



One Hundred Fifteenth Congress
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Homeland Security
Washington, DC 20515

March 5, 2018

The Honorable Kirstjen Nielsen
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Nielsen:

We are writing regarding your time at the White House as Deputy Chief of Staff. Specifically, we have questions about what you knew about the allegations of domestic abuse raised against White House Staff Secretary Rob Porter by his two ex-wives, and your role in reviewing Mr. Porter's security clearance. The American people are entitled to know how you handled these matters when you served at the White House, given your continued service in a capacity of significant responsibility and public trust. Indeed, as Secretary of Homeland Security you are responsible for more than 240,000 employees, many of whom hold security clearances, underscoring the relevance of your past actions to your current position.

According to reports, by the time Mr. Porter resigned as staff secretary in early February 2018, a number of high-ranking White House officials had known for months of the allegations.¹ Those include White House counsel Don McGahn, who allegedly learned of the claims in January 2017, and White House Chief of Staff John Kelly, who was told of the abuse allegations sometime in the fall.² Additionally, Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Director Christopher Wray testified last month before the Senate Intelligence Committee that the FBI submitted information to the White House on the alleged abuse four times before the allegations became public, including in November 2017 when the FBI, responding to a request from the White House, provided additional information regarding the allegations against Mr. Porter.³

Your tenure as Deputy Chief of Staff, which officially began in September 2017 and ended in December 2017 with your confirmation as Secretary of Homeland Security, positioned you inside the White House during the critical time period when the FBI was responding to White House requests for information regarding the allegations against Mr. Porter and the status of his security

¹ Josh Dawsey and Beth Reinhard, *Top White House Officials Knew of Abuse Allegations Against Top Aide for Months*, WASH. POST, Feb. 8, 2018.

² *Id.*

³ *Worldwide Threats Hearing*, Before the S. Select Com. on Intelligence, 115th Cong. (2018) (statement of Chris Wray, Dir., Fed. Bur. of Investigation).

clearance. It has been reported that Mr. Kelly tasked you with enforcing a policy against granting new interim security clearances like the one given to Mr. Porter and with resolving any issues preventing those with an interim clearance from receiving a full clearance.⁴

Accordingly, pursuant to Rules X and XI of the House of Representatives, please respond to the following questions by March 19, 2018.

- Were you aware of allegations of domestic abuse by Mr. Porter prior to his resignation in February 2018?
- If so, what actions, if any, did you take with respect to Mr. Porter's security clearance and employment at the White House?
- What was the result of your actions? Please explain.
- How many Department of Homeland Security employees currently hold interim security clearances?
- What is your Department's policy regarding employees with interim security clearances who may have issues preventing them from receiving a full clearance? Please explain.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Bennie G. Thompson
Ranking Member



Nanette Diaz Barragàn
Member of Congress

⁴ Julie Hirschfeld Davis, Maggie Haberman, and Michael D. Shear, *Trump, a Week After Porter Resigned, Says He's 'Totally Opposed' to Domestic Violence*, N.Y. TIMES, February 14, 2018.