



CHAIRMANSHIP IN REVIEW: 2015-2020

U.S. SENATOR RON JOHNSON Senate Homeland Security & Governmental Affairs Committee

Mission Statement:

To enhance the economic and national security of America and promote more efficient, effective, and accountable government.

Priorities:

- Border Security & Enforcement
- Cybersecurity
- Critical Infrastructure Protection
- Countering Terrorism
- Department of Homeland Security Management & Accountability
- Waste, Fraud & Abuse
- Regulatory Reform
- Government Oversight

By the Numbers:

- Approximately **300** bills approved by the Committee
- **164** bills passed by the Senate
- **132** bills signed into law
- Nearly **200** committee hearings and roundtables
- **96** nominees confirmed by the Senate
- **17** majority reports issued
- More than **1,500** oversight letters sent

At a Glance: 2015-2020 Highlights

Enhancing border security

- Established quantifiable, objective metrics for DHS to use to measure border security (*Border Security Metrics Act of 2015*, included in the NDAA).
- Held more than 30 hearings and released two staff reports examining the factors that have led to our failure to secure our borders, including one examining lessons we can learn from Israel's approach to border security, aviation security, and cybersecurity.
- During the humanitarian crisis at the border in 2018, the committee held more than 20 bipartisan staff briefings, several member briefings, and also took staff delegation trips to the border, culminating in a majority staff report in 2018 examining the staggering increase in family unit illegal border crossings from 2015-2019, and providing recommendations to address the problem.
- Developed a proposal in 2019 for a streamlined process called Operation Safe Return that became the basis for two DHS expedited processing programs at our border that have helped reduce holding time for illegal crossings and make the process more effective and efficient.
- Authorized DHS to enter into preclearance negotiations with other countries to enable more secure, efficient travel for Americans (*Preclearance Authorization Act of 2015*).
- Authorized and strengthened DHS' program to combat human trafficking (*DHS Blue Campaign Authorization Act*), and sparked action by DHS to address loopholes in federal immigration law that could be used to force child marriages. Examined the rise of MS-13 and other transnational gangs and worked to ensure that the government considers self-disclosure of gang involvement as part of its placement process for unaccompanied alien children.

Improving cybersecurity and critical infrastructure protection

- Created the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) within DHS and worked to strengthen the office, including by providing authority for CISA to identify and then warn owners of critical infrastructure of potential vulnerabilities (*Cybersecurity Vulnerability Identification and Notification Act of 2019*, included in the NDAA).
- Created the Federal Acquisition Supply Chain Council to ensure the federal government is taking a unified approach to protect against national security threats posed by products in the federal supply chain like Kaspersky, Huawei, and ZTE.
- Required the administration to coordinate and evaluate the potentially catastrophic effects of electromagnetic pulses (EMP) and geomagnetic disturbances (GMD), and develop plans to address them.
- Worked with the bipartisan Cyberspace Solarium Commission to pass into law several of the key recommendations from its 2020 report.
- Passed first-step legislation for the federal government to develop standards and protocol for using Internet of Things devices and artificial intelligence.

Countering Terrorism

- Held nearly 20 hearings to explore terrorism threats to the homeland and how the threat is constantly evolving.
- Investigated numerous terrorist attacks, including San Bernardino; Orlando, Florida; and Garland, Texas and examined the use of encryption and social media by terrorists.
- Created new authorities for DHS and DOJ to protect certain assets and facilities from drones that would pose an unacceptable security risk (*DHS Countering Unmanned Aircraft Systems Coordinator Act*, included in the FAA Reauthorization).
- Authorized the Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction Office within DHS to better confront those threats.
- Investigated the government's disparate understanding, tracking, and reporting on domestic terrorism across federal agencies and passed legislation to address the problem.
- Investigated the Federal Air Marshal Service following reports of potential misconduct and waste and worked with DHS to identify opportunities for improvements.

DHS Management and Emergency Preparedness

- Focused in 2020 on oversight of DHS and the rest of the federal government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic with nine hearings and five pieces of committee-passed legislation that can provide a foundation for future years as we work to ensure the U.S. is better prepared for the next pandemic.
- Enacted the *Disaster Recovery Reform Act*, which better prepares the nation for disasters by focusing on local, state, and then federal support for the most serious emergencies and providing important authorities for FEMA to help supplement its workforce in times of need.

