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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON
HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6250

March 7, 2022

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate

The Honorable Gary Peters
Chairman
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
United States Senate

Dear Leader Schumer and Chairman Peters:

I have been made aware of concerning allegations of domestic abuse against Ed Gonzalez, who has been nominated to serve as Assistant Secretary of Homeland Security and Director of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). Because of the severity of these allegations, the vote on his nomination should be postponed until it can be determined whether or not these allegations are true.

On July 30, 2021, Frederick Portis, a licensed police officer for Houston Community College (HCC), filed a sworn affidavit regarding an interview he conducted with Mrs. Melissa Gonzalez, wife of Sheriff Ed Gonzalez. The affidavit, brought to my attention by the National ICE Council and Federal Police Foundation, outlines the incident. While a police officer at HCC, Mr. Portis was called to investigate an alleged domestic dispute involving Mrs. Gonzalez, a Vice Chancellor at HCC. The interview was conducted in the office of HCC Chancellor Cesar Maldonado. In the affidavit, Officer Portis wrote, “[t]he jest [sic] of the investigation concerned the Sheriff [Gonzalez] allegedly becoming physical or violent with Mrs. Gonzalez because of her romantic relationship with the Chancellor.”

If these allegations of physical and violent domestic abuse are true, they are disqualifying for a law enforcement officer at any level and raise significant questions about the nominee.

Over the past year, we saw over 2 million migrants illegally cross the border - the highest number in recorded history. Under the current Administration, ICE has implemented policies that have limited its officers’ ability to enforce the law. ICE has been given the mission to enforce the immigration law in the U.S. interior, and it is vitally important that ICE have a strong and capable leader who is committed to upholding the law. This historic border crisis will continue to get worse until ICE begins enforcing the law and fulfilling the mission with which Congress has entrusted it.

Sheriff Gonzalez was initially nominated by President Biden on April 28, 2021 and referred to the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, where a hearing was held and he

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was reported to the Senate on a party-line vote in committee. The Senate did not consider his nomination during the first session of the 117th Congress and his nomination was returned to the President. Despite this, Sheriff Gonzalez was renominated on January 4, 2022 and again referred to the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, without an additional hearing or purported vetting. He was again reported to the Senate on a party line vote.

It would be irresponsible for the Senate to vote on the confirmation of Sheriff Gonzalez to be Director of ICE until we determine whether the allegations outlined in the attached affidavit are true. The cloture motion should be immediately withdrawn until this matter is resolved.

In God We Trust,



James Lankford
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Government Operations
and Border Management

cc:

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Republican Leader
United States Senate

The Honorable Rob Portman
Ranking Member
Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs