

Mr. Grassley (00:00):

... second term. Eight years of service as Attorney General of the third-largest state in the nation is excellent preparation for the role of US Attorney General. As Florida Attorney General, Miss Bondi was a member of the Florida Cabinet, chief legal officer of the state and led a large agency that tangibly impacted people's lives. And by all accounts, Miss Bondi handled her responsibilities well. As the Florida Attorney General, Miss Bondi achieved numerous successes, she engaged in key initiatives to fight human trafficking, counter the opioid epidemic, and protect consumers and protect the citizens of Florida from violence. She didn't shy away from hard work or complicated problems. She engaged in aggressive campaign to eliminate pill mills, took a leading role in securing a three and a quarter billion dollars settlement following the Deepwater Horizon oil spill and eliminated the backlog of rape test kits that had accumulated in that state's laboratories.

(01:34)

Miss Bondi's experience isn't limited to her service as Florida Attorney General. She also served as a prosecutor in Hillsborough County for 18 years and prosecuted terrible crimes. She sought tough penalties and justice for victims of violent criminals, domestic abusers, and sexual predators. She prosecuted drug traffickers and thus protected her community. She was also active outside of her professional role serving in the Junior League of Tampa on the board of Special Olympics, Florida, and is well known for her animal rescue efforts. Her experience and performance as Attorney General prosecutor and community leader speaks volumes about her character and her dedication to the rule of law. She's received multiple letters in support of her nomination, including from the Fraternal Order of Police, the Republican State Attorney's General, more than 100 former senior DOJ officials and a bipartisan group of former State Attorneys General. In short, Miss Bondi is highly qualified and of course, as we all know, a change is desperately needed.

(03:15)

When confirmed, Miss Bondi will take the helm at a very turbulent time for this country and for that department. The Justice Department is infected with political decision-making while its leaders refuse to acknowledge that reality. Crossfire Hurricane was a textbook example of government weaponization. The FBI's investigation was built on the fake Steele dossier, which was funded by the Democratic National Committee and Clinton campaign who worked with foreign operatives. My investigative work exposed that the FBI actually knew the dossier was false information and was likely a part of a Russian disinformation campaign. Even with the knowledge of such dossier defects and political infections, the Justice Department sought FISA warrant renewals and took other actions. After directing my oversight staff to investigate Justice Department's mishandlings of the matter, the Justice Department retaliated in issuing a subpoena for my own staff's phone records. That's right, challenging my constitutional rights of doing my oversight duties.

(04:55)

What's next? Then a few Democratic colleagues pressured the FBI foreign influence task force to supposedly brief me and Senator Johnson related to our Biden family investigation. On August the 20th, Senator Johnson and I had that infamous briefing from the FBI. Later, this FBI's briefing contents were leaked to the media even though the FBI promised confidentiality. That leak falsely labeled our oversight work as, you guessed it, Russian in disinformation. To this day over four years later, the intelligence community and the FBI refuse to provide us the intelligence basis for that briefing. The title of this Wall Street Journal's article sums it up quote, "the FBI's dubious briefing. Did the Bureau set two US GOP senators up at the behest of Democrats?"

(06:14)

I know as other people on this committee and in and out of Congress know what government weaponization is. And then we get to Special Council Jack Smith and his lawfare operation. It involved an unprecedented FBI raid on Trump's house, including agents that even searched the former First Lady's clothing drawers. Hillary Clinton and Joe Biden certainly did not receive the same treatment by government regarding their records. Indeed, as my oversight exposed, the FBI amazingly agreed to destroy laptop records and end records associated with Clinton's staff. This Orwellian conduct should have no quarter. On top of it all the FBI Special Agent Thibault, the anti-Trump agent that violated the Hatch Act for political activities on the job started one of Jack Smith's cases, but Jack Smith wasn't the only department official who tried to influence this past election. The Washington Post reported just last August about a previously undisclosed Mueller investigation into Trump that was closed for lack of evidence and it being quote-unquote, "fishing expedition." That news reporting was based on sealed court records, government records, and potentially classified information roughly 90 days before the last presidential election. The Justice Department leaked that information to the press to impact the election against President Trump and they did it while stiff-arming congressional requests for information that would prove embarrassing to the Biden-Harris administration. Let us not forget some of the more and other flagrant abuses of power that we've seen from the DOJ and the FBI over the last four years, and I don't have the time to spend on these that I spent on two or three others, but just to list them. The Department of Justice used the might of the federal government to prosecute individuals peacefully praying outside of an abortion clinic. The FBI suggested that traditional Catholics could be domestic terrorism threats claiming that these individuals adhere to quote, "anti-Semitic, anti-immigration, anti-LGBT and white supremacy ideology," end the quote. The FBI opened dozens of investigations into parents who voiced their concerns at school board meetings regarding curriculum choices and COVID-19 mandates.

(09:43)

The FBI applied undue pressure to social media platforms to censor so-called misinformation, downgrading or removing flagged social media posts and removing users. These are only a few particularly egregious examples of rot infesting the Department of Justice. The impact of this political infection in our once storied law enforcement institutions is catastrophic. By every metric the Biden-Harris Justice Department conduct has failed to live up to our country's ideals, so Miss Bondi, should you be confirmed, the actions you take to change the environment's course must be for accountability so that the conduct I just described never happens again. The only

way to accomplish this is through transparency for the Congress and the American people. Now to my friend Ranking Member Durbin.

Mr. Durbin (10:56):

Thank you Senator Grassley. I appreciate your commitment to the judiciary comity's long-standing bipartisan practices for vetting presidential nominees. That was in doubt several weeks ago, but I spoke to Senator Grassley and he assured me that he's still personally committed as I am to maintaining these practices which we've established over the years. Our process is rigorous and it shows how seriously members on both sides of the aisle take our constitutional responsibility of advice and consent. Miss Bondi, thanks for coming to my office last week to discuss your nomination. The importance of the Attorney General to our justice system cannot be overstated. As our nation's chief law enforcement officer, the Attorney General oversees the Department of Justice, which is responsible for protecting the civil rights of Americans, economic freedom and opportunity, public safety, and of course national security. In short, the Attorney General has real impact America's everyday life.

(11:55)

It is critical that any nominee for this position be committed first and foremost to the Constitution and the American people, not any president or political agenda, but President Trump claims he has quote, "an absolute right to do what he wants with the Justice Department." And that's how he conducted his first term. He interfered with the criminal cases of his friends and allies and successfully pressured DOJ to investigate his rivals. He even tried to use the Justice Department to overturn the results of the 2020 presidential election. The President-elect made it clear that he values one thing above all else and he said it over and over again, loyalty. Speaking about Attorney General Sessions, Donald Trump said quote, "The only reason I gave him the job is because I felt loyalty. He was an original supporter." But when then Attorney General Sessions did the right thing and recused himself from the Mueller investigation, Trump said he should never have nominated him and he fired him.

(12:58)

Trump then nominated Bill Barr to succeed Sessions. Barr successfully auditioned for the job in an unsolicited memo to DOJ that sharply criticized the Mueller investigation. Once confirmed, Barr misrepresented and blocked the release of the report, intervened in multiple criminal cases of Trump's political allies and spread falsehoods about election fraud. But in December of 2020 when Bill Barr finally announced there was no evidence of widespread voter fraud that would change the outcome of the election, Trump dismissed him, fired his second Attorney General. This time around President-elect Trump has vowed not just to use the Justice Department to advance his political interest, but also to seek quote, "retribution" against quote, "the enemy within." He is repeatedly threatened to arrest, prosecute, jail and otherwise punish those he considers his enemies. This includes reporters, prosecutors, judges, poll workers, military officials, and even his own former political appointees. Even before taking office, Trump has forced out his own FBI director that he appointed, Chris Wray, and he's trying to replace Wray

with Kash Patel whose main qualification to be FBI director seems to be his loyalty to Donald Trump.

(14:19)

Patel has even compiled an enemies list of government gangsters to target that even includes former Trump appointees like Director Wray, Attorney General Barr, and Defense Secretary Esper. Trump's approach is a stark contrast with the bipartisan view born out of the post-Nixon era that the Justice Department should serve the interest of the American people, not any one president. For those who need a reminder, Richard Nixon ordered department officials to fire Archibald Cox, the special prosecutor investigating Watergate. Two of those officials, Elliot Richardson and William Ruckelshaus resigned rather than carry out Richard Nixon's orders. When this committee considered the appointment of Loretta Lynch to be President Obama's Attorney General, a Republican member of the committee emphasized and I quote, "What we need from our next Attorney General more than anything else is independence." That same member who now still serves on the committee said and I quote, "The job is not to be the President's wingman. The job is to represent all Americans. The Attorney General must be willing to stand up to the President and say no when the office demands it."

(15:34)

When Attorney General nominee Merrick Garland came before this committee, another one of my Republican colleagues still serving told Garland that I quote, "My sole criterion for voting for your confirmation is your pledge to make sure that politics does not affect your job as Attorney General." The view that the Justice Department must be insulated from political influence and should not be weaponized against political rivals has historically been bipartisan, certainly on this committee. At this crucial moment in history, that view not Mr. Trump's view must prevail. Miss Bondi, you have many years of experience in law enforcement, including nearly a decade of service as Attorney General in one of the largest states of the nation but I need to know that you would tell the President no if you're asked to do something that is wrong, illegal, or unconstitutional. Miss Bondi you are one of four Trump personal lawyers that he has already selected for top positions in the Department of Justice.

(16:35)

You joined Mr. Trump in working to overturn the 2020 election. You've repeatedly described investigations and prosecutions of Mr. Trump as witch hunts, and you have echoed his calls for investigating and prosecuting his political opponents. This flies in the face of evidence like Mr. Trump's call to Georgia's Secretary of State, Brad Raffensperger. We've all heard that audio recording. These are the kinds of anti-democratic efforts that in the past you have defended and it's critical that we understand whether you remain supportive of Mr. Trump's actions. I also have questions whether you'll focus on the needs of the American people rather than wealthy special interest. I'm concerned that you failed to identify your extensive lobbying for foreign governments and big corporations as potential conflicts of interest. There'll be questions in this hearing on that issue. That's why I've asked the Justice Department and the National archives for information. I also have questions about some of your actions as Florida Attorney General. I'm concerned that your office failed to investigate more than two dozen complaints about the

for-profit Trump University after Mr. Trump donated to your re-election campaign and held a fundraiser for you at Mar-a-Lago. In addition, you have a long track record on the issue of civil rights, reproductive rights, voting rights, and LGBTQ rights that needs to be discussed. In contrast, Miss Bondi, Merrick Garland didn't campaign for President Biden, never served as his personal attorney, never lobbied on behalf of foreign governments and corporate giants. After years of relentless criticism on Attorney General Garland for many of my Republican colleagues, I hope they're prepared to hold you to the same standard. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Grassley (18:53):

Okay, it's now time for senators to introduce the nominee. The first one will be Senator Scott at the table as you see, and Senator Schmidt is a member of this committee at his place on the dais. Senator Scott, please proceed.

Hon. Rick Scott (19:13):

Mr. Chairman, ranking member and committee members, it is an absolute honor to sit before you today to introduce my good friend Pam Bondi for her nomination hearing. I'd also like to recognize some important people appearing in support of her today. Her husband John, as well as her mother, father-in-law, sister, brother, sister- in-law, and nephews, friends and family members of John. Many more would surely be here if space allowed. I can tell you wholeheartedly that President Trump couldn't have a better leader than Pam Bondi for Attorney General. She's undoubtedly qualified, brilliant, and committed to defending and protecting the laws of this nation and has a track record to prove it. It's no secret that the DOJ is facing a public trust crisis after Democrats spent years weaponizing the justice system and the entire federal government. They've become an agency that attacks the American people instead of defending and protecting them.

(20:06)

That will change under Pam Bondi. Under her leadership, the DOJ will actually fairly enforce the laws, protect the rights of the American people and keep our nation safe and crack down on violent crimes and dangerous drugs, and the American people will trust her to do so. I know that well because I worked alongside Pam Bondi for eight years when I was governor of Florida, and she was Florida's elected Attorney General working to improve the lives of Floridians to make Florida the best state in the nation to live, work and raise a family. Pam was an incredible partner working to keep Florida safe and uphold the laws of our state, ensuring crime is aggressively pursued by law enforcement and prosecutors. President Trump has made clear that one of his top priorities is to reverse the rising rates of crime and specifically violent crime that have plagued our communities over the past four years. Pam Bondi is uniquely equipped to advance his priority as US Attorney General because she has a proven track record of success in achieving dramatic reductions in crime and violent crime during her time as Florida's Attorney General.

(21:12)

From 2010, the year before she took office to 2018, the last year she was in office together, Florida experienced a remarkable 26% drop in overall crime, including a 19.6% drop in violent crime and a 27.4% drop in property crime. These aren't just numbers, these are tens of thousands of lives saved and communities improved and made safer and families and businesses protected. As Florida's Attorney General Pam Bondi also spearheaded other life-saving initiatives like tackling the opioid epidemic, in fighting human trafficking, her achievements are too many for me to list in this short introduction. As US Attorney General Pam Bondi will restore law and order to the nation, she'll put American's interest first and make the nation a better and safer place. I urge every single member of this committee to support my friend Pam Bondi and I look forward to voting for her confirmation soon on the Senate floor and help her get to work for the American people. Thank you, Chairman.