Regulatory reform

- Solicited and received more than 50 responses from stakeholder groups, including organizations representing industry, labor unions, and environmental advocates, to better determine how the regulatory process affects their businesses and used the responses to inform legislation.
- Improved federal agencies' efficiency and coordination of federal permitting for major infrastructure construction projects by passing the *Federal Permitting Improvement Act*.
- Approved the *Guidance out of Darkness Act* in Committee to help the public and businesses more easily view regulations and guidance put out by agencies so they know what they need to follow. It was later adopted by executive order.
- Passed a resolution of disapproval under the Congressional Review Act overturning the "Blacklisting Rule," an Obama-era regulation aimed at giving unions more leverage in negotiations with government contractors.

Promoted more efficient, effective, and accountable government

- Inspired by patients like Trickett Wendler, who passed away in 2015 from ALS, enacted the *Right to Try Act* to ensure patients have the chance to access new, experimental medication that could prolong their lives.
- Continued the authority for the first and only Federally-funded school voucher program located in the District of Columbia through fiscal year 2023.
- Enacted legislation that will help reduce federal improper payments.
- Enacted bills to reform the presidential transition process (*Presidential Transition Improvements Act of 2015* and *Presidential Transition Enhancements Act of 2019*) based on lessons learned from 2012 and 2016, including providing more legal clarity regarding ownership of records during a transition.
- Provided authorities to strengthen federal watchdogs' independence, effectiveness, and access to documents.
- Ensured formerly incarcerated individuals have a fair chance to compete for federal jobs by requiring that agencies inquire about criminal history later in the hiring process through the *Fair Chance Act*.
- Provided additional protections for whistleblowers, strengthened penalties for agency retaliation, and provided additional protections for veterans' medical files through passage of the *Dr. Chris Kirkpatrick Whistleblower Protection Act*.
- Confirmed the first quorum to the United States Postal Service (USPS) Board of Governors since 2014, which had been operating under a temporary emergency committee leaving USPS unable to devise long-term strategies.

Other Oversight Highlights

- **FBI and the 2016 Presidential Transition.** The Committee began conducting oversight of the FBI in 2016 in the wake of news reports that FBI officials exhibited political bias while assigned to high-profile, politically-oriented cases, specifically the FBI's investigation into the mishandling of classified information by former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and later the FBI's investigation of alleged collusion between the Trump campaign and Russia. Between 2018 and 2020, the Committee obtained tens of thousands of pages of responsive records and made many of those public, including text messages between FBI officials indicating political bias and a host of declassified materials.

The Committee issued five subpoenas, held a hearing to examine the DOJ Inspector General's report of FBI misconduct, and published a comprehensive timeline synthesizing the FBI's investigation and other relevant events.

In October 2020, the Committee issued a majority staff report describing how the General Services Administration, FBI, and Special Counsel improperly and secretly sought and received access to Trump transition team records.

The Committee also issued a majority staff report in 2017 detailing 125 leaks in the Trump administration's first 126 days, 62 of which could harm our national security as defined by the Obama administration. Those leaks drove and sustained the false Russian collusion with the Trump campaign narrative.

- **Conflicts of interest.** The Committee investigated actual or apparent conflicts of interest related to the Biden family's financial transactions and arrangements, with a particular focus on U.S. policymaking in Ukraine. As part of that investigation, the Committee received and reviewed tens of thousands of records, including records produced in response to a committee subpoena; interviewed over a dozen witnesses; and, in September 2020, issued a majority staff report detailing its findings.
- **Personal email use in the State Department.** The Committee investigated the national security and federal records implications of former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's use of a personal email account and server for official business.
- **Tragedies at the VA Medical Center in Tomah, Wisconsin.** Following the tragic suicide of Dr. Chris Kirkpatrick, a VA employee at the Tomah, Wisconsin Veterans' Affairs Medical Center, the Committee investigated allegations of over prescription of opioids, quality of care deficiencies, abuse of authority, whistleblower retaliation, and other veterans' deaths at the facility. The Committee exposed this and other misconduct in a report issued in 2016 and passed legislation to help prevent future tragedies.
- **Health care spending.** Convened several hearings and examined potential fraud and overpayments in the Medicaid program. In 2018 the Committee issued a majority staff report detailing how CMS must better police the Medicaid program. The report concluded that Medicaid is plagued by waste, fraud and abuse, including \$37 billion per year in Medicaid overpayments to providers – a 157 percent increase since 2013. Also in 2018, the Committee released a majority staff report examining how the Medicaid program may contribute to the opioid epidemic. The report concluded that Medicaid has inadvertently fueled the epidemic by establishing a series of incentives that make it enormously profitable for beneficiaries and others to abuse and sell dangerous drugs.