carolina impacted by Hurricane Helene earlier this year.

I saw firsthand how FEMA needs to have a top-to-bottom assessment, and the President, by Executive Order, has directed the creation of a FEMA Review Council to conduct a deeply

needed comprehensive review of the agency. We respect the independence of the Council's review and will welcome its recommendations. I will ensure that FEMA is fully cooperative with the Review Council and our congressional oversight and will participate as appropriate. I know the President and Secretary Noem look forward to the FEMA Review Council's findings and recommendations. The President has also issued a number of Executive Orders to streamline government: Secretary Noem and I are committed to ensuring those executive orders are carried out, in both letter and spirit.

Emergency management is at a critical crossroad in our country as we seek to improve our methods of serving American communities and citizens first. While FEMA works to return to its core missions, consistent with the President Trump and Secretary Noem's vision, the tools and methods we use to assist our communities must be modernized. This Committee has an important voice in this process of change and provides the vital resources we need to implement efficiencies. I look forward to answering your questions.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today, and I look forward to your questions.

Mr. AMODEI. Thank you, sir. Now if it is okay with all of my critics on the committee, I would like to go to Ms. Underwood for her questions. Is there any objection? Ms. Underwood, you are recognized for 5 minutes for your questions.

Ms. UNDERWOOD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Hamilton, I would like to discuss the achieving efficiency for through state and local preparedness executive order. This executive order may sound efficient in theory, but in practice, it reads as though the Federal Government is turning its back on the communities that need it the most.

I am concerned that the goal of this executive order isn't to decentralize disaster response, but to offload Federal responsibility. It effectively tells small towns, rural communities, Tribal nations, and underfunded municipalities you are on your own. I represent a rural and suburban area in northern Illinois, and many of these communities lack emergency management infrastructure, sufficient mitigation planning, and access to Federal support. There is no way that the small towns that I represent are equipped to handle leading coordination and response with multiple Federal agencies in the wake of a major disaster. Shifting the burden to them is not only irresponsible and wasteful, it is dangerous. Can you update this committee on the status of the executive order's implementation and what specific actions has FEMA taken or is FEMA preparing to take under this new directive?

Mr. HAMILTON. Yes, ma'am. Sorry. I was trying to hit the mute button. So we stand by the President in his efforts to ensure that we maintain higher efficiency when it comes to this particular executive order. We are at a bit of an imbalance. We want to partner with States. That partnership requires State investment, and so what we are looking at is policies and initiatives that encourage greater State participation.

This will not be a radical transition in an instant. This has to occur as a phased approach where we mentor States and locals on building capacity and capability. An example of that is Florida and Texas, really two shining beacons of success with emergency management. It took many years to build and implement some of those resources and infrastructure there, and they have done some unbelievable work. In fact, they are some of only States that have actual individual assistance programs whereas many other States do not.

So what we are looking at specifically is finding ways to more closely target risk reduction outcomes for States with future grants and to ensure that States are able and empowered to assume a greater role mostly in what we consider long-term exorbitant recovery costs.

Ms. UNDERWOOD. So then how does that—how is that consistent with the intent of the Stafford Act, which is built around the principle of Federal support when State and local capabilities are exceeded?

Mr. HAMILTON. You are right, and the Stafford Act there is very clear on the role in which the Federal Government plays a resource in assisting those who are overwhelmed. The problem is we have created financial incentives for the continuation of that, and even expanded levels. We have kind of lowered disaster thresholds. We have used other criteria that, to be honest, are a little bit too soft

for my opinion that have incentivized financially a lack of carrying insurance policies as well as lower disaster thresholds, which are probably not the best use of my staff.

This isn't to say that States aren't in need. We know they are. But we have to raise the threshold so that FEMA can truly prioritize efforts where the State is, in fact, overwhelmed. We have a variety of disaster declarations that we have seen that have come to FEMA where the State has also been required to state publicly they have enough insurance to take out a plan and actually execute payments for the costs that they have incurred. This is an imbalance where States have used FEMA as a financial backstop where we believe it is more applicable and appropriate for FEMA to be a utilized resource in the event the State is actually overwhelmed with resources.

Ms. UNDERWOOD. Okay. Thank you. I want to raise a recent memo from your office to FEMA's regional leadership where you state that, quote, "FEMA will discontinue unaccompanied FEMA door-to-door canvassing." For years, FEMA staff have gone door to door in disaster areas meeting survivors where they are, walking them through aid applications, and registering them for support. Unaccompanied canvassing is used when time, staffing, or operational priorities demand rapid outreach. These boots on the ground are not symbolic. For many survivors, FEMA staff are the first people who show up to help. They are often the only meaningful point of contact for people who are unable to travel, or navigate complex systems on their own, and alternative virtual or telephone options are not sufficient. This change will disproportionately hurt disabled Americans, seniors, rural residents and caregivers, people who, through no fault of their own, don't have a car. They don't have broadband access. They don't have the ability to leave a vulnerable family member after a disaster to travel hundreds of miles to disaster recovery centers or FEMA sights in some instances.

Frankly, this policy decision reflects a broader and troubling trend from this administration reducing in-person access to essential Federal services. From Social Security field offices to IRS walk-in centers to now FEMA, we are watching critical points of service become increasingly out of reach for the very people who need them the most.

When I think about who gets hurt, we are talking about people with disabilities. We are talking—you know, we have seen thing, like, Oh, you can go to a kiosk or just go online or call a 1-800 number. After a disaster comes through, the internet doesn't work. Right? The telephone lines and the cell towers may be down. And for rural Americans, people with disabilities, for our seniors, they need help, and it is the responsibility, particularly in the crisis, for our Federal Government to be there for our fellow Americans.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

Mr. AMODEI. Chair now recognizes Mr. Rutherford to give me a different microphone—I mean, now recognizes Mr. Rutherford. The floor is yours for 5 minutes for questions.

Mr. RUTHERFORD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. You know, I have to say, Director, I believe in the federalist concept of subsidiarity. I think you do, too, based on your opening comments. This idea that the Federal Government has to run everything, you recognize

that they don't by pointing out the reasonable domestic security task forces that are operating in Florida, the system in Texas. We need to take responsibility for our own disasters. We have done that in the State of Florida and the State of Texas. We have put together these systems. Our people aren't left—our people aren't left to their own device. The State is there.

And this President is not turning his back on assisting people when the disaster relief fund is being plussed up by \$4 billion. They are not cutting assistance to people in real need. And the difference is, and I think you touched on it as well, is what is the real need? How much of these incidents is the Federal Government responsible for and should be called on to handle?

The idea that somehow FEMA shows up and handles everything for the States, that is not true. It is certainly not true in the State of Florida. And one of the problems that we are having, and I would like to ask a question about this, is the issue surrounding some of the payments, and I think this gets into the issue of subsidiarity, because when you try to drive everything to the top, things slow down. And so if you really want the individual members of your community to be able to get the assistance they need in a timely manner, let's do it at the ground level. Not rely on FEMA to come in and somehow rescue us. That is not what we need.

I see this move, too, in the law enforcement field. This idea that we need to nationalize State and local law enforcement, absolutely not. The depth and the breadth of the security, domestic security in America is based on that diffused responsibility among over 3,000 law enforcement agencies in the country. We don't need somebody to come in and hand-hold us and walk us through everything in our lives. We have a responsibility back home.

I can tell you our government does a fantastic job. This is just a—this is a fight between those who want to be taken care of and those who want to take care of themselves. I want to take care of ourselves. And now we may need some assistance, funding, for example, but beyond that, get it to us quickly so that we don't have to pay all the interest. But beyond that, I think that is the role that FEMA should be playing. And for anybody to indicate that President Trump is turning his back on disaster relief when he has plussed up the budget \$4 billion from 22 to like 26.5. It is quite the contrary.

So my question is, are there things that we can do within the FEMA system to get the money out, get it out more on time? Can you talk to that a little bit, Director.

Mr. HAMILTON. Of course. That is a fantastic question. And you are right, federalism is not always clean. It comes with a give and take and it comes with a partnership. There is a mantra that I believe very firmly in, strong States lead towards a strong nation, and it has to be stratified in that way. Strong States are built from counties and localities and adjacent to that.

So from my perspective, we have created an environment where FEMA has been pushed to amalgamate more responsibilities in a way that has created an unhealthy imbalance in the proper role. So as a result, it has created a lot of bureaucratic inefficiencies that are not the most prudent.

We do have some—I completely sympathize with your statements about receiving payments. There are some challenges that we have there and we are looking at some new technology to make that more rapid and faster. I also want to say that we have reinitiated payments very quickly because of the court order that has been going on, so we are making payments currently, and we are also looking at EHP requirements and many other regulatory controls that allow us to pay out recipients and get grants to move to completion faster. That is what States deserve.

Mr. RUTHERFORD. Exactly. Thank you. I assume my time is used up. I yield back.

Mr. AMODEI. Thank you, Mr. Rutherford. We now recognize the gentleman from the Lone Star State, Mr. Cuellar. The floor is yours for 5 minutes for questions.

Mr. CUELLAR. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you again for your service, the military service and the work that you are doing, and certainly thank all the men and women.

I am from the State of Texas. I think you mentioned both Texas and Florida. Look, I can understand where Texas has been doing well. I can understand the role of the State, but when there is a national disaster, I think the Federal Government plays a role to coordinate and put resources.

When Harvey hit Texas, and you might correct me on the numbers, Texas, which does pretty well, asked FEMA for about \$15 billion, so even the models that we have out there, the States do well, but there is a role for FEMA, especially for natural disasters.

Now, I understand what I think the President is trying to do, find efficiencies, and I can say this for the record. Before we had doggy or DOGE, Texas was doing—Texas, Alabama says that, or maybe Mississippi, but we were doing that in the State of Texas. We actually did performance based budgets and I was involved with John Sharp, and we actually saved the State of Texas billions of dollars without cutting employees, without cutting services. We just found the efficiencies, the duplications. That we did that in the '90s. And talking about billions of dollars in the '90s, that is a lot of money using those dollars, so I am for this.

And I want to give you a couple of ideas that you all might want to consider. The current law right now, which is the Government Performance Results Modernization Act of 2010 was passed by bipartisan coalition here in Congress. It calls for certain things. It calls for—and I will talk about four different things: Operational regulatory efficiency reviews, and I will go—I can sit down, but let me just go. It calls for conducting annual operation reviews, evaluating component department performance against strategic performance goals according to the law. It conducts—should conduct comprehensive review of departmental regulations, policy, and guidance that they identify it as updated. Duplicate, obsolete, inefficient requirements. And of course, should submit that to the appropriations. And it goes on, you know, looking for operation efficiency costs and ways of doing this.

Number one, operational regulatory efficiency. It is the law right now. Number two, contracting and procurement stat. There is a law that comes into play, chapter 13 of title 31, and basically what we are doing is contracts. What happened to the on budget and on

time? Almost every single project I have seen as a member of Congress is not on budget, is not on time. And basically, you know, you start off with open competition on just highlighting. You look at provisions requiring performance on the budget, but you put provisions on budget and on time on it.

And then you incorporate, and the law said—but I don't know how good we are in incorporating financial penalties for unjustified cost overruns, and we see this when an agency runs over time, what is the first thing they do? I don't care if it is military or homeland, I have seen this everywhere. They come and ask Congress for more money. We need more money, otherwise we are not going to be able to finish this project.

But in other places, and I am sure the States do, we do this in Texas, on time, the Texas Department of Transportation is probably the best example, highways and all that. It is on time and on budget is the emphasis, and we need to do that. I will be happy to share some of this other language. Performance measures, development of updated performance measures, if we put in one dollar or we get one dollar back, what is one back? Bang for the dollar that we get.

If you look at all—and I think you all have performance measures, but the problem is you all do them by yourselves, and I am not talking about you, but any agency, they pack themselves, they get the best performance measures, they don't share it with Congress, and we have no idea how they are performing on that.

And then finally, the last part is we, you know, we not only develop and submit the updated performance measures but quarterly performance review. Department operation reviews and efficiency initiatives show progress to a regulatory modernization itself. And I know we do a lot of CRs, and some people agree, some people don't agree, but there are some regulations that are really outdated and are duplicate and are inefficient, and we have done that in States, and I think we need to do that, so there is highlights of things that we can look at.

And again, I am with you. I want to find the efficiency. I want to find this. But can we do it without cutting services and can we do it without cutting employees? And again, it can be done, because we did this in the '90s before we had doggy, DOGE, and it worked. It really works. I mean, the efficiency and effectiveness, what you are all doing, if you can include the Members of Congress, I think we can find some efficiencies, so I will be happy to share with you. I am going to ask the chairman if he would be willing to add this as bill language in the appropriations.

Thank you, and I appreciate—sorry about speechifying, but we are on the same page. We have just got to find a different way of getting to the end. Thank you for your service.

Mr. HAMILTON. Yes, sir.

Mr. AMODEI. First of all, for your request—

Mr. CUELLAR. Yes, sir?

Mr. AMODEI. Because you were mindful during the phonics lesson a while back on, it is not “nugget,” it is nugget; and it is not DOGE, it is doggy. That is phonics. I am open-minded to your proposal regarding billing.

Mr. CUELLAR. Doggy.

Mr. AMODEI. Now I would like to go to the beacon of questioning on the committee, the gentleman from Washington, Mr. Newhouse, the floor is yours for 5 minutes.

