

Rep. Suzanne Bonamici—Opening Statement
Oversight and Reform Committee, Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Civil Liberties Roundtable
“The Bill of Rights in the Balance: The Deployment of Federal Troops Against the American People”

Thank you, Congressman Raskin, for convening this panel today, and thank you to the panelists for joining us. I want to welcome the Oregonians on the panel today: Senator Lew Frederick, Mark Pettibone, Christopher David, and Kelly Simon. Your experiences and perspective are critical to understanding the gravity of our current constitutional crisis.

Congressman Raskin and other members of the Oversight Committee, Congressman Blumenauer and I are appreciative of the support you have shown Portland over the last few weeks. Many of you have reached out in solidarity and Oregonians have felt supported by people across the country.

When Donald Trump sent paramilitary officers from a Customs and Border Patrol SWAT team to Portland, it unquestionably endangered our community and set a terrifying precedent for what could happen in other cities nationwide. Today we will hear from Mr. David, who had his hand broken by federal officers, and Mr. Pettibone, who was pulled in an unmarked van, detained for questioning, and eventually released without charges. What they and countless others experienced at the hands of federal law enforcement is outrageous and unacceptable and violated their constitutional rights. There are many others like them – peaceful protesters gassed and beaten and shot with so called “less lethal munitions.”

Protestors in Portland have been rallying because Black Lives Matter. They are demanding justice in the wake of the murders of Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, and countless other Black Americans at the hands of law enforcement. The BIPOC communities of Oregon are demanding change, and all of us—local, state, and federal leaders, must continue our commitment to work with them and make that change happen. State Senator Lew Frederick—one of my former colleagues—is here today and I am eager to hear his perspective on the protests and the work that remains. For decades Senator Frederick has fought for police reform and racial justice, and his insight on what happened in Portland is central to understanding how we move forward as a city and a country.

Donald Trump has made clear from his actions and words that he would rather sow fear and violence than rise to the moment and lead the country to healing and reconciliation. I am grateful that Oregon's Governor Brown has negotiated a plan for these paramilitary federal forces to retreat from Portland, and it appears to be working to reduce violence and tensions, but it is also clear that the President will not hesitate to use federal troops to attack Americans in the future. This conversation today is an important one, with a lot at stake.

I want to note that my colleagues in the House and I have been addressing this from many angles in addition to oversight. We are using the appropriations process to defund the tactics we saw in Portland, we have legislation to prohibit authoritarian police practices, we passed the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act, and we continue to address systemic racism in our communities in education,

housing, employment. Thank you again for holding this panel and allowing me to participate. I yield back.