



COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

Ranking Member Bennie G. Thompson

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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

***Hearing on Trump's Mass Deportations and ICE & CBP Attacks on U.S. Citizens
(Minority Day Hearing)***

Wednesday, April 22

I welcome our panel of witnesses to this minority day hearing. I will note that it's been 20 years since the Committee on Homeland Security held a minority day.

Over the years, the Committee has conducted oversight of countless homeland security issues. But none of those issues were more urgent than Americans being locked up, assaulted, shot, and killed by the Department of Homeland Security.

Under President Trump, ICE and CBP have killed Renee Good and Alex Pretti in cold blood, and shot, beat, harassed, arrested, or locked up countless more innocent people. Congress cannot stand idly by while Americans are hurt and killed by their own government.

That's why Democrats are demanding accountability. That means holding oversight hearings, obtaining documents, and demanding answers from the Trump administration. Unfortunately, Republicans have done nothing of the sort.

Republicans have refused to work across the aisle to enact meaningful ICE and CBP reforms. In doing so, they have forced the longest partisan government shutdown in history.

Less than a year ago, Republicans gave ICE and CBP a \$150 BILLION slush fund — paid for with taxpayer dollars — with no oversight or strings attached. Now Republicans want to give them another \$70 BILLION in reconciliation so Stephen Miller, Tom Homan, and Markwayne Mullin can do whatever they want with it. It's outrageous.

Congressional Democrats are saying enough is enough. And on this Committee in particular, we refuse to allow Republicans to shirk our oversight responsibilities.

After Republicans refused Democrats' request to invite ICE and CBP to our DHS shutdown hearing last month, we requested a minority day hearing with Miller and Homan, the architects of Trump's out-of-control immigration policies. Unfortunately, the White House refused to send them to testify today, but that comes as no surprise.

Stephen Miller has the blood of American citizens on his hands, and Tom Homan doesn't want to answer questions about why he was recorded by the FBI accepting \$50,000 cash in a takeout bag from undercover agents. They're hiding from accountability today, and they're being aided and abetted by congressional Republicans.

The most recent example is the appalling letter the Chairman sent to Miller and Homan discouraging them from attending the hearing. He went so far as to refer to our request as “a distraction” and “not a serious attempt at oversight”.

Imagine calling oversight of the deaths of Americans “a distraction” and “not serious.” How ironic for Republicans to call Democrats’ hearing request “unserious” when the Chairman’s seven-page invitation letter was more than the entirety of Republicans’ oversight this Congress. It’s a shame.

Unfortunately, the Trump administration has ignored Democrats’ oversight requests all Congress and refused to release critical evidence against ICE and CBP in the deaths of Renee and Alex.

In January, every Democrat on this Committee signed a letter to then-Secretary Kristi Noem demanding video recordings and other documents in the deaths of Ms Good and Mr. Pretti. Four months later, that letter is still unanswered.

We remember them today, and our prayers are with their loved ones.

I want to thank the witnesses who are here to tell their stories on the record. It takes real courage to do that, and we thank them for coming forward.

Marimar Martinez, a U.S. citizen and preschool teacher, was shot five times by a Border Patrol agent after he rammed her vehicle as she drove through a Chicago neighborhood.

Rev. David Black, Senior Pastor at the First Presbyterian Church of Chicago, was outside the Broadview ICE Detention facility praying when DHS law enforcement officers shot him with pepper balls multiple times.

George Retes, a U.S. citizen and Iraq combat veteran, was on his way to work last July when DHS agents pepper sprayed him, arrested him, and locked him up for three days before finally releasing him.

Ryan Eckland, a U.S. citizen from Minnesota, was violently arrested and detained for hours without explanation after recording ICE activity from his vehicle.

We will now play a short video showing what Trump’s DHS did to our witnesses.

Violence against Americans like we saw in the video must never happen again. Doing nothing is not an option. Mr. Chairman, I’m sorry Mr. Miller and Mr. Homan didn’t have the guts to show up and face these witnesses today. I’m sorry they didn’t have the guts to answer for the pain, suffering, and loss they have inflicted on people in communities across America.

It’s past time for Republicans to realize their oath isn’t to Donald Trump, it’s to the Constitution and the American people. They need to step up and do their job.

Join us in ensuring that Donald Trump and his henchmen can never do this to Americans again.

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