Mr. NEWHOUSE. I go over time once.

Mr. AMODEI. One time.

Mr. NEWHOUSE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Madam Ranking Member, and also Acting Administrator. I can't go through your whole title.

Mr. HAMILTON. It is pretty long.

Mr. NEWHOUSE. Appreciate you being here with us, too, Mr. Hamilton. Also appreciate your former military service to our country.

Mr. HAMILTON. It was my honor.

Mr. NEWHOUSE. I would agree modernizing FEMA's some would say antiquated system and their assets will allow you to execute more efficiently. In fact, in the 2022/26 strategic plan, it is noted that FEMA must transform how the agency delivers support so that partners can increase their capacity. I think you are living proof that that is the goal to be able to manage future events.

In the written testimony, you also State that FEMA requires funding resources and the expertise to improve and replace dated information, technology, and security services, as well as additional support for the integrated public alert warning service, all good stuff.

I wanted to ask you a couple questions surrounding that. If you don't mind, I will put them all together and you can take with it what you could. Could you speak to the tangible actions and technologies that you are evaluating to deliver on this first. And also, how might FEMA use advanced technologies to better coordinate with other Federal agencies to ensure that taxpayer funds are able to recover faster and are used more efficiently so that communities are better served? Do you have a clear idea of the level of funding or resources? Because given what we have seen in the skinny budget, there is only noted reductions in certain areas of grant programming. And is the agency currently working to update the strategic plan?

Mr. HAMILTON. So all great questions. I would say that to start on your first point, the tech solutions that we are looking to innovate, one of the first things that I saw by coming at FEMA given my past emergency management background, but also my background in response and recovery operations was that we didn't have an information portal that was fast embedding programmatic information, but also giving us a snapshot for a whole portfolio.

It is very challenging to show a cost benefit analysis. It is very challenging to have aggregated data that can give you informed decision making with metrics, statistics, and real-time information so that you can see clear trending lines early. Our goal—again, my role here as the administrator of FEMA, even in an acting capacity, is to be the principal advisor to the President and secretary on disasters and emergency management. They need as much decision making space as possible so that they can make informed decisions and give us initiatives and agendas to execute when it comes to mission success, so the better we innovate our technology, the more improvement we will have in that space as well.

One of the key proposals we had was a disaster information portal. The idea of when you order a pizza from Domino's, you know when it was ordered, when it goes in the oven, when it comes out of the oven, when it is ready for pick-up and sliced and in a box. Yet we don't have that same level of approach towards guiding and mentoring applicants through the process of applying for public assistance or individual assistance. That is complex. That is unacceptable. We have individual survivors who wait weeks to get responses, sometimes months before they get payouts who are in significant financial desire straits.

You have municipalities that extend significant leverage, like you mentioned before, Mr. Rutherford, carrying these balances. We are overhauling the manner in which we engaged with our State, local, Tribal territorial partners as well as individual survivors to be faster and more compelling. That is one of the specific solutions to create a system of systems, truly an information environment. I have helped orchestrate and build some of those before at DHS. This will be much larger and more comprehensive, and we are very excited about the solutions that it would entail.

And with that comes coordination with partners. Looking at three principle user bases where we allow our external partners to include Members of Congress to have cleared staff who can have access to survivor information if self-selected so that you can track on cases. If you have a constituent that calls you and they say, Hey, I am not getting a response from FEMA, we want to create a system where your staff can log in, see it clearly, giving you chats, features. You are not waiting on a phone call for 3 or 4 days. You are getting real-time feedback that is dynamic, and we mentor them through those application processes to get them to success. And to be very clear and transparent, if they don't qualify, we want them to know why.

Mr. NEWHOUSE. Absolutely.

Mr. HAMILTON. We want there to be transparency. So those are some of the several solutions that we are hoping to implement that I think will really overhaul and change how we interact with both localities and jurisdictions as well as individual survivors.

Mr. NEWHOUSE. Awesome. Appreciate that response. Look forward to working with you on that. To prevent further reprimands, I am going to yield my time back, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. HAMILTON. Thank you, sir.

Mr. AMODEI. Touché to my colleague from Washington State.

Mr. CUELLAR. Hawaii.

Mr. AMODEI. Yeah. That will be the next one. I am not from there. The chair now recognizes the gentlelady from the high altitude portion of Texas. Ms. Escobar, the floor is yours for 5 minutes.

Ms. ESCOBAR. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman, and Mr. Hamilton, thank you for your service and thanks for being here.

Mr. HAMILTON. It was my honor.

Ms. ESCOBAR. I share the concerns that our ranking member laid out. I have never seen FEMA as an organization that the American people are dependent on or that States are dependent on. I have seen FEMA as a partner to States and to localities, and I am really concerned about what I have heard from Secretary Noem and from

the President about eliminating FEMA. I certainly hope that doesn't happen.

I am all in on commonsense reforms, and frankly, I think there is plenty of room in FEMA for some commonsense reforms. I am not a champion of the status quo at FEMA, and so I look forward to working together on those reforms. But I think the context for my concern about FEMA and some of these obligations being pushed down to the State is because even in Texas, I have seen deficiencies that have impacted my community.

I also think the greater context is cuts that are coming to State and local governments at the Federal level. I have heard from my local governments, Tribal communities, very concerned about potential cuts to Medicaid and nutrition programs, so layering this added responsibility on to localities at such a challenging time for local governments and State governments, that is another area of concern for me.

But I will tell you, I have some very specific local questions that I—and I hope to be able to work with you on these issues. The first question is around the UASI funding, and El Paso was relegated to an unfunded status some time ago and had previously enjoyed being able to receive UASI funding.

My local government, the local municipality, the City of El Paso has tried working with FEMA to try to access funds, and they have been unsuccessful, and I would really love your help in thinking through what needs to happen so that the city of El Paso can once again have access to those funds.

We have major land ports of entry. We have major military installation. There is a number of reasons why those—why that UASI funding could and should be helpful to the community. So I am wondering if you can commit to working with us on gaining access once again?

Mr. HAMILTON. I can't promise an outcome, but I absolutely commit myself, my staff to working with you and to better understanding your challenges and to help find solutions that would make sense and to ensure that you are informed on exactly how rationales are determined, because if States and cities and jurisdictions are eligible and qualified, we certainly want to ensure that they get the resources necessary.

Ms. ESCOBAR. Great. That would be super helpful. We have seen other communities who were relegated to this status gain access, so we would like to be one of those success stories.

The other pot of funding I would like to talk to you is about the SAFER grants. We have emergency services districts which are the special districts, firefighters, volunteer firefighters. There are tax amenities as well, but would love your thoughts on how we can help our emergency services districts access some of those SAFER grants?

Mr. HAMILTON. So I am a big advocate for the SAFER grants. We have a decision memo that we are hoping to be able to fund many of those programs. Again, it is pending department approval. I will tell you I was formerly the director of emergency medical services at DHS headquarters. I am also a first responder, former combat medic, and paramedic currently. So the care and funding for our first responders is crucial. It is very near and dear to me because

I have spent two decades as a first responder in some capacity. So I look forward to working with you more. Look forward to ensuring that our first responder communities get the appropriate funding they deserve.

Ms. ESCOBAR. Great. Thank you. Look forward to that as well. Like my colleagues, I am concerned about FEMA's recent decision to cancel BRIC funding for previous recipients. Not only is it illegal, because this is funding that Congress appropriated, it is also devastating for the communities that applied for this funding and were allocated it for critical projects. It is unfortunate that we are holding this hearing without a full budget, but President Trump has made it clear that he can violate the orders of Congress, which makes me nervous about a number of other programs and grants that our communities rely on. I am wondering if there are any plans at FEMA to cancel any other programs or funds that have been allocated by Congress?

Mr. HAMILTON. Excuse me, I thought I was running out of time. So to answer your question on BRIC particularly, we found a lot of inefficiencies with the design of the program itself which caused us to have serious concern over whether it was the appropriate use of taxpayer funds through many projects that were funded that we believe were very wasteful. But there are also projects that were fully funded that we intend to move forward to completion. We are unpacking and analyzing that every grant recipient under BRIC should receive some form of notification and—I am sorry, Mr. Chairman, would like me to continue? I am going over my time. I want to be respectful of you, sir.

Mr. AMODEI. I will tell you what, Mr. Acting Administrator, thank you for being much more concerned about it than any of my members on this committee. Please continue and finish your answer to Ms. Escobar's question and feel free to hold a FEMA instruction class out in the hall at the conclusion of this hearing for other members on the committee.

Mr. HAMILTON. Thank you, sir. I will say that as it pertains to its current rent recipients, we are kind of unpacking them in several different buckets. Those that have obligations that were made. If the projects were ongoing, we intend to continue funding for many of those projects in a systematic review, and again, recipients should be receiving this information here very soon if not already. That is through our regional offices.

Also a major problem that we found with the BRIC program itself is a really high unliquidated balances in which work was not moving towards completion or work was stagnating for years going back to 2020. It was tying up a lot of money within the DRF and projects were not moving forward in a succinct manner. That was an exceptional problem that we identified. So there is a variety of different elements of what we are trying to look at to make sure that the future of mitigation investment is reasonable and we create financial incentives for States to move faster, but we are also looking at our own regulatory requirements and things we can simplify so that we don't put impediments and barriers in State and localities way of executing fully on these projects, and I would love to specifically speak with you about some of the projects in your district, your concerns and evaluations so that we can ensure that

you fully understand from our context things that the administration are going to prioritize for investment.

Generally, you are going to be looking at the profile of risk reduction as well as preparedness and/or, you know, capability building, and so the future of grants at FEMA are going to kind of be profiled that way. We are working with OMB on some ideas. Before any decisions are made on that, I promise you that we will be coming to you all to solicit some input and insight so that you can share and collaborate with us, because we do want to create a mechanism that makes the most sense.

Ms. ESCOBAR. I am out of time, but we will definitely circle back with you on these issues.

Mr. HAMILTON. Yes, ma'am.

Ms. ESCOBAR. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. AMODEI. Thank you, ma'am.

The chair now recognizes the gentlelady from the State whose State flower is the wild prairie rose. Ms. Hinson, the floor is yours for 5 minutes for questions.

Mrs. HINSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. It is the wild rose. We also have the gold finch and we have a lot of FEMA disasters in Iowa, so thank you very much for the time. Thank you, Ranking Member Underwood, for holding this, and thank you, Acting Administrator Hamilton, for joining us today. Really appreciate you answering our questions.

It is nice to see under President Trump's leadership really having—and Secretary Nome who we had a chance to question yesterday, things return to core mission, and that is really—I really appreciate what you said in your opening comments about that, because we have seen FEMA go from being the response agency for hurricanes disasters like derechos and tornadoes in Iowa to funeral directors. In essence, the mission has just strayed so far from what you should be doing, so I am really, really excited to see how you are addressing these operational priorities and really focus on protecting taxpayers.

I do want to make sure that the services that you are providing to States like mine that our constituents are not caught up in the bureaucratic red tape. You know, when we look at the slow complex processes, you talked a lot about some of those efficiencies that you are looking to find for folks. The woman who you held at her most vulnerable moment, right? I mean, I think we have all been there and experienced those stories in our districts. And I don't want to see funding funneled to larger communities leaving rural States at a disadvantage just because they are competing for resources for political purposes.

Under Secretary Mayorkas and President Biden, the shelter-in-services program, we saw that directing those resources towards sanctuary cities. I want to see resources going to Iowans and Meskwaki Tribal folks in my district who are fighting for those resources.

So how are you addressing concerns on that bureaucracy and inefficiency at FEMA while ensuring that those needs are still—those needs are really still met at the community level?

Mr. HAMILTON. Thank you for the question. I can tell you particularly on the SSP matter, when I actually interviewed and I was selected, that was the first thing that I had addressed is my concern over this forcing of nonemergency management responsibilities within an agency to dispense reimbursement funds for housing migrants and housing illegal aliens. It is completely disconnected from the core mission of what this agency is meant to manage. That is part of the inherent bureaucracy of how we sort of got here from being perfectly transparent.

FEMA has been a catch-all for a lot of things. Why? Because we move money very fast and we have lots of people. We have resources and infrastructure in a way that many States don't have the ability to manage. We manage 97 percent of all DHS grants. That is inherently a problem to itself in my personal opinion, because we have responsibilities that are not FEMA centric being paid out by FEMA in a way that I don't think was the original intent of the Stafford Act. When you look at what the terms of emergency management was meant to entail, the continuation of emergency operations in the event of catastrophe. That is really what that definition means.

So we are looking at a variety of ways to cut bureaucracy, make programs easier to understand. We are also trying to ask that agencies which are having grant programs step up more to actually manage the program. We don't have actual disbursement authorities to where we can pay individual survivors. We have to go through HHS or others. There is some of those kind of bureaucratic inefficiencies, which I know was designed because of the Economy Act. I recognize the efficiencies there. That does make sense. But it has created additional layers we have to go through and gateways which are complicated.

We did a manual review process. There is four different systems through which data is spilled down to then ultimately dispense payment. That is insufficient. We are looking to overhaul everything so that we can be faster. I want survivors to get paid in hours or days, not weeks, months, or God forbid, years.

Mrs. HINSON. Right.

Mr. HAMILTON. And so we are implementing a lot of things to make that faster.

Mrs. HINSON. Well, in certainly many of the cities that I know are probably watching us today, Cedar Rapids, Marion, like I mentioned, the Meskwaki Tribe, these folks have been waiting—they waited a long time. They paid the interest on that, and that is a huge cost to our communities.

I want to talk a little bit about public alerts. I appreciate what you said in your testimony about the NextGen warning system is something I am very, very passionate about, so I want to thank you for highlighting the importance of those critical systems, and so in my remaining time, which I know we are running on short on, how are you working with these systems to effectively enhance alerting capabilities in rural communities? These are a lot of grants again that you talk about that process, simplifying that. Let's make sure they get where they are going to go faster, but how are you working on making sure that is efficient?

Mr. HAMILTON. One of the first things we have entertained is partnering with CISA, because it is part of that is within the core responsibilities on emergency communications, looking at how exactly to unpack it, what unique Federal authorities we have, and how to target infrastructure in such a way that will be reliant in the event of catastrophe for loss of power, loss of other resources.

So we have a couple different action working groups that we are trying to start up here that will look at more complex situations of how we can solve those problems faster. At the end of the day, the technology age is innovating in a whole and unique way, and so ironically, antiquated technology is coming back as very, very resilient, and so, we are looking at some of those methods, even AM radio, to really make sure that Americans have more options. What we want is redundancy.

Mrs. HINSON. Redundancy, resiliency. That is what we both open up. Thank you so much. I appreciate your testimony and answering your questions.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. AMODEI. Thank you. Now to the gentleman from the Aloha State, Mr. Case, the floor is yours for 5 minutes for questions.

Mr. CASE. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Hamilton, Aloha. In September 2024, then-candidate Trump, on a visit to Asheville, North Carolina, in the wake of Hurricane Helene stated, quote, "I think frankly FEMA's not good. FEMA has turned out to be a disaster. I think we are going to recommend that FEMA go away," unquote. On January 22nd, President Trump stated, quote, all FEMA does is complicate everything. FEMA has not done its job for the last 4 years.

In August of 2023, a once and forever wildfire ripped through Maui, in particular Lahaina. The town of Lahaina was destroyed. 102 people died. There were roughly 12,000—2,200 structures destroyed, 12,000 people displaced, 7,000 people directly benefiting from FEMA on the ground. FEMA's expenditures to date have been north of \$700 million direct and other Federal agencies north of \$1 billion in response. Economic damage was in the range of 4 to \$6 billion, as high as \$10 billion plus.

We do not, on Maui, based on our own experience, believe that FEMA should go away. We do not believe that it complicates everything. We do not believe that it didn't do its job. In fact, FEMA helped us to save the day after a devastating disaster. FEMA has done an excellent job on Maui, and the people in FEMA who did that job for us do not deserve this rhetoric. Do not deserve that rhetoric. And as I said to the Secretary yesterday, the campaign is over. It is time for us to put this stuff away so that we can have a productive discussion about what federalism means in emergency management. I am all in on that discussion. But this is not the way to do that.

Now, in the subject of trying to understand what your budget means for the appropriations committee here, if I understand correctly what your skinny budget indicates is that you are intending to fundamentally continue, if not increase, direct FEMA disaster relief, so direct relief. In other words, to a disaster. I am breaking this down into really prevention mitigation which is pre-disaster,

at least in my mind, and then emergency response and recovery on the back end.

My understanding is you are not particularly going after the back end, but you are going after the front end for sure. And I believe that I understand that somewhere around \$3 billion in the FEMA non-disaster category, you are proposing to reduce that FEMA non-disaster category by \$646 million, which is 20 percent of that slice.

You have directly called out the violence and terrorism prevention grant of \$18 million. You have also directly called out the national domestic preparedness consortium of \$91 million. That leaves me with a math missing in the non-disaster of \$537 million. Is your view then that that \$537 million is subject to a federalism debate and that State and county governments or somebody else should take that over?

Primarily, I think in the prevention and mitigation side of this, so try to keep disasters from occurring to start with, and consider that if we had prevented Maui from occurring to start with, or anybody else, whether it be Hurricane Helene or California or Florida or Louisiana, we may not have had a multibillion dollar Federal obligation on the back end. So what is going on with your proposed cuts on the non-disaster side? What else are you proposing to cut?

Mr. HAMILTON. Yes, sir that is a great question. I will tell you that we stand again consistent with the President's agenda on his recommendations for our budget, and there are some—we are looking to overhaul the grant process entirely; again as I mentioned earlier, preparedness versus risk reduction, and so there is several different grants that you will likely see in the future of proposed where they are sort of consolidated, made simpler, less grant programs, greater options and availability, there is discussions ongoing about what block grants would look like, how they are executed giving subprograms for them on the preparedness side. And so we are unpacking each of that as it currently sits.

On each of these subgrant discussions on what makes up that total number, I would be happy to follow up with you on more specifics and show you specifically where we are looking at additional cuts so that we can—

Mr. CASE. Well, we can do that in the process. I am just interested in what you are trying to cut other than the things you have called out, because it is a pretty big cut in that category. 20 percent. Thank you.

Mr. HAMILTON. Yes, sir.

Mr. AMODEI. The gentleman from the Magnolia State, Mr. Guest, is recognized for questions for 5 minutes.

Mr. GUEST. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Acting Administrator Hamilton, thank you for first for your service, your military service. Thank you for your service to the Department of Homeland Security and thank you for agreeing to take on this new role.

I want to speak briefly. There was some discussions about the fact that the former—that the President, when he was running for reelection, was talking about defunding FEMA, but it would seem to me that your budget represents something completely opposite. Looking at the math, it looks like that you are requesting a 17½

percent increase in disaster relief funding. But there is a desire, I believe, to make FEMA more streamlined, more agile, more responsive, because just looking at an article from PBS, not necessarily what would be considered a beacon of conservatism, in January of last year, they said recovering from national—natural disasters is slow and bureaucratic.

Mr. HAMILTON. Yes, sir.

Mr. GUEST. And I think that is what we have with FEMA now. FEMA has become a bureaucracy.

Mr. HAMILTON. Right.

Mr. GUEST. And FEMA needs to be streamlined. FEMA needs to be agile. FEMA needs to be able to respond at a moment's notice, which I believe was the intent of FEMA when it was created.

I want to talk just briefly about I know that the President has established a FEMA review council. One of the members on that review council is former governor of great State of Mississippi, Phil Bryant, and I have had a chance to have some conversations with him, and he is excited to serve, but can you talk a little bit about the FEMA review council, kind of what their mission is and what recommendations that you hope that they will return to FEMA, that then you can act upon at that point.

Mr. HAMILTON. Yes, sir. That is an excellent question. And I will tell you that the EO—most of us have read the executive order from the President on what the council is and some of the responsibilities. We look at this as really an all-star roster of individuals with various experiences and background to give the President their perspective on ways to enhance bureaucratic inefficiencies to make this agency better.

Reform is absolutely something that is necessary for this agency. As we have seen before, I agree the workforce is tremendous and amazing and they do a lot of great work, but there is also systems and processes that are completely antiquated and have to be improved. We are using financial systems using COBOL, which is designed from the 1970s. Cold war-resilient capabilities with our financial tracking, which my CFO over here will probably be laughing about in the background, because it is not exactly the easiest to use. The review council is an opportunity for us to really grab anything and everything in the area of emergency management about how we can simply get better.

The private industry has a lot of insight and concern. The insurance industry is a key—there is a representative from the insurance industry that is going to be on the review council as well so that the President can have a whole-of-community approach on all the different equities that touch emergency management and disasters, and inform him on what the outcomes are really should be achieved for ideal scenarios.

I think the review council specifically will be focused on outcomes of key incidents so that they can inform the Secretary of Defense and Secretary of DHS to then speak with the President on elements that we can really manage and address within the organization to make us faster and better.

Mr. GUEST. First, thank you for establishing this all-star group, and thank you for thinking outside the box, because I do think that we need to do everything within our power for FEMA not to be

viewed as a bureaucracy by our local governments, State governments, as they are seeking help in their time of need.

We often, as Members of Congress, we get called by our counties, by our municipalities, and they become extremely frustrated. They become frustrated with the process. They become frustrated with the time it takes for the process to be carried out. And so, anything that we can do to streamline the process, to cut the bureaucracy will be well-received.

And speaking of that, before I surrender the rest of my time, I would be remiss if I did not talk about a Mississippi specific incident. In March 15th, we had a series of tornadoes that touched through Mississippi and impacted 20 counties for roughly a quarter of our States, six fatalities. On April the 1st, our Governor submitted a request for disaster relief. On the 2nd there was a letter sent by the delegation in support of that. Since that time we are—my office has been in touch with members of FEMA, with our White House liaison, and actually spoke with Secretary Noem about this just yesterday when she testified, but I would ask if you can please review that request.

Again, this is one of the frustrations that we see. This is a reason that I believe that FEMA has become a bureaucracy is because it takes weeks, and in some cases, months, to get these disaster requests either approved or denied.

So with that, Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. AMODEI. Thank you. The gentleman from the Grand Canyon State, Mr. Ciscomani is recognized for 5 minutes for questions.

Mr. CISCOMANI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Hamilton, nice to meet you. Thank you so much for being here. Thank you, again, as my colleagues have thanked you for your service and your continued service as a first responder and now in this role. Very much appreciate it.

I want to talk to you about SSP and the history of that. That is one of the grant programs that I am glad to see is no longer needed under this administration, under the leadership here, the service and shelter program. I was very frustrated with the program for several reasons. One of them is that it provided a lot of the funding to States that were not border States, States that were actually not being as impacted as my State was on this.

The Federal dollars to the jurisdictions nowhere near the border to deal with the border crisis, and also that many of these jurisdictions accepting and applying for SSP dollars were actually not complying with other parts of the Department. So we saw that go on and on for a number of years. Many of us were voicing our strong opposition to that, and so, I am glad to see where it is at now.

One of the questions that I always had and never was answered, and maybe you have it now or you can find it for us is, do you have any breakdown of how many of these dollars went to southern border communities and non-border communities or States, a breakdown of that?

Mr. HAMILTON. I don't have that here currently on me, but we do have that information, and we would be happy to provide that to you in followup.

Mr. CISCOMANI. I am very interested in that.

Secondly to that, if you can provide or can you work to follow up on how many dollars went to sanctuary, or non-ICE-complying jurisdictions. I would also like to know the information for that.

Mr. HAMILTON. Yes, sir. We would be able to follow up with that information, again, to both you as well as the entire subcommittee with all that information.

Mr. CISCOMANI. Yeah, yeah. Very important to know the distinction of how these dollars were used.

Now, on to something else here. It has been previously brought up by Ms. Escobar, previously mentioned here today, the initial budget request regarding the SAFER and AFG grant there as well.

On that program in my district, the SAFER and AFG grant programs in particular, have been critical to providing State and local agencies with the resources they need to hire more firefighters and emergency responders and much needed equipment and overtime pay for first responders who are already in the front lines, particularly in the rural communities. That is an area that—that is the majority of my district in terms of geography in my district, and access to these Federal dollars is critical.

Can you just break down for me the value that you see in these programs and what—what in them do you see restructuring or a potential cut in that, or what is going to happen there?

Mr. HAMILTON. So first, as a first responder, I cannot tell you how important they are for our society and for our people. They are truly the first line of defense, and I will tell you that the Assistance to Firefighter Grant, the SAFER grant, those are crucially important.

It is our hope to be able to move those forward here soon. We have some decision-making conversations with the Department on how to ensure that our grants are accountable and transparent for the taxpayer, but it is my hope that we will be able to move these forward and we will be able to support these amazing men and women of our fire communities and the work that they do.

Mr. CISCOMANI. Yeah. I am all—and I am very supportive of the accountability, the transparency required in these dollars. I think you are right, part of the challenge with FEMA is so much flows through there and moves quickly, and sometimes—you know, and maybe sometimes intentionally, with little oversight. And that has been the problem. So I am glad you are looking into it.

I think the whole effort overall of the government accountability piece of this is to find what is not working and do away what is not. But also, I think in that process you find what is working and where not only should we protect some of these programs and the funding for it, in some cases increase it, if it merits it, and if there are metrics that show how it is working.

So hopefully you can find that along the way, and you can spot some of the programs like this one that work.

With the minute that I have left on the oversight, speaking of that, we heard yesterday from Secretary Noem about the need to restructure FEMA. And I understand that there is an ongoing review happening to advise the President on capabilities and needs to address disaster moving forward.

While the Federal Government may not be needed to address every disaster, I do believe that the Federal Government should

continue to focus on reducing the loss of life and property for major disasters and terrorism.

What metrics do you believe are needed to ensure that every grant dollar is being used effectively within the Department?

Mr. HAMILTON. As far as the individual metrics, that is probably a lengthier conversation we have than in the 20 seconds here.

Mr. CISCOMANI. Seventeen.

Mr. HAMILTON. Exactly. But I can tell you that I would be happy to discuss that with you, specifically some of the way in which we rate those. But as it pertains towards disasters, we want to ensure that investments that are made allow communities to recover quickly. In addition to that, we want to be able to analyze overall risk reduction of communities. Have we actually made them more resilient so that when future incidents occur, you have a less likelihood—excuse me, Mr. Chairman, I have gone over my time, my apologies.

Mr. AMODEI. Please continue.

Mr. HAMILTON. Thank you—you have a less of a likelihood of incurring future costs down the road with repeat—kind of repeat offenders, if you will, or repeat incidents that happen routinely and back to back. It is our goal to ensure that we bring about resources in a way that doesn't do that—

Mr. CISCOMANI. Yeah.