Mr. Grassley (22:13):

Thank you, Senator Scott and [inaudible 00:22:17].

Mr. Schmitt (22:18):

Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member Durbin and members of the committee. It is an honor for me and a privilege to introduce Pam Bondi, President Trump's nominee to be the 87th Attorney General of the United States. I have known and worked closely with Pam for years, and I'm glad to call her a friend. When Pam was nominated by President Trump, my reaction was, this is a home run. As many of us are, I was only to be outdone by Senator Graham who described the nomination as a grand slam, touchdown, hole-in-one, ace, hat-trick, slam dunk, Olympic gold medal pick, and he's right. As the letter joined by more than a hundred former Justice Department officials put it quote, "It's all too rare for senior Justice Department officials, much less attorneys general to have such a wealth of experience in the day-to-day work of keeping our communities safe," end quote.

(23:11)

Pam exemplifies and personifies the Department of Justice's mission to uphold the rule of law, to keep our communities safe and to protect our rights and liberties as Americans. Pam has distinguished herself in her career in public service that has taken her from her small-town upbringing in Temple Terrace, Florida, to a hearing before this esteemed committee. After attending the University of Florida and Stetson University College of Law, she started her career as a local prosecutor in Hillsborough County, Florida. As a local prosecutor for nearly two decades, Pam kept her community safe, prosecuting violent criminals, drug dealers, those who had threatened the local community and those who stood in opposition to the rule of law. Pam's fellow Floridians then elected her to serve as Florida's Attorney General, where she was the first woman in state history elected to that office. As a former state Attorney General myself, I can vouch for the deep experience that Pam Bondi has developed from serving in that role.

(24:15)

As the chief law enforcement official in her state she worked with local prosecutors to fight crime, worked to protect our constitutional rights or the constitutional rights of Floridians, and stood up for the little guy by taking on abuses of power. As Florida's Attorney General, she worked tirelessly to combat the opioid crisis fighting pill mills and helping to combat the widespread misuse and trafficking of deadly drugs, including fentanyl, which have devastated families and communities all across our country. She stood up for Floridians in the wake of a 2008 financial crisis leading to the National Mortgage Settlement Act, resulting in \$56 billion in compensation to victims. And after the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, Pam was there and stood up for Floridians by getting \$2 billion from the companies responsible. On a more personal note, Pam has always taken it upon herself to help others. She's incredibly generous in someone I could always count on. She's truthful, she's tough, and she's a born leader.

(25:21)

She has charted her own course with the rare combination of backbone and heart. The next Attorney General of the United States must restore trust by reversing the weaponization we've seen the last four years in refocusing that department to its core mission, administering justice. The next Attorney General must promote the rule of law, take on violent crime, keep our communities safe, and safeguard the God-given rights that each American has protected in our constitution. I can think of no one, no one more up to that task than Pam Bondi, a career prosecutor and widely respected attorney general with the prudence, fortitude, and temperance for this incredibly important job. Mr. Chairman, it is truly an honor for me to introduce Pam Bondi to this committee and to our country here-

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (28:19):

Jake and soon-to-be niece, Savannah. My brother Brad, a brilliant lawyer, my sister-in-law, Tandy, and my nephews Justin, who just got a 4.0 at UVA, Rex, great college tennis player. Brad, great tennis player. Is Rhea here? And my niece, my beautiful niece, Rhea, and the little guy is in school because he's 10. My friends, Leslie, Cathy, Dina, Tiffany, Kim, Paula, and so many of my former co-workers. And ranking member Durbin, if you want to get dirt on me, these women have known me since I was a child. Seriously, most of them, so thank you for indulging me in that. They've all made a very long trip to be here, and thank you for holding my hearing as well and not postponing it. I appreciate that. Thank you all. From the moment I interned at the State Attorney's Office in Tampa, Florida, all I wanted to do was be a prosecutor.

(29:26)

The Supreme Court certified me and I had four jury trials while still in law school, lost most of them, but had four jury trials and never wanted to do anything else. I continued my career there, trying everything from DUIs, domestic violence cases, capital murder cases, the whole gamut. I became a lead trial attorney, in courtroom every day trying career criminals, was deputy chief of a division and then ultimately was felony bureau chief and eventually left to become Florida's 37th Attorney General for the state of Florida. Nothing has impacted my career more than my experience as a state prosecutor because I got to know and still keep in touch with many victims and their families from when I was a prosecutor. Upon becoming Attorney General in 2011, I

proudly served for two terms. I was term-limited. I would probably still be there right now had I not been kicked out of office by term limits.

(30:38)

I loved being Attorney General. I did my best to keep Florida safe, to continue to stand up for victims of crime and to fight the opioid crisis and the drug crisis that was not only facing Florida, but this entire country. Out of the top 100, and this is one of the things I'm the most proud of, oxycodone dispensers in the entire country, I believe it was 98 of them, 90 or 98 of them lived in Florida. We fought for tough legislation. Kids were dropping dead every day. We fought for tough legislation and after that legislation, none of those opioid dealers, doctors practiced in Florida. We fought to eliminate human trafficking by raising awareness and prevention and talking to parents and talking to children. We also provided critical resources, including safe houses that my state was lacking. On the civil side, we worked to protect consumers. We tackled everything including off-label prescription marketing, which affects, as you know, many, many people who can't afford prescriptions as well. We partnered with States Attorneys General from both parties and federal agencies across administrations. We went after price gougers during hurricanes. If confirmed as the next Attorney General of the United States my overriding objective will be to return the Department of Justice to its core mission of keeping Americans safe and vigorously prosecuting criminals, and that includes getting back to basics, gangs, drugs, terrorists, cartels, our border, and our foreign adversaries. That is what the American people expect and that is what they deserve from the Department of Justice. If confirmed, I will do everything in my power and it will be my great responsibility to make

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (33:00):

... Make America safe again. Making America safe again also requires reducing recidivism. We have to fix the Bureau of Prisons. And I am looking on both sides of the aisle. The bureau has suffered from years of mismanagement, lack of funding, and low morale. I was proud to support President Trump's First Step Act. I think more can be implemented and more can be done on that front. President Trump's leadership on criminal justice reform has demonstrated what is possible when a president is unafraid to do things that have been deemed to be too difficult. We have to reach across the aisle and get solutions for all of these problems. Like the president, I believe we are on the cusp of a new golden age where the Department of Justice can and will do better if I am confirmed.

(34:04)

Lastly, and most importantly, if confirmed, I will fight every day to restore confidence and integrity to the Department of Justice and each of its components. The partisanship, the weaponization will be gone. America will have one tier of justice for all. In all this work, I'll collaborate closely with this committee. I will work with all of you as I've committed to do when I met with almost all of you. And I will partner not only with the federal agencies, but with the state and local officials throughout our great country. I look forward to answering your questions today, and working together for this country and our constitution. Thank you, Senators.

Mr. Grassley (35:03):

I will ask first questions, then Senator Durbin. And then I'll call on the Democrat people the way that Senator Durbin would say so on their arrival, or here by seniority in the same way on the House side. And I'll make sure that I don't abuse the seven minutes. I want you to have your attention on this binder that I put up here. It gets to a key factor of each senator's role in oversight. It contains 144 oversight letters that I sent to the Biden-Harris Justice Department and its component agencies with many of those letters in there to the FBI, adding letters to the inspector general. That would be about 165 letters. So, I've sent more letters since you've been in my office before Christmas. Should you be confirmed, 144 letters will be your responsibility.

(36:16)

The responses I have received so far fall in two categories. First, they weren't answered at all. Second, I received a response, but it didn't fully respond. Said another way, the Justice Department merely sent me words on a piece of paper. So, should you be confirmed, you'll have an obligation to respond even to the minority and consider a letter from them, even if my signature's not on it, as they want information. Will you commit to responding to my oversight requests, as well as the requests of other members of the committee?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (37:03):

Chairman, either I or my top staff will personally review the letters and do everything we can to respond to you.

Mr. Grassley (37:14):

Your tenure as Florida Attorney General was impressive. You fought against pill mills, human trafficking. You eliminated a backlog of rape test kits in state labs. You fought against organized retail theft, and you were known to stand for law and order. With such achievements, it's easy to see why the people of Florida re-elected you in 2014 and why President-elect Trump nominated you to serve as the nation's chief law enforcement officer. So, this gives you a chance to tell us on this committee and the people of this country, what you're proud of as your record as Attorney General of Florida.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (38:04):

Thank you, Chairman. Thank you, Chairman Grassley. I was truly honored to serve the people of the State of Florida for eight years, but it was a team effort. I had great people around me, many of whom are in this room today. And we did a lot. We did a lot to fight crime. And I've been reminiscing a lot since I was asked to take this nomination. Opioids, as I talked about, were a top priority right when I took office. When I was running for office, I went through the entire State of Florida. Parents were walking up to me, handing me pictures of their children who were deceased from opioid abuse. After I was elected, I took those pictures and I framed them in my office as a goal of stopping that fight, which I talked about in my opening statement.

(38:59)

And if US Attorney General, I'll bring those pictures back out and they will be there to inspire me on the further drug abuse we're facing throughout this country. We also learned that something else was happening. Pregnant women were having babies as a result of being opioid-dependent. We call it neonatal abstinence syndrome. We fought to educate mothers. We fought that issue as well. Fentanyl was wreaking havoc in our country, but it was just getting started. I actually fought my own party a bit on scheduling fentanyl, because at that time people thought it was something you merely got in the hospital on a patch after surgery. Apples and oranges, and boy, do we all know that now, the difference. Fentanyl is raging throughout our country and I will do everything I can to fight that with the agencies that fall under the Department of Justice.

(39:55)

Human trafficking became a top priority for me as attorney general. I had the opportunity on a bipartisan trip to go to Mexico. And the one thing I found out there, they were doing better than we were. They had safe houses. I saw things I never dreamed I would see. And all of these things in my past have formed the person I am right now sitting here before you. I came back to Florida. We started a human trafficking council, and we partnered with others, and we expanded and added safe houses in the State of Florida. I don't know how many are in this country right now, but I would like to partner with both sides if confirmed to continue those efforts.

Mr. Grassley (40:41):

I'd like to interrupt you-

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (40:43):

Yes, sir.

Mr. Grassley (40:43):

... and go to another question. And I'll have another round so you can finish on that point. I'd like to ask you about something that's central to fighting government waste and fraud, the False Claims Act. I want you to know that Attorney General Garland calls me once a year. He called me yesterday to tell me the success of the False Claims Act. Since 1986 when I got it passed and President Reagan signed it, it's brought in \$78 billion as of yesterday, his report. Two-and-nine-tenths billion dollars for the year of 2024. Most of that's because of patriotic whistleblowers who found the fraud and brought the cases forward at their own risk.

(41:41)

The Supreme Court has long upheld the law's constitutionality, but I want you to know in your view is the False Claims Act constitutional. Before you answer that, one time in the 1990s, one of the attorney generals said it wasn't constitutional. And when that same person by the name of

Barr was back five years ago to be attorney general, he said it was constitutional. So, if confirmed, will you commit? Well, answer that first question. Do you think it's constitutional? Would you defend the constitutionality of it before the Supreme Court?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (42:20):

I would defend the constitutionality, of course, of the False Claims Act, Senator.

Mr. Grassley (42:25):

Okay. Last question. If confirmed, would you commit to continuing DOJ's defense of the constitutionality of it, and will you assure the entire staff and funding levels to properly support and prosecute false claim cases?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (42:42):

Senator, the False Claims Act is so important and especially by what you said, with whistleblowers as well, and the protection, and the money it brings back to our country. Yes, sir.

Mr. Grassley (42:51):

Thank you for your answers. Senator Durbin.

Mr. Durbin (42:54):

Thank you, Senator Grassley. Ms. Bondi, if you're successful in your nomination, this Democrat would like to give you three words of advice, answer Grassley's letters. You'll never hear the end of it if you don't. At issue, I believe in this nomination hearing is not your competence nor your experience. At issue, is your ability to say-

Mr. Grassley (43:17):

Answer that first question? Do you think it's constitutional? Would you defend the constitutionality of it before the Supreme Court?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (43:23):

I would defend the constitutionality, of course, of the False Claims Act, Senator.

Mr. Grassley (43:27):

Okay. Last question. If confirmed, would you commit to continuing DOJ's defense of the constitutionality of it, and will you assure the entire staff and funding levels to properly support and prosecute false claim cases?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (43:45):

Senator, the False Claims Act is so important and especially by what you said, with whistleblowers as well, and the protection, and the money it brings back to our country. Yes sir.

Mr. Grassley (43:54):

Thank you for your answers. Senator Durbin.

Mr. Durbin (43:57):

Thank you, Senator Grassley. Ms. Bondi, if you're successful in your nomination, this Democrat would like to give you three words of advice, answer Grassley's letters. You'll never hear the end of it if you don't. At issue, I believe in this nomination hearing is not your competence nor your experience. At issue is your ability to say no. More than any other cabinet official, the attorney general has to be prepared to put the constitution first and even tell the President of the United States you're wrong. The political danger and personal costs of such a decision are well documented. You have only to ask former Attorney General Jeff Session and Bill Barr whom Donald Trump sacked for lack of loyalty.

(44:45)

And so, I have three basic questions I'd like to ask you. Most Americans believe that central to the peaceful transition of power in a democracy is the acceptance of the results of an election. To my knowledge, Donald Trump has never acknowledged the legal results of the 2020 election. Are you prepared to say today under oath without reservation that Donald Trump lost the presidential contest to Joe Biden in 2020?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (45:15):

Ranking Member Durbin, President Biden is the President of the United States. He was duly sworn in and he is the President of the United States. There was a peaceful transition of power. President Trump left office and was overwhelmingly elected in 2024.

Mr. Durbin (45:34):

Do you have any doubts that Joe Biden had the majority of electoral votes necessary to be elected president in 2020?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (45:41):

Senator, all I can tell you as a prosecutor is from my firsthand experience. And I accept the results. I accept, of course, that Joe Biden is President of the United States. But what I can tell you is what I saw firsthand when I went to Pennsylvania as an advocate for the campaign. I was

an advocate for the campaign, and I was on the ground in Pennsylvania and I saw many things there. But do I accept the results? Of course, I do. Do I agree with what happened? And I saw so much... No one from either side of the aisle should want there to be any issues with election integrity in our country. We should all want our elections to be free, and fair, and the rules, and the laws to be followed.

Mr. Durbin (46:32):

I think that question deserved a yes or no. And I think the length of your answer is an indication that you weren't prepared to answer yes. Have you heard the recording of President Trump on January 2nd, 2021, when he urged the Secretary of State of Georgia to, "Find 11,780 votes," and declare him the winner of that state?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (46:54):

No. I've heard about it through clips. But no, Senator, I've not heard it.

Mr. Durbin (46:57):

What was your reaction to President Trump making that call?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (47:02):

I would have to listen to the tape, Senator.

Mr. Durbin (47:07):

Well, the quote that I give you is exact. He said to the Georgia Secretary of State, "Find 11,780 votes."

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (47:15):

Do you have the entire context of that call? I feel like it was much longer than that and may have been taken out of context.

Mr. Durbin (47:22):

It is. It was an hour long. And you can certainly listen to it. I hope you will. Every American should. As a former prosecutors, are you not concerned that the President of the United States called a state election official and asked him to find enough votes to change the results of the election?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (47:39):

Senator, I have not listened to the hour-long conversation, but it's my understanding that is not what he asked him to do.

Mr. Durbin (47:48):

You need to listen to it. Let me ask the third question. Do you believe that the January 6th rioters who've been convicted of violent assaults on police officers should be pardoned?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (48:02):

Senator, if confirmed as attorney general of the United States, the pardons, of course, fall under the president. But if asked to look at those cases, I will look at each case and advise on a case-by-case basis, just as I did my entire career as a prosecutor.

Mr. Durbin (48:26):

You also advise the president on pardons. That's part of your responsibility as attorney general. And so, I'm asking you, do you believe that those who've been convicted of the January 6th riot violent assaults on our police officers should be pardoned? That's a simple question.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (48:42):

So, Senator, I have not seen any of those files, of course. If confirmed and if asked to advise the president, I will look at each and every file. But let me be very clear in speaking to you, I condemn any violence on a law enforcement officer in this country.

Mr. Durbin (49:01):

Let me ask you about your work as a lobbyist for Ballard Partners. You did not list your current position as a partner at the lobbying firm nor the work you've done for your Ballard Partner clients, such as lobbying for the country of Qatar for \$115,000 a month and for corporate giants, Amazon and Uber, when you were asked about conflicts of interest. Why do you believe your work as a lobbyist does not constitute potential conflicts of interest?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (49:30):

Well, Senator, first, that was the amount my firm received. I believe multiple people represented the country of Qatar within my firm. And I'm very proud of the work that I did. It was a short time and I wish it had been longer for Qatar, was anti-human trafficking efforts leading into the World Cup, which is something I'd like to talk about later, too. I was registered as FARA along with many members of my firm. That was the sole portion of my representation for Qatar. Now, if there are any conflicts with anyone I represented in private practice, I would consult with the career ethics officials within the department and make the appropriate decision. I would also like

to point out to you, I don't believe that I would be the first attorney general who has represented and advocated for businesses in their past.

Mr. Durbin (50:27):

Of course not. And the question is whether you will recuse yourself from any case involving your Ballard clients. One of those clients was The GEO Group, was it not?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (50:39):

GEO, yes.

Mr. Durbin (50:40):

A private prison company you lobbied for manages correctional institutions and detention facilities. The GEO Group has faced criticism for safety violations, inadequate health care and poor management. The US Immigration and Customs Enforcement is GEO's largest source of revenue. Under the Trump administration, GEO stands to earn hundreds of millions of dollars by detaining immigrants if there is this mass deportation. Would you sense any conflict of interest if you're asked to judge the performance of this government contractor?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (51:11):

Senator, I will consult with the career ethics officials within the Department of Justice and make the appropriate decision.

Mr. Durbin (51:20):

Thank you, Ms. Chairman.

Mr. Grassley (51:21):

Senator Graham.

Mr. Graham (51:23):

Thank you. Congratulations.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (51:25):

Thank you.

Mr. Graham (51:25):

You forgot to say that John's family was from South Carolina.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (51:28):

The upstate. I'm sorry.

Mr. Graham (51:29):

Yeah. I'll give you a pass on that. From Anderson, by the way. So, listen, President Trump asked a bunch of us, who would you pick for attorney general? How many of you got asked that on our side? Probably didn't ask Dick, but he asked me. I said, "Pam Bondi." That's like an easy decision. I couldn't think of anybody more qualified that he knew that he trusted. You were his lawyer, right?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (51:56):

Yes, sir. I represented him when they tried to impeach him the first time as part of White House counsel, Office of Special Counsel.

Mr. Graham (52:05):

Being Trump's lawyer prepares you for many things. So, yeah, you have a longstanding relationship with the president. He trusts you. That's a good thing. That's probably why President Kennedy picked his brother, Bobby Kennedy. I guess you can say no to your older brother. I'm sure he would. But this idea there's something bad is ridiculous. Who do you pick? You pick people you know, you pick people you trust, people you're qualified. I'm glad he picked you. He knows you, he trusts you, and you're highly qualified. So, the idea that there's something wrong with that is just absolutely ridiculous. So, let's talk about the job you're about to have here. Do you support making certain drug cartels in Mexico foreign terrorist organization?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (52:51):

Senator, I personally went to Mexico. I personally dealt with these cartels when I was a state prosecutor. And they are a grave and violent threat to our country. Yes, Senator.

Mr. Graham (53:06):

You consider advising the president? Good, good. Now, when it comes to Crossfire Hurricane, are those days over if you're attorney general?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (53:16):

Absolutely.

Mr. Graham (53:17):

Okay. Laken Riley, are you familiar with that case?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (53:21):

Sadly, I am, Senator, Graham.

