



# COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## Hearing Statement of Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson (D-MS)

### *Republicans Try to Pretend Donald Trump Hasn't Ruined DHS*

**March 25, 2026**

Republicans holding this hearing decrying the Department of Homeland Security shutdown is the height of hypocrisy — not only because they and their President are to blame for the shutdown — but also because they are complicit in causing irreparable damage over the last 15 months to DHS, its mission, and its workforce.

Let me be clear at the outset that Democrats want to fund TSA, FEMA, CISA, and the Coast Guard, **and have repeatedly offered bills to do just that.** However, **Republicans have blocked them all.** Let me say that again — **Republicans have repeatedly blocked bills Democrats offered to fund every agency before this Committee today.**

Republicans control every part of government and could have funded these agencies with Democratic support but chose not to. Republicans could pay TSA agents **today** but choose not to.

You don't have to take my word for it. Republican Senator John Kennedy of Louisiana told Fox News that when Senate Republican Leadership informed the President that his conference was prepared to accept the Democratic compromise position, the President said, **"No deals with the Democrats."**

So, this is **a Republican** shutdown, but as per usual they take no responsibility. Maybe that's because they know the President is desperately trying to distract the public from his thousands of appearances in the Epstein files and the war he needlessly started in Iran.

They know Trump doesn't want the media or the public talking about the affordability crisis he created or skyrocketing gas prices or rising inflation. Rather than do what's right for homeland security, the frontline personnel working without a paycheck, or the traveling public, congressional Republicans do Trump's bidding every time. He snaps his fingers and they jump — their only question is "how high?"

And that's what we have here — a shutdown congressional Republicans agreed to in order to cover for Trump. Even today's hearing is designed to cover for him.

I requested that the Chairman extend invitations to ICE and CBP leadership to testify today, but he declined to do so. I respect the Chairman, but his decision is a troubling departure from Committee practice. I have served on this Committee since its inception, and I know firsthand how this Committee has been run since it was stood up after 9/11. Republicans have now set an unfortunate precedent they will have to live with going forward.

But the fact remains that ICE and CBP should be here today, because those agencies are critical to the full resolution of DHS funding issues. Democrats want to ensure that before we give even *more* money to ICE and CBP — which is already flush with cash, by the way — that we rein in the deadly abuses we saw in Minneapolis. We owe Renee Good and Alex Pretti that much.

As the attorney for Renee Good's family implored the Committee in a letter this week, "Do not forget the unthinkable killing of Renee — a loving and peaceful American mother of three — and the broader harm done to other Americans."

Trump doesn't want people to remember how his secret police shot innocent Americans dead and terrorized communities. We won't let the victims be forgotten, and we honor Renee and Alex's memory by fighting to ensure it never, ever happens again.

I am extremely troubled that Trump has deployed ICE agents to airports around the country. We cannot allow what happened on the streets of Minneapolis to happen in our Nation's airports. These agents cannot do TSA's job **nor should they** — they aren't trained for it.

So, we see images of ICE agents standing around or walking through terminals, doing nothing to reduce the lines at security checkpoints, while TSA personnel continue to do their jobs without pay because Republicans refuse to vote for legislation to fund TSA. It's ridiculous and maddening, but not surprising.

Since Donald Trump took over, he has done everything in his power to destroy the Department of Homeland Security, weaponize it against the American people, and hurt the workforce. He sent DOGE into DHS and fired or forced out thousands of hardworking employees with irreplaceable homeland security expertise.

At FEMA, more than 2,000 hardworking employees left the agency, and CISA lost about 1,000 employees, or a third of its staff. He cut critical homeland security programs and is intentionally withholding grants from nonprofits like synagogues, churches, and mosques and disaster funding from communities that desperately need it.

He has attacked DHS workers' union rights, and his administration is suing to end Transportation Security Officers' collective bargaining rights as we speak. These are the hard-won rights of the very same officers Republicans are claiming to care so much about now.

This administration has done nothing but marginalize and denigrate TSA from the moment Trump was sworn in. Meanwhile, Democrats have been fighting for the TSA workforce since long before Republicans discovered — this week, apparently — that DHS is more than just ICE and CBP.

Donald Trump, Stephen Miller, Tom Homan, Kristi Noem, and Corey Lewandowski have tried to turn ICE into a national police force — a weapon for their political agenda — while systematically neglecting the critical missions of TSA, FEMA, CISA, and the Coast Guard.

As part of their effort, Trump has installed incompetent and unfit DHS leadership who have used their positions for personal gain.

At the top of the list is disgraced former Secretary Kristi Noem, who lived rent-free in government housing meant for military leadership. She wasted millions of taxpayer dollars on ad campaigns and photo ops, complete with hair, makeup, and a rented horse for her to pose on for the cameras.

And her so-called “special government employee” Corey Lewandowski used his position and close relationship with Noem to steer contracts and sweetheart deals to his cronies, in a pay-to-play scheme that has him under investigation.

FEMA is on its third unqualified acting administrator in 15 months, and the witness that was scheduled to testify today, Mr. Gregg Phillips, raises serious concerns. He said of President Biden last year, “I would like to punch that [expletive] in the mouth right now...he deserves to die. And I hope he does.”

Mr. Phillips reportedly claims to have been involuntarily teleported multiple times, including once to a Waffle House in Georgia. That kind of violent rhetoric and wild conspiracy theories are troubling for someone who holds a leadership position at DHS.

For their part, congressional Republicans have sat idly by and watched it all happen, often enabling, encouraging, and cheering on this madness. So, to my Republican colleagues, spare us your crocodile tears today. Your talk is cheap and the theatrics are nothing but performance. This hearing won't get DHS employees a paycheck.

I urge my Republican colleagues to stop the performance and start governing. Join Democrats in passing legislation to reopen DHS **today**.

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