Mr. HAMILTON [continuing]. Because that is not serving the American people first.

Mr. CISCOMANI. That is great. I want to continue that conversation also on the bureaucratic side of things, so a lot more on that are very interested.

Mr. HAMILTON. Yes, sir.

Mr. CISCOMANI. And, again, thank you for being here, for your service, and I look forward to working with you in the future.

Mr. HAMILTON. Thank you, sir.

Mr. AMODEI. Mr. Administrator, because of the generosity of Mr. Newhouse, we had a couple extra minutes that I could transfer over to the Ciscomani account, but I appreciate you being mindful of that.

The chair now recognizes the distinguished ranking member for the full committee from the Constitution State, Ms. DeLauro. The floor is yours for 5 minutes of questions.

Ms. DELAURO. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman. And I want to thank you and the ranking member for the hearing, and thank you for pointing out that Connecticut is the Constitution State.

Let me just say, Mr. Hamilton, welcome to the committee, thank you.

Let me address an elephant in the room that chairman of the full committee, Mr. Cole, recently addressed in the media: The status of the Disaster Relief Fund.

We understand the Disaster Relief Fund is expected to end the year with a deficit of \$9 billion, which is before the cost of any further disasters this year.

I am concerned that FEMA is telling States and local governments that they are on their own. We all know that Elon Musk is proposing disastrous cuts to NOAA and the National Weather Service, which will limit our ability to forecast deadly storms, pro-

vide good information to communities before disaster strikes. That means communities will make fewer preparations and the resulting cost to them will be higher.

Is there a request coming for emergency supplemental money based on the dire situation the Disaster Relief Fund faces?

Mr. HAMILTON. We are not submitting a supplementary at this time, ma'am. We are going to allow the appropriation process to move forward, and we stand by some decisions that we have made that help insulate the DRF to ensure that we don't hit those INF thresholds as quickly as we have before.

Ms. DELAURO. Well, we would like to know what those specifics are in that effort.

Is FEMA prepared for the upcoming hurricane season, year-round fire season with the dangerously low Disaster Relief Fund balance?

Mr. HAMILTON. Again, a fantastic question. There are always challenges that we have to work through, and I do think that I have one of the greatest workforces in the entire Federal Government who are committed to ensuring that we meet the mission.

So we are focusing on ways to make us operationally more capable and also finding ways to be more fiscally practical with our means so that we don't buttress up against those kind of thresholds nearly as quickly as before.

Ms. DELAURO. So you are not going to address the \$9 billion deficit. What you are going to tell us is how you are going to address that \$9 billion deficit that we anticipate for the Disaster Relief Fund. So you are going to get us that information?

Mr. HAMILTON. We will. We would be more than happy—

Ms. DELAURO. How?

Mr. HAMILTON [continuing]. To provide you specifics on exactly the decisions that have been made to plus-up—

Ms. DELAURO. Okay.

Mr. HAMILTON [continuing]. The DRF using other existing funds.

Ms. DELAURO. Because if I recall, there was an estimate that we were about \$22 billion, with current disaster efforts that already have occurred around the country. So that seems—I would be interested to see how you square that circle of the 9-plus—20-plus in meeting the needs of the constituencies that have been hit by disaster.

Kentucky Governor Beshear pointed out that, and I quote, replicating FEMA's administrative functions in each State would be far more costly than a single national agency, end quote.

How does the individual State recovery result in an overall savings for the people of America where there have been 1,400 disasters over the past decade?

Mr. HAMILTON. That is a—again, thank you for the question. I would say that we want to find thresholds whereby the States can manage reasonable outcomes in lower-level disasters that may not incur and push FEMA and Federal resources into some of those kind of thresholds unless they meet a very, very high standard and burden.

So that is what we are kind of looking at. We are not looking at a future without Federal assistance—

Ms. DELAURO. So you are going to categorize disasters—low, medium, high—and then make a determination of, you know, States, whatever else, Federal dollars, et cetera. So you are going to just categorize every one of these disasters that occur so that they fit in a bucket of where they are going to get—where the money is going to come from?

Mr. HAMILTON. It is a little more complex than that. I will say what we are looking at is the ideas of when investments are made, what is the overall impact, what is the State's actual capability. We are looking at proposals that even require States to demonstrate what their insurance levels are, things to that nature, so that we can analyze each State and territory on an individual basis and assess their needs.

Ms. DELAURO. Okay. If that—it would be very helpful, I think, to this committee for us to know what the criteria is going to be with regard to that.

Let me just—yesterday the Secretary testified, Secretary Noem testified. Quite honestly, I found her responses confusing and inadequate.

In response to my question asking her about whether or not this administration seeks to eliminate FEMA, this was her response, and I quote, President Trump has been very clear since the beginning that he believes that FEMA and its response in many, many circumstances has failed the American people and that FEMA, as it exists today, should be eliminated and empowering States to respond to disasters with Federal Government support.

A clear answer. Does this administration seek to eliminate FEMA, and do you support eliminating FEMA?

Mr. HAMILTON. Mr. Chairman, would you like me to answer the question?

Ms. DELAURO. Please.

Mr. AMODEI. I am not going to let you off that easy. Nothing personal.

Mr. HAMILTON. No, I completely understand.

As the senior advisor to the President—

Ms. DELAURO. Yeah.

Mr. HAMILTON [continuing]. On disasters and emergency management, and to the Secretary of Homeland Security—

Ms. DELAURO. Yeah.

Mr. HAMILTON [continuing]. I do not believe it is in the best interest of the American people to eliminate the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Ms. DELAURO. Okay

Mr. HAMILTON. Having said that, I am not in the position to make decisions and impact outcomes on whether or not a determination such as consequential as that should be made. That is a conversation that should be had between the President of the United States and this governing body on identifying the exact ways and methodologies in which what is prudent for Federal investment and what is not, if that answers your question.

Ms. DELAURO. Well, that is why I say it was a confusing answer, because I can only determine from that answer that FEMA, as it exists today, should be eliminated. Those are not my words—“eliminated.”

And so I hear your answer, and it should be, you know, between the executive and the governing body, because we are the United States Congress that makes those decisions.

The Secretary—also in the Secretary's testimony, she said there was dysfunction at FEMA. I asked about dysfunction and examples of dysfunction. There were unable to provide me with any of that yesterday.

I would hope, in conversation with her, that you might let us know, but what is dysfunctional with FEMA so that we can address those issues.

Now, absent any examples, what I do have is a list of State by State Federal disaster relief funding that has been provided over the past 20 years, including \$2 billion to my home State of Connecticut. Just this past August, FEMA was instrumental in helping the residents of my State respond to, build back, from the damage caused by historic flooding. The total for all States, D.C., and territories, is over \$424 billion.

And for information for my colleagues on the subcommittee, Arizona, over this period of time, \$2.1 billion; California, \$34.8 billion; I mentioned Connecticut; Florida, \$35.3 billion; Hawaii, \$3.9 billion; Illinois, \$5.9 billion; Iowa, \$4.1 billion; Louisiana, \$56 billion; Mississippi, \$12.2; Nevada, \$813 billion; Texas, \$38.6 billion; Washington State, \$4.7 billion.

I ask anyone here on this committee, you tell me whether your State government has the ability to be able to provide the kinds of dollars we are talking about to help States recover from a disaster, a natural disaster which they had nothing to do with.

And I think, Acting Director, that this is really playing fast and loose with an agency that has provided the opportunity for recovery and rebuilding, whether it is for families and businesses. And to be so cavalier—and I am not suggesting you are—to say that as FEMA exists now we should eliminate it, I suggest that there be some hard and fast conversations.

I appreciate your answer on what your recommendation will be. You know, you are not going to make the final recommendation, but that final recommendation I believe resides here.

This is the law of the land. This is the power of the purse. This is what we do. And what is being done is unlawful and illegal, and we are going to continue to push that point and make it obvious to the people of this country what in fact is about to hit them when all of a sudden the rains come down, the fires blossom, and then there is—Federal Government says, well, let's see what category you are in, you know, low-hanging fruit, maybe okay, maybe this is minimum, maybe Federal Government should say something—no, no, that is not what the Federal Government ought to be doing and participating in the lives of our States and our citizens who are really—they had nothing to do with a disaster—natural disaster in their communities.

Thank you, and I yield back. Thank you for accommodating me, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. HAMILTON. Mr. Chairman, would you mind if I responded to that, sir?

Mr. AMODEI. Well, we are nowhere near on time, so please proceed.

Mr. HAMILTON. Very good.

I appreciate your comments about empathizing with survivors. I can tell you that I bring my own and personal family experiences of survivors as well. My parents' home burned down when I was a child. Again, I know what it is like to have friends, family, and loved ones who have lost their homes in the fires of Northern California in 2017 where I actually grew up in Sonoma County.

Ms. DELAURO. Yeah.

Mr. HAMILTON. I can also tell you what it is like to have family in western North Carolina personally impacted by recent events. And my parents moved to Florida. They were personally impacted, again, from the hurricanes that are down there.

My concern and my principal focus with this agency is there is meaningful reform which must take place because we have to make it better, efficient, more solvent, and ensure that we get survivors the assistance they need in a timely manner.

I just want—I want you to understand, that is my singular focus, making this—

Ms. DELAURO. I appreciate your—I do—

Mr. HAMILTON [continuing]. Faster and better at meeting the needs—

Ms. DELAURO. And all of us on this committee look to see where one can bolster, make—you know, make stronger programs, look at what works, look at what doesn't work, but that is not in the jurisdiction of an individual or even in the inherent—there is no inherent authority for the President to do this.

It is what the Constitution—and I am glad I am from the Constitution State, because, in fact, the Constitution says in Article I the power of the purse resides here.

You want to make changes? Let's make changes together. This is not a unilateral decision, and that is all that we have seen, not only here, but across the board, with what is happening. It is unacceptable.

Thank you. Thank you for your, you know, your comments. I appreciate that a lot.

Mr. HAMILTON. Thank you.

Mr. AMODEI. No offense to either of the last two speakers, but we are putting this fire out right now.

Ms. DELAURO. Okay. Here is the water.

Mr. AMODEI. Yeah, thank you.

Even though all of my time has been taken up by others for questioning—

Mr. CISCOMANI. Mainly Newhouse.

Mr. AMODEI. Yeah, it is all Newhouse's fault.

Just a couple of quick things. And first of all, I am pleased to hear that when you are talking about as you are going through this process and you are going to evaluate States, that that is not a one size fits all. Because I think the point has been made, it is like, I mean, next door to me is California which has a phenomenal, millions of dollars disaster relief agency or office of emergency—whatever they call it, and just a little bit to the east, to those of us from the wrong side of the tracks, it is quite a bit less. So one size doesn't fit all.

I want to talk a little bit with you about the BRIC projects. And I want to start, first of all, with—it would be nice to know, however the program goes forward—and I assume it will in some way, shape, or form—that when FEMA is saying, hey, we are evaluating a request for a BRIC grant in Illinois or in Texas or whatever, not that you check in with us and say, hey, what do you think about this, but that you say, hey, by the way, we just awarded one in Po-dunk, wherever, just so you know.

And I will tell you why. Because in the last 6 months where you folks were like, you know—and I am not—I am just saying, it was news to me to find out that there were three awarded BRIC projects within 5 miles of my front porch.

And so how I found out about it is, somebody goes, oh, my God, they are cut. And I am like, what are you talking about?

And so when you talk about creating a system—I don't want to create a bunch of work, but I don't think when you got—when you have got an application from somewhere in Connecticut, and you guys, in whatever your processes are, grant it, that just a courtesy notice goes out, that goes, hey, DeLauro, guess what, we just awarded a BRIC project in Wherever, Connecticut, or Wherever, Texas, or Wherever, Hawaii.

And I will tell you the reason why that becomes important is because, first of all, it gives you a little—you will appreciate the phrase—situational awareness.

Mr. HAMILTON. Yes, sir.

Mr. AMODEI. But second of all, when you go to 6 months ago and all of a sudden the phone starts ringing, and it is like, my funding for whatever is now held up, cut off, whatever, and you got to go back and start from what?

And so the next part of that is, if you decide that you are going to do that, then you have got the database to go, hey, Tom Cole, we are not doing the project in Oklahoma that we had told you about. So that we have an opportunity to at least interact with you, to say, can you tell me why.

And I will tell you why that is important. I am not trying to horn in on your guys' discretion or running your program, but what I am definitely trying to horn in on is not being faced with a situation where it is like the bell has already been rung. Now I got to unring a bell.

And the reason that it bothers me is because when we were playing whack-a-mole with some of these things, like what are they, who is funding them, what is the deal, and you get an answer back from the highest levels—not FEMA—well, there was an algorithm and blah, blah, blah, and that is what was handed down to us.

And so now—it won't shock you to hear—it is like, well, we will see about that.

And so now we got to backtrack, you got to backtrack, what kind of shape is it in, so that it is like—I appreciate what you said about communications about disaster relief and all that, but normal operational stuff, it is my thought, unless you say you are missing the boat here, that we can create a deal where we are not playing catch-up.

The last people in the whole process that know about it are the people in whose districts it is happening.