Mr. Graham (53:23):

Do you know why the man who killed her was released from custody? He was paroled due to detention capacity at the central processing center in El Paso, Texas. Now, that's not your call. You'll be DOJ. But do you agree with me that the statute regarding parole doesn't allow parole to be based on we don't have detention beds? There's nothing in that statute would authorize parole based on lack of capacity. Are you familiar with that statute?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (53:57):

Yes, sir. And that's frightening.

Mr. Graham (53:59):

Yeah. Well, it is frightening. Are you going to fix it?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (54:02):

I'm going to do everything in my power to fix it, if confirmed as attorney general.

Mr. Graham (54:06):

But you're going to advise President Trump we need more beds? Tom Homan's the guy that's going to do this, but would you as attorney general say we need more bed space so Laken Riley never happens again?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (54:17):

Senator, my job if confirmed as attorney general will be to keep America safe.

Mr. Graham (54:22):

Do you think we need more detention space?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (54:24):

And that includes having enough space for violent criminals, for people that should not be in this country who have committed violent crimes. And Laken Riley is one of many.

Mr. Graham (54:36):

Yeah. 41,000 beds in this country to detain people. We got like millions of people here illegally. We let this dude go because we didn't have any place to put him. I hope those days are over. And if Tom, you're listening out there, I hope you'll create enough detention space to make sure we don't find this dilemma ever again. Do you think we're at war and if so, who with?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (54:59):

Oh, Senator, we're at war on so many fronts.

Mr. Graham (55:03):

Are we at war with ISIS?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (55:05):

Of course, we're at war with ISIS.

Mr. Graham (55:07):

They're at war with us. Do you agree with that?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (55:09):

Absolutely, Senator.

Mr. Graham (55:10):

Do you think since our withdrawal from Afghanistan, threats to our homeland have gone up from ISIS?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (55:15):

Yes.

Mr. Graham (55:16):

Okay. March 7th, 2024, General Kurilla, "ISIS-K retains the capability and will to attack the US and Western interest abroad in as little as six months with little or no warning." That's March of 2024. General McKenzie, "ISIS-K has a strong desire to attack the United States after it began

to grow in Afghanistan, following US exit in August 2021. He also stated, "The threat from ISIS-K is growing." Major General Quantock, "The US remains target number one for ISIS-K." Do you agree with that

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (55:54):

Senator, I don't have my security clearance, but from everything I've read and heard, ISIS is one of the greatest threats.

Mr. Graham (56:02):

Okay. Well, when you get your security clearance, you're going to find out these people are coming after us and they want to kill us. So, I would like to have a strategy to deal with the ISIS threat that's beyond just the law enforcement model. Does that make sense to you that we should use every tool in the toolbox?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (56:22):

Senator, that includes wrapping in our state and local officials, too, and better cooperation throughout our country and our world.

Mr. Graham (56:32):

I totally agree. Do you support reauthorizing FISA in 2025?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (56:38):

Senator, I believe 702 is up in 2026.

Mr. Graham (56:40):

Okay, I'm sorry, '26.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (56:44):

I believe it's 2026. And we will closely be looking at that. FISA is a very important tool.

Mr. Graham (56:49):

Do you agree that the 702 provides important intel gathering capability to protect our nation?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (56:58):

Extremely important.

Mr. Graham (56:59):

Okay. So, Pam, you're about to step into a job that's one of the most important jobs in any democracy. Let's go back to pardons. If I'm a lawyer for somebody in jail, would you promise to listen to the application and read it before you made a decision?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (57:19):

Yes.

Mr. Graham (57:20):

Okay. No matter who you are? Good. That's the way it works. People want to bargain with you up here. Will you do this? Will you do that? All I ask you to do is call it as you see it. Hire good, competent people and give the president the best legal advice you can. Run the Department of Justice in a manner that other people would want to join it one day. Growing up, I had a fondness for the FBI. I watched the show. I think it was every Sunday. Wanted to be an FBI agent. Right now, the FBI needs an image overhaul, so you have a real task ahead of you in two areas, to restore trust. Many Americans have lost us in the Department of Justice. And to make sure that this country is safe from drug cartels that are killing 3,000 Americans every two weeks for money, to go after these people and to protect our homeland that's under siege. I think you're the perfect pick at one of the most dangerous times in American history, and I look forward to supporting you.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (58:23):

Thank you, Senator.

Mr. Grassley (58:25):

Senator Whitehouse.

Mr. Whitehouse (58:27):

Thank you, Chairman. Welcome, Ms. Bondi.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (58:28):

Thank you, Senator. And thank you for meeting with me. I greatly appreciate that.

Mr. Whitehouse (58:32):

It was a pleasure. Ms. Bondi, you were a courtroom prosecutor for a great many years. As a courtroom prosecutor, did you ever have an enemies list?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (58:42):

No, Senator.

Mr. Whitehouse (58:44):

And you went on to be Florida's attorney general. As Florida's attorney general, did you ever have an enemies list?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (58:50):

No, Senator.

Mr. Whitehouse (58:51):

As Florida's attorney general, you were responsible for hiring into the Florida Department of Attorney General, correct?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (58:57):

Senator, the attorney general's office in Florida is the third largest in the state. Approximately 1,400 employees and approximately 400 lawyers. Only California and Texas are our bigger offices. So, yes.

Mr. Whitehouse (59:12):

And you were responsible for hiring into that office while you were attorney general?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (59:17):

Yes, Senator.

Mr. Whitehouse (59:17):

Would you have hired someone into the Florida Attorney General's Office who you knew had an enemies list?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (59:25):

Senator, to cut to the chase, you're clearly talking about Kash Patel. I don't believe he has an enemies list. He made a quote on TV, which I have not heard. I saw your sign or Senator

Durbin's sign about Kash. But I know that Kash Patel has had 60 jury trials as a public defender, as a prosecutor. He has great experience in the intel department, Department of Defense. I have known Kash and I believe that Kash is the right person at this time for this job. You'll have the ability to question Mr. Patel when you do.

Mr. Whitehouse (01:00:05):

And I'm questioning you right now about whether you will enforce an enemies list that he announced publicly on television.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:00:11):

Oh, Senator, I'm sorry. There will never be an enemies list within the Department of Justice.

Mr. Whitehouse (01:00:16):

Thank you. What is the FBI's role in national security and counter-terrorism and how important is that role?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:00:26):

Senator, I believe now more than ever, counter-terrorism is so important and vital in our country. We are facing such incredible threats here and abroad. If I'm sure many of you saw former FBI director Wray's interview on 60 Minutes. He talked about the threats. Frankly, again, I don't have my security clearance. But the threats facing us, Senator, from China, from China right now, that are so great, with the sleeper cells within our country.