So we will check back with you on that, but—because it is going to happen anyhow. I can guarantee you, when we are going through your stuff, one of the things that is going to be looking, and somebody is going to go, hey, I got BRIC'd, or whatever, and it had nothing to do with DEI or—you know, it is really sexy stuff like backup generators or a dam reconstruction that isn't the Oroville Dam or something like that.

So to make it meaningful for everybody, I would appreciate it if you could get us your thoughts on how that—and listen, if it is like, hey, we are going to need a couple more people or whatever, by all means, say that—

Mr. HAMILTON. Yes, sir.

Mr. AMODEI [continuing]. So that we can make that value judgment.

The last thing I am going to say is that I had asked the Secretary, basically along the same lines yesterday, to say, hey, listen, we are not going to sick, you know, zillions of things on you, but every member of this committee was asked to submit three projects that were BRIC, that were canceled in their district. And the Secretary supported that.

I think you were in attendance, so I don't think I am making that up. So I am going to put a little more teeth to that, which is, we are going to ask that members on the committee, if you have BRIC projects that you want basically you guys to say, algorithm, here is the evaluation, whatever it is—I am not suggesting the answer, but—and we are trying not to overwhelm you—

Mr. HAMILTON. Yes, sir.

Mr. AMODEI [continuing]. I am going to ask members to submit those to the FEMA Administrator by 5 o'clock D.C. time tomorrow. I am guessing you are already aware of some that you want to submit, so it is not like—and, hey, listen, if you don't want to submit any, that is fine too. But that is our deadline.

And then we will—and submit them through the Appropriations majority office so that we can give them directly to you. So we will need to know who to give those to, but we will just kind of streamline that process a little.

And then depending on how many we get from these folks sitting around here, then we will talk with you and say, here is when we would like to kind of know. I don't think it requires like, here is what I did with my summer vacation, here is how they got cut—

Mr. HAMILTON. Yes, sir.

Mr. AMODEI [continuing]. So what we know that when it comes time to discuss about what we think about the program, and that that has got some guardrails on it, so we can get that feedback in a timely manner.

Mr. HAMILTON. Yes, sir. Mr. Chairman, I commit to working with you and your team and, again, this committee, to give them the appropriate insight into all the different projects that were unpacked.

Would you like me to go into some of the rationale with how we came to the determinations or would you rather save some of that for a later date?

Mr. AMODEI. Thank you for offering, but no.

Mr. HAMILTON. Understood.

Mr. AMODEI. Nothing personal.

So, anyhow, I think we are at the point where I will say we know that you will be a good partner in the upcoming fiscal year 2026 appropriations process, and I accept your commitment that communication between this committee and FEMA will be significantly better moving forward.

I know there has been a lot of transition, and God knows there probably haven't been many boring weeks, but as we are getting ready to craft the 2026 bill from this committee, you know, the garbage in, garbage out, we are not doing garbage in, garbage out.

If we don't have the information, it is going to be a problem. And I am not threatening you. You don't need threatening. We don't work that way. It is just, we need the information, and I don't think that is a surprise to anybody.

We won't surprise you. Don't you surprise us.

Mr. HAMILTON. Yes, sir.

Mr. AMODEI. Just that simple, even stephen, both ways.

For get-back questions that members of the subcommittee had today, we ask that you respond within 15 business days. If members submit written questions to you other than the ones we talked about for BRIC, we are going to ask that those questions in writing be submitted within a week and that you respond to those within 25 days.

And I would like to thank you for being here today and enduring the inefficient wielding of the gavel in this process, but you did a good job. We look forward to working with you.

And the subcommittee stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 3:25 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

**DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY
APPROPRIATIONS FOR 2026**

THURSDAY, MAY 8, 2025.

**OVERSIGHT OF THE CYBERSECURITY AND
INFRASTRUCTURE SECURITY AGENCY**

WITNESS

**BRIDGET BEAN, ACTING DIRECTOR, CYBERSECURITY AND INFRA-
STRUCTURE SECURITY AGENCY**

Mr. AMODEI. Good morning. I will call this subcommittee meeting of the House Appropriations Committee Homeland Subcommittee to order.

I thank everybody for being on time—Madam Director, Madam Ranking Member. It is no surprise to anybody that we have votes scheduled in about an hour, so we are going to endeavor to be crisp. I am not going to waste a bunch of time telling you how we are going to do that; just to say that we are reducing the amount of time for questioning for members to 4 minutes. I was going to do it for 3, but Ms. Underwood basically bullied me into 4, and so I got bullied, and so it is 4.

When we get through the hearing, I am not going to adjourn and come back after votes; we are going to adjourn. If members have questions that they wanted to ask of the cybersecurity folks that they didn't get to ask and they don't feel good about submitting them in writing, then let us know and we will talk about maybe trying to convene another hearing before marking up the cybersecurity part of things.

And so, with that, I have some nice stuff I could say here, but I am not going to, because I got bullied into giving members 4 minutes instead of 3. And so, with that, I would recognize the distinguished ranking member, Ms. Underwood, for her opening comments.

Ms. UNDERWOOD. Well, thank you, Mr. Chairman, for holding this hearing to conduct oversight of the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency.

I would also like to welcome Ms. Bridget Bean, the Senior Official Performing the Duties of Director of CISA, to her first hearing before us.

CISA is not a large organization, but Congress fought over the years to properly fund the critical responsibilities of your agency, growing its funding by 75 percent from fiscal year 2019 to fiscal year 2024.

Remarkably, these increases have consistently been with bipartisan support. I don't need to tell you how rare that is these days,

and I believe it reflects the scale of the catastrophic cyber threats facing our country as well as the quality of resources and support that CISA provides.

But instead of investing in this popular, nimble, and cost-efficient agency that protects nearly every aspect of Americans' lives, you are proposing an almost 20-percent cut to CISA, \$491 million, and driving out the workforce through early-retirement buyouts and questionable terminations. That is not cutting fat; that is a death blow.

This reduction in force is not based on performance but on things in CISA's congressionally mandated mission that the President is offended by, like securing America's elections from foreign adversaries like Russia.

These are real threats. I represent Illinois, and during the 2016 elections Russian hackers penetrated the State Board of Elections' voter registration database, stealing the personal data of about 76,000 Illinois voters.

CISA was created to protect the Nation's critical infrastructure from physical and cyber threats, which includes election infrastructure. Therefore, you cannot claim to be refocusing on core missions like enhancing the security or resilience of critical infrastructure while also eliminating election-security support and staff.

Unfortunately, CISA is not the only area suffering as this administration weakens our Nation's cybersecurity vulnerabilities. Cabinet Secretaries are putting American lives at risk by avoiding secure communications. The FBI's Foreign Influence Task Force has been disbanded. The head of U.S. Cyber Command has been fired, with no replacement.

This is all happening at a time when national-security and cybersecurity experts have urged greater investments in cyber defense and offense, particularly as cyber crime proliferates and China and Russia have sought to interfere with our economy, our elections, our healthcare systems, and our security. Our adversaries are upping their game every day, growing significantly, while this budget would take us backwards.

These aren't hypothetical threats. China is ramping up attacks on our telecommunications and energy sectors. Schools and hospitals in my district have had to close after ransomware attacks.

So my question is, why? Why is this administration so determined to degrade the core cyber defenses that keep America safe?

Is it to privatize CISA functions so that the tech CEOs who sat front-row at President Trump's inauguration can profit off of them and lock small competitors out?

Is it to let Putin and his cronies around the world who support the President interfere in our elections?

Is it to make government services more difficult and frustrating to access so Americans will support your efforts to dismantle them?

Is it being driven by some ask from anonymous investors in the President's crypto scheme?

I don't know the answer. But what I do know is that this committee will continue to fulfill our Article I responsibilities under the Constitution regardless of the chaos and corruption of this administration.

We will have questions for you today on your plans to improve the core functions of CISA, fulfill the mission that Congress designated, and expand much-needed capabilities with the reduction in staff and resources you are requesting in this budget.

Lastly, I would like to thank the women and men of CISA working 24/7 to combat threats facing our Nation's networks, critical infrastructure, elections, emergency communications, schools, hospitals, and public gatherings while a new administration creates job uncertainty and the fear of politically motivated reprisal.

Thank you again, Ms. Bean, for being here today, and I look forward to your testimony and answers to our questions.

I yield back.

Mr. AMODEI. Thank you, ma'am. So, between the two of us, with your statement, our average is pretty good. We are ahead of schedule.

Ms. UNDERWOOD. I think we are doing great.

Mr. AMODEI. Madam Director, the floor is yours.

STATEMENT OF BRIDGET BEAN

Ms. BEAN. Good morning. Chairman Amodei, Ranking Member Underwood, and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to discuss the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency's priorities and our efforts to protect our Nation.

I am honored to serve as the Senior Official Performing the Duties of the Director and the Executive Director of CISA. My decades of civil service have well-prepared me for this role, having previously served at the Small Business Administration and at the Federal Emergency Management Agency.

I joined CISA in 2022 as our first Chief Integration Officer, leading CISA's operations integrations across the Nation to deliver mission-critical services more rapidly and in support of our critical infrastructure. This work made clear that cybersecurity and infrastructure security is national security.

As the Nation's cyber defense agency and the national coordinator for critical infrastructure and security and resilience, CISA leads the national effort to understand, manage, and reduce risk to the cyber and physical infrastructure that Americans rely on every day.

CISA is committed to executing our core mission as authorized by Congress. Our agency has swiftly and responsibly implemented this administration's executive orders and supporting guidance. Aligned with administration priorities, we are laser-focused on our statutorily authorized cybersecurity, infrastructure security, and emergency communications missions.

The threats facing our Nation, they are not hypothetical; they are real. And our adversaries are directly targeting our critical infrastructure in unprecedented ways. We know this because the talented workforce at CISA has detected these adversaries.

CISA's workforce, operating on the front line of national security, is our greatest asset. I want to thank them personally, each and every one of them, for their unwavering dedication, professionalism, and service to our Nation.

Since January 2025, we have continued to drive vulnerability risk reduction in Federal departments and critical infrastructure.

We have increased visibility across networks and strengthened cybersecurity. We have released operational products with partners, including the FBI and NSA, warning infrastructure of pressing threats and urging specific mitigations.

We have delivered 269 terrorism-mitigation courses for more than 5,000 folks across the country, with 94 percent of those who participated responding that that training has enhanced their preparedness. We conducted 68 exercises, most recently the one in Philadelphia convening hundreds of emergency managers in support of the 2026 World Cup.

We have completed 9,400 cyber and physical assessments and trainings for State and locals as well as critical-infrastructure owners and operators. We have conducted more than 4,000 notifications to warn entities of early-stage ransomware activity before malicious actors could take action. This results in uninterrupted service and billions of dollars in estimated savings because the ransomware could not be deployed.

We have expanded CISA's Known Exploited Vulnerability Catalog to over 1,300 vulnerabilities. As a result of this, the private sector has remediated vulnerabilities identified by CISA an average of 15 months earlier. This is critical when we are defending against nation-state actors and persistent threat of ransomware.

State, local, and Tribal and territorial governments and those who have signed up for CISA's vulnerability scanning services saw a 31-percent reduction in exploitable vulnerabilities. We have deployed endpoint detection and response technologies across Federal agencies to more than 415,000 endpoints, enabling rapid detection and response.

We have blocked 700 million malicious connections across the Federal Government and more than 60 million across critical infrastructure. This is just in the first quarter of 2025 alone.

These examples illustrate that CISA is operating with a clear vision to defend and secure the Federal civilian enterprise, to strength the physical and cybersecurity of the United States critical infrastructure, to incentivize the development and procurement of trustworthy technology, to lead the United States Government's coordinated cyber defense operations, and to unify our national response to significant cyber incidents by coordinating between government, industry, and our international partners.

With the support of Congress, we have strengthened our ability to detect, analyze, and respond to cyber and physical threats faster and more effectively than ever before.

There is no shortage of work ahead, and we are committed to operating with transparency, accountability, and efficiency as we confront the threats of today and prepare for those of tomorrow. I look forward to working with all of you to strengthen CISA's capabilities to enhance the security and resilience of our Nation's infrastructure.

Thank you again for the opportunity to be here, and I look forward to your questions.

[The information follows:]



TESTIMONY

OF

Bridget Bean
Senior Official Performing the Duties of the Director
Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency
U.S. Department of Homeland Security

BEFORE

THE

Subcommittee on Homeland Security
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives

ON

“Oversight Hearing – The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency”

May 8, 2025
Washington, D.C.

Chairman Amodei, Acting Ranking Member Underwood, and Members of the Subcommittee: Thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding the accomplishments and priorities of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA).

I am honored to appear before this Subcommittee and I look forward to discussing the state of our Agency and our ongoing efforts to ensure we make the most efficient and effective use of the resources Congress provides to CISA to carry out our commitment to the DHS mission to safeguard our homeland, our values, and our way of life.

As the Nation's cyber defense agency and the national coordinator for critical infrastructure security and resilience, CISA leads the national effort to understand, manage, and reduce risk to the cyber and physical infrastructure Americans rely on every hour of every day. Securing our Nation's critical infrastructure is a shared responsibility that necessitates a whole-of-government and a whole-of-nation approach. CISA's mission can only be accomplished by fostering collaborative, trusted partnerships across all levels of government, the private sector, academia, and the international community.

CISA will continue focus on strengthening our Nation's cyber and physical defenses. CISA plays two key roles in this mission. First, we are the operational lead for federal cybersecurity, charged with protecting and defending federal networks in coordination with the Office of Management and Budget, the Office of the National Cyber Director, and each agency. CISA also leads asset response to significant cyber incidents in partnership with the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Intelligence Community for threat response and intelligence support, respectively.

Every day, CISA works with government partners such as the FBI and sector risk management agencies to identify and notify victims of cyber intrusions. Specifically, CISA identified that actors known as Volt Typhoon and Salt Typhoon compromised multiple critical infrastructure organizations—primarily in Communications, Energy, Transportation Systems, and Water and Wastewater Sectors—in the United States and its territories, including Guam. It's been assessed with high confidence that Volt Typhoon actors have been pre-positioning themselves for potential disruptive effects in the event of potential geopolitical tensions and/or military conflicts. Salt Typhoon actors have compromised networks at multiple telecommunications companies to enable the theft of customer call records data, the compromise of private communications of a limited number of individuals involved in government or political activity, and the copying of certain information subject to U.S. law enforcement requests pursuant to court orders. This ongoing threat from Volt Typhoon and Salt Typhoon underscores the urgent need for our continued vigilance and collaboration.

CISA continues to aid in incident response and proactive risk reduction in the wake of recent cybersecurity operational activities and incidents, to include Volt Typhoon and Salt Typhoon. In these instances, cyber threat actors have employed advanced tactics for pre-positioning in critical infrastructure allowing them to maintain undetected persistent access for a prolonged and sustained period. We continue to work with Federal and Critical Infrastructure partners to

detect and eradicate these actors from critical systems, including through our CyberSentry threat detection capability. As of the first Quarter of FY 2025, CISA has established operational partnership with 44 critical asset owners across 7 sectors, with additional partnerships planned.

Threat actors continue to gain initial access to critical networks by leveraging Known Exploited Vulnerabilities (KEV). Since January 21, 2025, CISA has worked urgently, adding 73 KEVs to the KEV Catalog, enabling network defenders across the nation to prioritize their mitigations. Further, CISA is fully committed to sustaining and improving the Common Vulnerabilities and Exposures program, a critical part of cyber infrastructure. Additionally, we continue to expand the deployment of protective and detection technologies across the Federal Civilian Executive Branch, increasing our CISA-led Endpoint Detection and Response capability to more than 415,000 endpoints. We also continue to block connections to malicious domains through our Protective Domain Name System service. In the first quarter of calendar year 2025, we blocked more than 700 million malicious connections across the federal civilian enterprise and 60 million malicious connections across Critical Infrastructure, preventing countless cyber incidents.

Since January 21, 2025, CISA has advanced its mission to safeguard the Nation's critical infrastructure through a range of cybersecurity, physical security, and emergency preparedness efforts. As part of its ongoing cyber defense operations, CISA has consistently issued detailed advisories addressing a wide range of cybersecurity threats. These advisories include comprehensive analyses of threat actor tactics, techniques, and procedures; indicators of compromise that network defenders can use to protect their systems; and recommended mitigations—underscoring CISA's unwavering commitment to enhancing the security, resilience, and reliability of the Nation's cyber infrastructure.

Looking ahead, CISA will work with federal partners to mature their cybersecurity and incident response postures and safeguard federal networks. CISA will also partner with the private sector and state, local, tribal, and territorial (SLTT) governments to detect and mitigate cyber threats and vulnerabilities to our Nation's critical infrastructure before they are exploited. We will enhance critical infrastructure protection by enabling risk-informed decision-making by owners and operators of critical infrastructure, as well as federal and SLTT partners.

In parallel with its cybersecurity mission, CISA has maintained a strong focus on physical security and special event support.

Since January 2025, CISA delivered 269 terrorism and criminal threat mitigation training courses to over 5,100 participants across all 10 regions. Additionally, CISA conducted 68 exercises—48 focused on cybersecurity and 20 on physical security.

In April, CISA provided on-the-ground support for the 129th Boston Marathon by assessing risks to critical infrastructure, staffing multiple command posts, and training nearly 60 law enforcement and security personnel through surveillance detection courses. For the 250th Celebration of the Battles of Lexington and Concord, CISA conducted physical security assessments, delivered vehicle ramming prevention training, and supported operational coordination through staffing of the Unified Coordination Center.

CISA also provided 14 Active Shooter Preparedness trainings to more than 4,000 registrants, equipping security professionals with actionable guidance to strengthen emergency action plans. Furthermore, CISA advanced school safety by training more than 2,800 stakeholders on responding to anonymous threats of violence.

This year, CISA expanded our unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) security guidance, in collaboration with federal and private sector critical infrastructure partners, to address key capability gaps in UAS threat recognition, response, and detection. Additionally, CISA works closely with stadium owners, law enforcement, and the Federal Aviation Administration to coordinate UAS temporary flight restrictions for the 2025 FIFA Club World Cup, which will support 60 matches across 12 stadiums in 10 states.

On April 23, CISA conducted a full-scale exercise at Lincoln Financial Field in Philadelphia, bringing together more than 800 government and private sector partners to simulate emergency response scenarios for a FIFA World Cup 2026 match. The exercise enhanced coordination and tested procedures for information sharing, tactical communication, family reunification, and public messaging, strengthening interagency relationships ahead of the World Cup.

I am honored to represent CISA's work supporting our mission to understand, manage, and reduce risk to our nation's cyber and physical infrastructure. The risks we face are complex, geographically dispersed, and affect a diverse array of our stakeholders and, ultimately, the American people.

In closing, I would like to take a moment to recognize this Committee's strong support for CISA. We will continue to operate efficiently and cost-effectively. There is much to be done, and I look forward to working with you to continue strengthening this Agency and, by extension, the security and resilience of the United States.

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you today, and I look forward to your questions.

Mr. AMODEI. Thank you, Madam Director.

The chair now recognizes the ranking member. The floor is yours for 4 minutes for your questions.

Ms. UNDERWOOD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Jumping right into it, my first one should be easy, a simple “yes” or “no.” Is Russia still a cybersecurity threat and priority for this administration and CISA?

Ms. BEAN. Yes.

Ms. UNDERWOOD. Excellent. I am glad to hear that.

And I want to discuss with you CISA’S response to a recent incident at the National Labor Relations Board, which protects the legal rights of American workers.

Public reporting indicates that, in March, a whistleblower complaint was filed against a DOGE team at NLRB for removing massive amounts of sensitive data from the agency with no legitimate justification. The whistleblower reported a, quote, “spike in data leaving the agency” after DOGE was granted access to it. Among other things, it is possible this data included corporate secrets and private information on union members.

At the same time, DOGE employees turned off monitoring tools, manually deleted records of what they accessed, and sought to ensure their activities weren’t logged in the system.

As soon as DOGE got there, the agency started detecting suspicious login attempts from an IP address in Russia. So NLRB’s IT department launched a formal review of what it deemed a serious, ongoing security breach or potentially illegal removal of personally identifiable information.

Normally, at this point, a CISA Computer Emergency Readiness Team would be created to respond. But public reporting indicates this never happened because instructions, quote, “had come down” to drop the US-CERT reporting and investigation.

And the whistleblower who made the complaint found a threatening note taped to his door with sensitive personal info and a drone shot of him walking his dog.

Who decided not to create a Computer Emergency Readiness Team in this instance? And was it someone at CISA or elsewhere in the administration?

Ms. BEAN. So what I can tell you is that CISA supports all of our Federal civilian agencies—

Ms. UNDERWOOD. Right.

Ms. BEAN [continuing]. Through the protection of sensitive data and sensitive systems, through targeting capabilities, products, hands-on technical assistance, and collaboration, providing resources.

And we would be happy to work with the NLRB when asked, but we have not, you know, and we are happy to do that.

Ms. UNDERWOOD. So you did not receive a request?

Ms. BEAN. Not to my knowledge.

Ms. UNDERWOOD. Okay.

So what is the standard procedure at CISA now for investigations involving the misuse of sensitive data and incursions by bad actors like Russia?

Ms. BEAN. So I think that there is—what I would like to point out is that we are on the cybersecurity side of the house, right? So

we are helping agencies to protect their systems and their sensitive information. So, you know, we are happy to help with some forensics with NLRB.

The other thing is, you know, I think the DOGE employees are Federal employees, and, you know, they are held to the same rules of behavior and engagement, and I have every reason to believe that they are doing that.

Ms. UNDERWOOD. Can you commit to providing us regular and timely updates into the investigation into what happened with NLRB as you do your forensics and the other—

Ms. BEAN. If we are asked—

Ms. UNDERWOOD [continuing]. Investigations?

Ms. BEAN. Yes, ma'am. If we are asked to do so, we will provide updates.

Ms. UNDERWOOD. Okay.

I yield back. Thank you.

Mr. AMODEI. Thank you, ma'am.

Ms. UNDERWOOD. Three minutes, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. AMODEI. Thank you very much. That is what they call a leader in my State.

Ms. UNDERWOOD. Uh-huh.

Mr. AMODEI. Good for you.

If at any point in time during the questioning the answer is appropriately, "I would love to talk to you guys in a SCIF about it," let us know, and we will arrange that.

Mrs. Hinson, you are recognized for 4 minutes of questioning.

Mrs. HINSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to our ranking member for holding this hearing.

Acting Director, thank you so much for being here today.

As a member of the China Select Committee, I have seen firsthand, obviously, many of the threats that face our country—the work there, the adversaries, the tools that they are using to come after the United States and target our citizens. So agencies like yours are very, very important.

The CCP is actively exploiting gaps in infrastructure to sow that chaos and instability, embedding within our critical systems, and positioning to strike when it suits them. As we know, we saw with the recent Volt and Salt Typhoon campaigns, obviously, operations that were carefully planned, well-resourced, and executed with precision. They make (ph) the strategic intent and long-term capabilities of CCP state-sponsored actors to carry out covert attacks on us.

And this is a threat not only to our national security but to every American's life, so I think it is a threat we cannot ignore. And I know you are taking it very seriously.

So I want to talk about a program that I think is absolutely essential in this, and it is the Attack Surface Management program. Obviously, this is about not only identifying and going in forensically, like you said, auditing this and catching it, but patching the vulnerabilities before our adversaries can exploit them.

So do you consider this program to be one of CISA's core cybersecurity capabilities? How are you leveraging this program to really help our partners defend against these sophisticated nation-state actors?

Ms. BEAN. Very important question. You are absolutely right. So this Attack Surface Management, it is one of our core capabilities. It is a pivotal—it is a critical pillar of our cyber defense program at CISA.

And it is unique inasmuch as it is one of the most scalable programs we have, and it takes an attacker's approach, so it is looking from the outside in. Most CISOs and CIOs are looking at their environment from the inside. This is a way to scan across the horizon, across the network, across the internet, and see what are those vulnerabilities, where are they. And with that information, we actually are able to go to critical infrastructure and private sector and say, "Hey, you have this vulnerability, but the good news is you can patch it and you can protect yourself."

So the Attack Surface Management, not only is it one of our most scalable, cost-effective tools we have, it is the most effective in identifying vulnerabilities and providing an entity to fix that, to mitigate that challenge. It reduces risks. It enables proactive measures.

And as entities continue to build their attack surface—you know, you add a device, you add a software, you have cloud, you have got mobile devices. All of that expands the attack surface that an adversary can capitalize on. This tool really allows, through partnership between the government, CISA, and private entity, to identify those vulnerabilities and to fix them.

Mrs. HINSON. Well, certainly, I think the partnerships that you have at the State and local level, too, all the way down to the business community, it is critical. And I think that the strike teams, as they were called, and, you know, getting out and actually communicating that is critically important.

One followup, last question. You know, your predecessor was really outspoken about the national-security risks associated with TikTok, as well, regarding that access to personal devices, data harvesting that comes from that.

Do you share that assessment? And how are you at CISA evaluating or responding to those risks?

Ms. BEAN. Absolutely. I think, as you know, TikTok is not authorized on any Federal network.

And what we are also trying to do is make sure that we are raising the awareness that cybersecurity is everyone's concern. And you mentioned it earlier, right? It is a team sport. It is the Federal, State, and local, but also individuals. And so making sure that our small businesses, our K-12s, our students understand the risk and how it really plays into their everyday life, that is an important role we play to help educate the community on the threats and the risks.

Mrs. HINSON. Thank you.

I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. AMODEI. Thank you, Mrs. Hinson.

Mr. Cuellar, you have the floor for 4 minutes.

Mr. CUELLAR. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And, first of all, Director Bean, I want to wish you a happy Mother's Day.

Ms. BEAN. Thank you.

Mr. CUELLAR. All of you all also, happy Mother's Day.

And, guys, please don't forget, buy your cards, your flowers, and whatever you need to do for Sunday.

So, with that, I would just say, happy Mother's Day on Sunday.

But let me talk a little bit about efficiency, effectiveness, and accountability. Look, I think we are all on the same page. We want to get rid of inefficiencies and waste and all that. It is how we get there, is where, you know, we have seen it.

I know, in Texas, working with the comptroller, John Sharp, and the legislature in the 1990s, we did this—"Doggy" I think is what they call it, but DOGE—without cutting people and without cutting services. But we found billions and billions of dollars of savings without cutting services and personnel. So there is a way of doing this.

From there, years later, Congress, in a bipartisan way, passed a law back in 2010, the Government Performance and Results Modernization Act. And there is another law that is there. And, you know, it calls for annual operational reviews to make sure that, you know, we get this efficiency. It calls for regulatory modernization—that is, anything that—rules that are obsolete or costly, it calls for that. That is the law already.

It calls for development of performance measures. You know, the problem is, you all develop the performance measures in a vacuum—and I am talking about just the executive branch—without sending anything over to us. They are put on a web page, and I am sure yours is on a web page.

And then the other thing tied up is calling for competitive contracting. That is a different law.

You know, budgets—and I think every agency that has any contract has a problem with on budget and on time. And there are penalties that you can enforce under the law where, if somebody doesn't do the contract, after you get a competitive contract, if they are not on time or they are not on budget, there are penalties. But the Federal Government, I still haven't found one where we are on time and on budget. I am sure there is an example somewhere out there, but we need to enforce that a lot more.

And, finally, just the quarterly oversight reporting, which is, for us, Article I. You know, you do that, report to us under Article I. And under the law that we passed in 2010, a lot of that is supposed to be done.

The only thing that wasn't added was reporting back to Congress. The compromise, unfortunately, was to put it on the website. But we are hoping that committees and Appropriations will start—just add that little thing to the Government Modernization Act that I talked about.

But I think we are all on the same page. We want to find efficiencies, effectiveness, and we want to work with you, without cutting personnel and services. So we look forward to working with you.

And, with that, I yield back the balance of my time, Mr. Chairman. And don't forget Mother's Day, sir.

Mr. AMODEI. Oh, I knew about that. Thank you for the reminder. That is kind of redundant, but that is good. We are good.

Mr. Gonzalez, the floor is yours for 4 minutes.

Mr. GONZALES. Thank you, Director, for your service to our country. And thank you to all the men and women at CISA for everything that you all do.

I want to first start—we always talk about ecosystem and, you know, all these threats and how we grow this out. I want to talk about universities. And, you know, I am blessed to be in Texas. We have some amazing universities. I was just speaking with Heather Wilson—doing a great job—president of UTEP.

What can we do more to work with some of the universities? Is CISA doing anything in particular with UTEP, one? And then are you doing anything with any other universities?

Ms. BEAN. So CISA is all about partnerships, understanding that cybersecurity is a team sport. We can't do it by ourselves. And universities and institutions of higher learning play a critical role.

And we do—we work with them at multiple levels. At the national level, we have engagement with universities, but also at the local level. Our whole regional force is on the ground in those communities working with universities to do three things, right?

One is to make sure that we are highlighting the importance of cybersecurity in the curriculum and getting folks to go to school to learn that, to build the next generation of cyber defenders.

Secondly, to make sure that we are learning from them. Some of the best and brightest ideas about how to defend our critical infrastructure is coming out of those institutions. So our regional staff is working with them to make sure that we are getting that information, feeding it back up, you know, really trying to be efficient and cost-effective and leveraging that which is being done there.

And, lastly, the third one is just to make sure that we have academia, international partners, the Federal Government, and State and local governments communicating so that we are leveraging resources and not duplicating them.

Mr. GONZALES. I will tell you what. As we go through this budget process, that could be a sweet spot. All the members in here, we have, in some form or fashion, colleges and universities. You know, my good friend Juan Ciscomani has University of Arizona there. There are all these opportunities. And if CISA is just partnering with all these places, it is going to be very hard for us to say, "We want less of that," and it is going to be very easy for us to say, "More of that."

I am going to switch gears a little bit on international, kind of, discussion. A lot of us saw what happened in Spain and Portugal about a week ago, and that concerns me. You know, anytime the power goes out, I think we are still trying to figure that out.

But I am going to ask two questions. One, do you have any details on that situation?

Ms. BEAN. Absolutely. As soon as we became aware of it, we reached out to our partners to find out what was going on and could we render assistance. We were soon told that it was not a cyber nexus, cyber-related.

But we remain extremely committed to our international partner. As the US-CERT, you know, we have hundreds of international CERT partners, and it is, you know, government to government, really. And our team works around the clock. I mean, just recently, someone was telling me that they were getting up at 4

o'clock in the morning to have an international call. So we are extremely committed to that continued sharing of information across what we call the CERTs.

But your question is very timely and very important, because, regardless of whether or not it was a cyber event, it really demonstrates the importance of critical infrastructure. And critical infrastructure is the backbone of our national security and our economic security.

So we want to make sure, at CISA, that we are working with the critical infrastructure in our country, whether it is the electrical grid, whether it is clean drinking water, whether it is our healthcare, right, it is our communications, making sure that they are both secure and resilient, so that, you know, our American citizens can depend on having that operational infrastructure.

Mr. GONZALES. You know, thank you for that answer, and thank you for working with our partners. You know, we have military bases in Spain. They are a close ally. Today it is Spain; tomorrow it is somewhere else. But when I think of CISA, I always think it is the expert in that area, not only for the United States but for the world. So it is great that you are working on that.

My last question is going to critical infrastructure. Oil and gas industry is very important not only in my district, not only to Texas, but the United States. The Colonial Pipeline is something very much on our mind.

Can you briefly talk a little bit about what you are doing to harden and make sure that our energy industry is ready for that next attack that is coming?

Ms. BEAN. First, we are working with the Department of Energy, we are working with all of the sector risk management agencies, but we are working with the oil and gas companies specifically to make sure that they are understanding what is the threat to them, who is targeting them, and what can they do to help better secure themselves.

What we are finding is that our nation-state actors are not using any novel techniques; they are exploiting known vulnerabilities. They are searching the internet looking for misconfigurations, and they are getting in. And they are going undetected because these living-off-the-land kind of techniques don't leave a footprint.

And so what we are trying to work with, you know, the oil and gas companies, as well as all the rest, is to understand we need to make the adversary work harder to get in and that there are things they can do to significantly—and I mean drastically—reduce their risk.

We are also providing intelligence briefings so that they better understand what exactly are we seeing, so that if we are able to give them a bit more information, we are doing that. And, again, our folks on the ground who are working with those companies to understand the interconnectivity.

And, lastly, making sure that those who rely on the oil and natural gas understand that, if something should happen, what are their contingency plans, what are those cascading impacts.

So we are trying to take a holistic approach to make sure that they are hardened and have a really good resiliency plan so that they can restart operations as soon as possible.

Mr. GONZALES. Great. Thank you, Director.

I yield back, Chairman.

Mr. AMODEI. Ms. Escobar, the floor is yours for 4 minutes, not an Arizona 4 minutes—or, I mean——

Mr. CUELLAR. Whoa.

Mr. AMODEI [continuing]. A Texas 4 minutes, but——

Ms. ESCOBAR. First Hawaii, now Arizona.

Mr. AMODEI [continuing]. With the high altitude, with the high altitude——

Mr. CUELLAR. Hawaii, Arizona. I am going to call you on Mother's Day for sure.

Mr. AMODEI. Well, I am a little rattled because when I hear the Director talk about getting up at 4:00 in the morning for an international call and know that she is thinking about calling Nevada, it kind of, you know, has a negative impact on me.

But I am wasting the committee's time. Please proceed.

Ms. ESCOBAR. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Ranking Member.

Thank you so much, Ms. Bean, for your work and for being here.

I have been so profoundly concerned about the reports of what DOGE—or, Chairman——

Mr. AMODEI. "Doggy."

Ms. ESCOBAR [continuing]. "Doggy"—apologies, Chairman—has been doing.

You are not going to find anyone who disagrees with rooting out waste, fraud and abuse. We all want that. But the unlawful ways that DOGE has been engaging with sensitive data has been alarming. And it is alarming to my constituents as well. I have gotten innumerable questions about it.

And we have read reports about the staffers at DOGE sharing sensitive information via unsecured email accounts. There was just a Washington Post article yesterday about their desire to create a centralized account for all of Americans' sensitive data.

So I am—and, obviously, we are all concerned about the access to this data by adversaries. We don't want adversaries getting their hands on this data.

So I am wondering if CISA was consulted as DOGE staffers accessed this data.

Ms. BEAN. So I don't have any knowledge that CISA was consulted. What I can say is two things that I think are worth highlighting.

One is CISA has worked, through Congress's both direction and support, to build tools that better protect the security on every Federal agency network, and we continue to do that. And it is a top, top priority for us, as directed by Congress and funded by Congress.

Secondly, we are—as you mentioned, you know, we are looking for efficiencies, but, you know, we are doing it as we do with every transition, right? You look at organizations, you look at spending. I have been in government a number of years, hardly worth quantifying, but I have seen this again and again. And, you know, at every transition, you are looking at your staffing, you are looking at your budget, you are looking at your contracts, you are looking at your organizational structure.

And that is what we are doing at CISA to try and find efficiencies and make sure that we are still delivering on our core missions while eliminating duplication and increasing efficiency, which will really enhance the security of our citizens.

Ms. ESCOBAR. I am all for efficiencies, but my concern is in the data that was accessed by these employees and potentially shared on unsecured networks. I have read that they have shared information via personal Gmail accounts.

Have you all had a chance to go in and provide any oversight over what data was accessed, where it went, how it was shared?

Ms. BEAN. I don't have that here today, but I am happy to go back and get some information—

Ms. ESCOBAR. Okay.

Ms. BEAN [continuing]. And try and provide you a more fulsome answer.

Ms. ESCOBAR. I am very, very interested in that, and I think there are other members of the committee who would be interested in that. And, as the chairman mentioned, if we have to do that in a SCIF, we are at the ready.

Ms. BEAN. Thank you.

Ms. ESCOBAR. Mr. Chairman, I yield back a little over 3 minutes.

Mr. AMODEI. Thank you for being an all-star member of the committee.

Mr. CISCOMANI, the floor is yours for 4 minutes.

Mr. CISCOMANI. I will represent Arizona well and stick to the time, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you, Ms. Bean, for being here with us today. I really appreciate your feedback.

You know, we all know quite well that, in our increasingly interconnected world where there is so much information that lives on the cloud and communications are done electronically, the cyber threat environment is dynamic and changing on a daily basis.

Adversarial nations and criminals take advantage of any weakness and perceived weakness and will continue to do so. That is how they operate. This happens not only at the Federal level but also at a State and the local level.

Can you speak to the resources that you have available for State and local governments and how you anticipate the budget request changing, if at all, the availability of these resources for State and local entities?

Ms. BEAN. So, at CISA, we have what we call our regional delivery model. And that means having security advisors in every State, territory. And those are discipline-specific experts on security, cybersecurity, physical security, emergency communications.

And it is that team on the ground that is working with local governments, local critical infrastructure in those communities. And they work and they live in those communities.

Mr. CISCOMANI. Uh-huh.

Ms. BEAN. So this is the way we deliver many of our scalable products and services, is down through our regional security advisors.

And, you know, this administration is committed to making sure that we are as close to the American people, delivering those services, as possible. So I can promise you that will continue.

Mr. CISCOMANI. Great.

You know, on that same topic of closeness to the community, kind of like “boots on the ground” kind of thing, small businesses are a perfect representation of that. And they depend a lot on the resources also that you can provide for their security, both cyber mainly but also in other aspects.

Can you speak a little bit to that, to the small-business resources?

Ms. BEAN. Absolutely. You know, you are making my heart sing, having worked at the SBA for many, many years.

We know that small business is, you know, the engine of our economy. And so making sure that they are doing everything they can in this highly competitive, highly connected environment is really important.

And there are things that they can do immediately—

Mr. CISCOMANI. Yeah.

Ms. BEAN [continuing]. That will help better secure them. One is to get to know their CISA security advisor. Two is to sign up for our cyber hygiene program, which is a continuous monitoring of what is happening on their—what vulnerabilities they are exposed to. Thirdly is to patch those vulnerabilities, right?

Another thing that they can do is make sure that their employees understand the threat that—you know, phishing attempts and those kinds of things.

Mr. CISCOMANI. Yeah.

Ms. BEAN. So internal education.

The other thing that I really think bears special attention is, small businesses are critical to the supply chain of our national security. And, as such, whether—they may not be prime contractors; they may be. They may be subcontractors, or they may be just supplying to those people.

Mr. CISCOMANI. Uh-huh.

Ms. BEAN. It is important that the products that they purchase are secure. And so they have the power of both their voice and their purse. And what we are really trying to do is drive “secure by design” so that the products that a small business buys are secure by design.

Mr. CISCOMANI. Yeah.

Ms. BEAN. There should not be known vulnerabilities. They shouldn’t have to turn on security features. They shouldn’t have to go and figure out, how do I do this?

Those products that they are buying and they are installing to drive their business, which creates jobs and economic revenue, they should be secure by design. They can have their voices heard, talking through membership, through their congressional Members, to have industry develop and deploy secure technology.

So there are things they can do immediately, and then there are things that they can do that will have a longer-term impact, but they are very powerful.

Mr. CISCOMANI. Great. Thank you so much.

Ms. BEAN. Uh-huh.

Mr. CISCOMANI. Thank you for that.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. AMODEI. Thank you, sir.

Mr. Guest, the floor is yours for 4 minutes.

Mr. GUEST. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And, Director Bean, thank you for joining us this morning.

I want to talk a little bit about public-private partnerships, something I know that CISA has done extremely well, particularly with things such as the JCDC.

And we know that these public-private partnerships, they promote shared situational awareness, faster response, a more unified front against cyber attacks.

And so just, with the agency going forward, can you talk a little bit about, one, the importance of these public-private partnerships, how we can grow and expand those, and maybe a little more particularly about some of the great work that the JCDC has been doing?