Mr. Whitehouse (01:01:02):

Given that importance, is it responsible to call for shutting down the FBI's counter-terrorism and national security work? And will you as attorney general impede or shut down the FBI's counter-terrorism and national security work? Two questions.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:01:19):

Senator. Senator, I believe that national security is vital right now for our country on so many fronts. I could continue to discuss many others.

Mr. Whitehouse (01:01:28):

And the FBI's role in that?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:01:29):

And the FBI plays a vital role in counter-terrorism throughout our world.

Mr. Whitehouse (01:01:33):

Which you will or will not shut down?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:01:34):

I will look at each agency. I have no intention of shutting anything down right now, Senator. I am not in that office yet. And if confirmed, I will look at each individual agency and how it should be managed. But counter-terrorism right now in our world is vital.

Mr. Whitehouse (01:01:52):

You have said that Department of Justice prosecutors will be prosecuted in the Trump administration. What Department of Justice prosecutors will be prosecuted and why?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:02:09):

I said that on TV. I said prosecutors will be prosecuted, to finish the quote, if bad. Investigators will be investigated. We all take an oath, Senator, to uphold the law. None of us are above the law. Let me give you a really good example of a bad lawyer within the Justice Department, a guy named Clinesmith, who altered a FISA warrant. One of the most important things we can do in this country. So, will everyone be held to an equal, fair system of justice if I am the next attorney general? Absolutely. And no one is above the law.

Mr. Whitehouse (01:02:51):

Under what circumstances will you prosecute journalists for what they write?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:02:59):

I believe in the freedom of speech, only if anyone commits a crime. It's pretty basic, Senator, with anything, with any victim. And this goes back to my entire career for 18 years as a prosecutor and then eight years as Florida's Attorney General. You find the facts of the case, you apply the law in good faith, and you treat everyone fairly.

Mr. Whitehouse (01:03:30):

And it would not be appropriate for a prosecutor to start with a name and look for a crime. It's the prosecutor's job to start with a crime and look for a name, correct?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:03:48):

Senator, I think that is the whole problem with the weaponization that we have seen the last four years and what's been happening to Donald Trump. They targeted Donald Trump. They went after him. Actually, starting back in 2016, they targeted his campaign. They have launched countless investigations against him. That will not be the case if I am attorney general. I will not politicize that office. I will not target people simply because of their political affiliation. Justice will be administered even-handedly throughout this country. Senator, we've got to bring this country back together. We've got to move forward or we're going to lose our country.

Mr. Whitehouse (01:04:30):

Yeah. I think the concern is that weaponization of the Justice Department may well occur under your tenure. And we want to make sure that that's not the case, that you remain independent. That you remain able to and willing to tell the president no when that's necessary to protect the constitution and the integrity of the department. So, that's where I'm asking these questions. We talked in the meeting about the contacts policy that has prevailed really since Senator Hatch sat in that chair and demanded it of the Clinton Justice Department. Through all the administration since then, with the exception of a brief period under Attorney General Gonzales, which he corrected and which did not end well for him, there has been a contacts policy that limits contacts between the White House and the Department of Justice to a very few senior officials on each side. In your role as attorney general, if you are confirmed, will you maintain, defend and enforce that long-standing contacts policy?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:05:39):

Senator, yes, I will meet with White House counsel, and I will meet with the appropriate officials and follow the contacts policy.

Mr. Whitehouse (01:05:48):

My time has expired. Thank you, Ms. Bondi.

Mr. Grassley (01:05:49):

Senator Cornyn.

Mr. Cornyn (01:05:52):

Ms. Bondi, your testimony is music to my ears.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:05:56):

Thank you.

Mr. Cornyn (01:05:58):

One of the things that I have been most

Senator Cornyn (01:06:00):

... concerned about over the last, certainly the last four years and extending back during President Trump's administration, is the weaponization and politicalization of the Department of Justice, which together with the FBI is one of the most important institutions in this country. If people don't trust-

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:06:19):

That's right.

Senator Cornyn (01:06:20):

... that their elected officials will faithfully enforce the law or administer equal justice under the law, they've lost faith in America. And that disturbs me greatly, and I know it does you too, based on what you said. So I'm delighted to hear you say what you have said, but I want to talk about some specific topics. Time is short.

(01:06:49)

First, the border. I believe President Biden and Vice President Harris had presided over one of the biggest humanitarian and public safety disasters in American history. Senator Cruz and I represent a state with 1,200 miles of common border with America, but as you pointed out with fentanyl, what happens at the border doesn't stay at the border.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:07:15):

Yeah.

Senator Cornyn (01:07:15):

Fentanyl poisoning is the most common cause of death of young people between the age of 18 and 45. We know where it comes from.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:07:24):

Yes.

Senator Cornyn (01:07:24):

The precursors come from China, they go to the cartels, they mix them up, make them look like innocuous pills, and young people take them and die. It's just that simple and that tragic. So

there's just so much that we could talk about with regard to the border, but I know people have voted for President Trump in large part because of his promise to restore security at the border. Will you do everything within your power as attorney general to enforce the laws on the book, including the president's executive orders, which I anticipate he will be signing on January the 20th when he is sworn in, and help do everything you can and the Department of Justice can to restore security to our southern border?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:08:14):

Yes, Senator. Absolutely.

Senator Cornyn (01:08:17):

One example is of, course, if you come here from anywhere in the country and you show up at the border under the Biden and Harris administration policies, you'll simply be released into the interior of the country, either to await a trial date, which may never occur due to the enormous backlog, or you will simply be paroled. And I know parole has a special connotation in the criminal law, but in this context, as you know, it's designed to be administered on a case-by-case basis. Yet President Biden and Vice President Harris had granted parole, that is released people into the United States, on a categorical basis, or anybody who shows up, or because they don't have the detention facilities to keep them. So do you believe Laken Riley would be alive today if President Biden and Vice President Harris had enforced the law and secured the border?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:09:19):

Senator, he should not have been in our country and then Laken Riley would have been alive, and I don't think it's just Laken Riley. There are so many victims throughout our country. Not only that, we're all familiar with the violent gangs who are coming into our country, walking into our country, freely through the open border. The cartels, the gangs, Venezuela's let people out of their prisons. It's been reported. I don't have the security clearance yet to see what's happening, but I know, we all know, there are criminals throughout our country and it is my commitment to you on both sides of the aisle that I will do everything in my power with the agencies that fall under me, if I am confirmed, to make America safe again. We have to do that, Senator.