Ms. BEAN. Well, hotty toddy, I just love that question.

CISA is built on public-private partnerships. I mean, we are not regulatory; everything we do is through trusted, established relationships. And that is truly, you know, the mandate that you have given us, is to build public-private partnerships, and that is what we are doing.

But it is critically important. We just talked about the Spain incident. Without those existing relationships and partnerships, we would not have been able to reach out immediately to get the information. Had it been a cyber incident, we would have been able to get indicators of compromise, all kinds of things that we could have then brought home and worked on our own networks.

We are uniquely positioned—the authorities that you have given us uniquely position us between the private sector, the public sector, our international partners. And through that place where we sit, we are able to share and get information that is critically important that we can then share with all 16 critical infrastructures.

The JCDC is—you know, it is, by nature, a partnership-building organization. And it is through that trusted relationship that people share information with us. You know, those who are competitors on the P&L sheet are collaborators in the CISA world, because they know and there is trust and they know that this information is going to be used to secure our homeland. So they are sharing information that they would not share with competitors otherwise.

And so we build it at the national level, at the international, but also at the local level. And so our field forces are in constant communication with JCDC. JCDC asks our regional folks to get with the people they know and trust on the ground.

It is quintessential to our success to make sure that these public partnerships continue and that we grow them.

Mr. GUEST. Yes, ma'am.

And then let me ask you—you talked a little bit about cyber criminals, cyber attacks, exploiting known vulnerabilities. You know, I think one of the ways that we can harden our systems is patching vulnerabilities within operational systems. And we have had public-service efforts, and we always try to encourage people, you know, "Get the newest and latest security update." And it seems like that so many of us don't. And I am probably one of those that probably doesn't update my phone as often as I need to, so some of this may be talking to me.

But without government heavy-handedness and mandating these sorts of things, what can we do, either through policies or incentives or standards, to encourage more people to stay ahead of these cyber attacks by timely patching of operational systems within their business community and their business model?

Ms. BEAN. Yeah. You know, the “Patch Tuesdays” just don’t work anymore. And, you know, as we look across the whole ecosystem of cybersecurity—companies, businesses, small businesses—the burden shouldn’t be on them. And, again, I am going to go back and foot-stomp “secure by design.” But these patches need to be done and, you know, forcing those installations.

I am really encouraged, though, that, as I look at my children, my grandchildren, and the workforce we have, this digital interconnectivity is just a way of life. And so I think that they will be the driving force just to have it in our DNA, that it is just going to be a standard operating procedure.

Also, to raise the awareness that, if you don’t, you are not just opening yourself up to a cyber attack but, because you are so connected to everybody else, you are then the weakest link in the chain. And I think most Americans don’t want to be that. And so, to the extent that we can help people understand how connected they are and that your family, your friends, your business partners, and the Nation, our security depends on you doing this.

But we also have to make it simple and easy. And I think that our technology companies need to do their fair share: one, that they don’t exist when the product is released, and then making sure that those patches are done timely and make it easy for folks to install them.

Mr. GUEST. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

Mr. AMODEI. The grand master of questioning on the committee, Mr. Newhouse, the floor is yours for 4 minutes.

Mr. NEWHOUSE. Fourteen? What?

Mr. AMODEI. I want to thank all the other committee members for saving time so that Mr. Newhouse can be himself.

Mr. NEWHOUSE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. You are too generous. You really are.

Ms. Bean, thank you for being with us today.

I was going to bring this up anyway, but for sure after Mr. Guest’s point, his question. In your testimony, you talked about the number of trainings offered to support the private sector as well as local governments. And they truly are a critical function of what the agency does.

I just wanted to say that, last summer—this is a plug for you, I guess—CISA provided some of my constituents with a briefing during an agricultural threats roundtable and, also, just in March, protecting food from farm to table with a cybersecurity and protective emphasis workshop. And I just want to say, it was highly regarded, very well-received.

Chad Hutson—

Ms. BEAN. Uh-huh.

Mr. NEWHOUSE [continuing]. Just to give him a call-out, the regional affairs officer, was very helpful.

So I would encourage you to keep that up.

Ms. BEAN. Thank you.

Mr. NEWHOUSE. It helps all of us be stronger.

But I wanted to, real quickly, in the time I have left, just—you know, the threats from China are huge. I just came from the Select Committee on China, and now I won't be able to sleep tonight because of some of the things I learned there. But they are moving from economic and intelligence espionage to threatening our infrastructure, things that—you know, keeping the lights on, all that kind of stuff. At least that is my understanding.

So, in your gut, do you feel that—do you believe that you have the structure that is adequate for defending the U.S. against these kinds of thing? And, if not, what can we do to help?

Ms. BEAN. You are right. I mean, China is the most prolific, dominant threat we have.

Mr. NEWHOUSE. Yeah.

Ms. BEAN. And they are doing it for three reasons, right? They are doing it for espionage. They are doing it to steal our intellectual property. And they are getting into our critical infrastructure and they are waiting. They are patient, they are persistent, they have decades of experience—

Mr. NEWHOUSE. Yeah.

Ms. BEAN [continuing]. And they are waiting to disrupt or destroy our critical infrastructure at the time and place of their choosing.

Mr. NEWHOUSE. That is right.

Ms. BEAN. And they want to do it to either discourage us should there be a conflict with China over Taiwan and—two things.

We are not making them work hard enough.

Mr. NEWHOUSE. Make it harder for them.

Ms. BEAN. We need to make it harder for them. And so the work that we are doing—and this is all part of the answer—our Known Vulnerabilities Catalog and helping making sure that there are mitigating strategies, that is a huge way. The more we can make it hard for them to get into our critical infrastructure, the better it is.

Mr. NEWHOUSE. Okay.

Ms. BEAN. We have the tools to do what we need to do. We need to make sure that we are leveraging every partnership we have, that we are making sure that people understand the threat, that everybody is doing what they need to do.

I don't know if you saw, but 2 weeks ago Secretary Noem went out to the RSA Conference, which is one of the leading cybersecurity conferences—

Mr. NEWHOUSE. I don't think so.

Ms. BEAN [continuing]. Out in San Francisco. And I think she went for two reasons. One, I think she wanted to let the world know that cybersecurity is part of our national-security plan—

Mr. NEWHOUSE. Good.

Ms. BEAN [continuing]. Right? We are going to defend our homeland on land, air, border, sea, and cyber.

Mr. NEWHOUSE. Yeah.

Ms. BEAN. So she was putting that call out there.

Mr. NEWHOUSE. Yep.

Ms. BEAN. And I think, to the CISA family, she was saying, I support you—

Mr. NEWHOUSE. Good.

Ms. BEAN [continuing]. That you are part of this national security, and that you—that we play a critical role in that plan, and that she supports us.

So we have the tools. What we need to be able to do is be more streamlined, more efficient, make sure that we are looking at the highest threats and the most vulnerable entities and taking our precious resources and driving them to buy down that risk and that area that we know the adversaries are targeting.

Mr. NEWHOUSE. Good. Yeah.

Ms. BEAN. So it is working with the IC community to understand who are the targets, understanding the tools that will best address it, and then deploying it and working in partnership with those to make sure that they take those actions needed to drive down the risk.

Mr. NEWHOUSE. Good. Thank you very much.

Ms. BEAN. Thank you, sir.

Mr. NEWHOUSE. And I yield back to the best subcommittee chairman on the entire committee.

Mr. AMODEI. Well, is there any more time you would like, Mr. Newhouse? We can call you “Mr. Rutherford” and use his.

Well, first of all, I want to thank the committee for being true leaders in every stretch of the word, in terms of trying to be efficient with our use of time today, with other schedules, and stuff like that.

Madam Director, thank you very much for appearing here today with your folks.

I am going to ask a couple of questions, but go ahead and start this for me too. You know, I mean, I am not a hypocrite, most of the time. So a couple of things.

First of all, some people have talked with you about outreach. So, when we work up the bill, I think it is not news that outreach is phenomenally important to everybody on the committee. We think it is a very good thing that you do. And so we are going to be looking specifically at—I mean, let’s face it, the context that we will be marking up the bill for your budget is one that, frankly, has some challenges for us in terms of what may be asked for.

Nobody leave the room saying that I am challenging you on it, but please leave the room and if you think there is a message there, here it is: You guys have been asked to transfer \$119 million in a reprogramming request, and you have also been cut a half a billion dollars, or whatever it is, round numbers. We would like to know—so before the markup, in a timely manner before the markup—it’s like, so how does this affect things?

You say, what the heck did he just ask? I am not a guy that believes more money is the answer to everything, but I am very definitely—I don’t speak for anybody but me, but I think there is a theme here, which is, I want to know where the \$119 million is coming from in the reprogramming before we act on that. And the second thing is, I want to know how the half a billion basically comes out of that in the context of your mission.

And I get that, in the past, there was like, “Well, they were doing stuff they shouldn’t have been doing.” I am not concerned with any of that right now. I am concerned in what we are doing now in

“Doggy,” and I am concerned with what we are doing in fiscal year 2026.

And when I hear people like the subcommittee chairman from New York on the Policy Committee and the chairman of the Policy Committee talking about “China is eating our lunch”—my words, not theirs—but, in other words—and I know you can never say “mission accomplished,” but we want to know specifically—it is like, I know you are being reorganized and all that other sort of stuff, but at the end of the day, if there is a big meltdown and somebody is going to go, “Well, how come you folks approved cutting a bunch of stuff?” And it is like, I at least want to be in the position of, “We asked the questions. We looked at the data. We thought we had done the right thing.” I mean, perfection is the standard, and we are all human, so that is not going to be achieved.

But what I don’t want to be in the position at the end of this is, “Oh, yeah, go ahead” and all that, when it might be kind of obvious that it is like, well, you get what you pay for. More money is not automatically the answer, but I am not talking about more money; I am talking about approaching three-quarters of a billion dollars between reprogramming and the cuts based on the skinny budget.

And you say, well, what the heck is the question? The question is this: Why shouldn’t I be worried about where we are sitting, in terms of all the issues that you have talked about, as a result of those cuts?

And if the only thing that is going to come back is a general, “Well, we are reorganizing and refocusing,” please pass up the chain, ma’am, that that dog won’t hunt.

And it ought to scare the heck out of everybody in this room to think that these people sitting around this table are going to do your budget for you if we don’t get something. You know, I mean, I would be scared if I was doing my own budget, even. So we would like that feedback from you folks in a pretty timely manner.

And we also look forward to hearing, as it goes forward, what is going on in the reorganization. Because I am guessing we are going to have to do this budget before the reorganization is done. And so, if that is a big unknown out there, that is going to be a problem for these people being able to say that they had a pretty good snapshot of what the facts were and what we did.

I am being bullied up here about stuff that I guess I am supposed to read.

Not your fault, Madam Ranking Member.

So I am going to start about—well, I already said that.

I look forward to continuing the discussion on how we refocus CISA but still maintain our core cyber defenses. I think I said that.

Here is a part: We won’t surprise you. Don’t you surprise us.

For the get-back questions the members had today, we ask that you respond within 15 days. There may be some additional questions members provide in writing. We ask you to respond to those in a timely manner.

Mr. AMODEI. Thank you, ma’am. You and your agency, your professionalism and whatever, are noted. I want to make that specifically part of the record today. We look forward to working with you.

And, with that, the subcommittee stands adjourned.
[Whereupon, at 9:49 a.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

QUESTIONS FOR THE RECORD
SUBCOMMITTEE HOMELAND SECURITY
U.S. HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

**Oversight Hearing – The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security
Agency**
Wednesday, May 8, 2025

Representative Ashley Hinson

1. CISA TIES Program

To: Acting Director Bean

Increasing cyber threats demand collaboration and coordination across government and commercial industry. To address these growing threats and meet statutory mandates, Congress has recognized that CISA requires robust, automated Threat Intelligence Sharing and Collaboration to rapidly share actionable intelligence with diverse government and commercial stakeholders and ensure CISA can effectively operate and respond to threats against our nation's critical functions.

Question: Can you provide an update on the status of the TIES program and timeline?

Response: The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency has made meaningful progress in the design and technical evaluation for a new threat intelligence platform through the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency's Threat Intelligence Enterprise Services. This cyber threat intelligence exchange platform will unify, simplify, and automate how the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency shares, receives, and acts on cyber threat intelligence and information.

Modernizing and expanding upon the legacy services' data and reporting capabilities, the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency's Threat Intelligence Enterprise Services effort will include a centralized digital ecosystem for cybersecurity professionals and operational analysts and provide the infrastructure to receive and share relevant and timely threat intelligence and information from numerous sources. Support under the Threat Intelligence Enterprise

Services will also offer select enabling services including threat briefings and requests for information.

The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency pursued a four-phase solution evaluation approach under the Department of Homeland Security's Other Transactional Authority that allowed it to work iteratively with multiple solution vendors to demonstrate their solutions against the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency's requirements. The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency completed the third phase of this approach, an extensive testing and evaluation of solutions from four down-selected vendors, at the end of Quarter 1 Fiscal Year 2025.

The Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency had been on track to award, build out, and achieve authority-to-operate for the Threat Intelligence Enterprise Services by the end of Fiscal Year 2025. However, the Department of Homeland Security's Other Transaction Authority expired on September 30, 2024, and Congress has not passed an extension, resulting in the program being paused and the timeline delayed.

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