Senator Cornyn (01:10:12):

Well, many of us, of course, see classified information on the intelligence committee or just generally in our duties as a senator, and so you're not going to feel any better about the blinking lights, the danger that Director Wray has talked about. In my closing moments here, I want to revisit an issue that is of particular importance. 60% of the President's daily brief, which is the intelligence brief that the Director of National Intelligence and the CIA director deliver to the president, comes from Section 702 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act. I've called this the most important law that most people have never heard of. I know you have and you're

familiar with it, but I want to ask you a few questions about that. It's been called the crown jewel of U.S. Intelligence and of course it cannot be used, legally used, to spy on American citizens, and if it is, it ought to be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

(01:11:19)

I know you would agree with that, but there been some, as you know and as you pointed out to Senator Graham, we have a temporary extension of the existing authorization for the use of the intelligence community to target foreign-

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:11:35):

Yes.

Senator Cornyn (01:11:35):

... threats to our national security that expires in 2026. And I'd like you just to confirm here on the record that you will enforce that law and you can support the law as it is written.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:11:50):

Senator, I haven't read the entire 702 in front of you, but I will commit to reading that and doing everything I can to keep America safe again.

Senator Cornyn (01:12:00):

Of course you will. So Director Ratcliffe who's going to be... I'm going to go to his hearing for CIA director. Of course, he was confirmed as director of national intelligence. Some have argued that in order to query or look at lawfully collected FISA 702 product that you need to get a warrant requirement, in order to show probable cause that a crime, including espionage perhaps, has been committed. But Director Ratcliffe has written that a warrant requirement may not achieve its intended objectives and could hinder national security efforts. Do you share Director Ratcliffe's concerns?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:12:48):

I would read his memo and I will speak to you after I read his memo, Senator.

Senator Cornyn (01:12:52):

Well, we need to have a... I hope you and I can continue this conversation after this because I think there's a lot of misinformation with regard to how Section 702 works. I'm happen to be one of the members of the Senate Intelligence Committee. We read that product on a regular basis and it is not used to spy on American people. I think what's fundamentally missing is a lack of

trust in the intelligence community, including the FBI, which I'm hoping you and Mr. Patel can restore. Thank you.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:13:24):

Thank you.

Mr. Grassley (01:13:27):

Senator Klobuchar.

Senator Klobuchar (01:13:29):

Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chair. We had a good meeting this week. Thank you for that, and I appreciated your priorities on human trafficking that you mentioned today, that work as well as fentanyl and some of your other prosecution experience. We had some similar backgrounds in doing that, and I want to talk about, first of all, the US Attorney's Office in Minnesota, one of the premier offices in the country. This office has been instrumental in combating violent crime, dismantling street gangs, taking fentanyl off our streets, enforcing civil rights laws after George Floyd's murder, ensuring victims of fraud get justice. Do you agree that it should be a priority to support U.S. attorneys, frontline prosecutors and case agents who work hard every single day on our streets?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:14:22):

Senator, I think that is one of the most important things in our country right now, and there are so many good men and women within the Justice Department throughout our country, as well as all the law enforcement agencies. Yes, they work very hard and they will be supported.

Senator Klobuchar (01:14:42):

I'm concerned about some of the proposals that could put cuts in the COPS program, Byrne JAG programs. I know you're familiar with those. Senator Murkowski and I lead the COPS Reauthorization Bill. Just, will you commit to continue to support those programs?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:14:59):

Senator, I will read everything about those programs because that is a top priority of mine and I would love to meet with you on that, and Senator Murkowski, to support law enforcement and those programs.

Senator Klobuchar (01:15:10):

Thank you. Independence from political interference is vital to the legitimacy and success of the Department of Justice. I was honestly troubled by some of the answers to Senator Durbin's questions. We will continue that discussion I'm sure, on the committee about the election, but I want to focus on the investigation charging decisions.

(01:15:33)

As a prosecutor, I'm sure you had this experience, I would get calls from people, hey, that's just a kid, give him a break. And I remember one answer I gave was, he's 40 years old, he's not a kid. But that kind of interference is attempted all the time and one of my concerns here, whether it's a call from a friend, a corporate lobbyist, a White House, it has been very clear that the attorney general's of both parties have established clear policies to ensure the White House doesn't tamper with criminal investigations and prosecutions. At Attorney General Mike Mukasey's hearing, he made clear that any attempt by the White House, and these are the words, to interfere with a case is not to be [inaudible 01:16:14]. Any call to a line assistant or to a United States attorney from a political person relating to a case is to be cut and curtailed. Do you agree with this statement?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:16:27):

Senator, yes. I believe that the Justice Department must be independent and must act independently. The number one job is to enforce the law fairly and even-handedly, and that's what will be done if I am confirmed as the attorney general.

Senator Klobuchar (01:16:46):

So you will provide an insurance to every member of this committee that the Justice Department will only follow the facts in the law, and the White House will play no role in cases investigated or brought?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:16:58):

Senator, it will be my job if confirmed as attorney general to make those decisions. Politics will not play a part. I've demonstrated that my entire career as a prosecutor, as attorney general, and I will continue to do that if you confirm me as the 87th attorney general of the United States of America.

Senator Klobuchar (01:17:20):

In an earlier question, some of my colleagues talked about China and the risk, yet you have a nominee from this incoming administration, Kash Patel, the picked-ahead, the FBI have serious concerns about him, has referred to the FBI's intel division, which is responsible for protecting us from foreign adversaries like China, as, quote, "the biggest problem the FBI has had." And he said that he wants to, quote, "break that component out of the FBI." Do you agree?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:17:53):

I have not seen those comments from Mr. Patel. I would review them, but we have to do everything we can to protect our country. Again, Mr. Patel would fall under me and the Department of Justice, and I will ensure that all laws are followed and so will he.

Senator Klobuchar (01:18:10):

Okay. There are many decisions made by the FBI director, having seen a number of them do their work, that can be made. While I agree you would be the boss of Kash Patel, I'm not sure that you would be able to intervene with every decision or position that he had or know what he's doing.

(01:18:28)

So let's continue. Do you agree it is a duty of the Justice Department to defend the laws Congress passes, and will you commit to do even when the president may disagree with an act campaigned against its passage or called for its repeal? President Reagan's AG, William French Smith, said the department policy was, "The department has the duty to defend an act of Congress whenever a reasonable argument can be made in its support." So I'm specifically referring to the 2022 law that I long led, that we pass to empower Medicare, to negotiate drug prices, major savings for seniors. Will you commit to defend the law against the lawsuits from big pharma?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:19:10):

Senator, I was involved in big pharma cases when I was attorney general of the state of Florida, and I will commit to protect the laws of the United States of America.

Senator Klobuchar (01:19:21):

Okay, thank you. That would also, same question with the Supreme Court is going to be hearing a challenge to the Affordable Care Act's coverage of preventative services, and despite the fact that you twice joined suits to have the entire Affordable Care Act invalidated, will you commit to defending this law?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:19:41):

Yeah, I believe this is very different. It's a very isolated... It's different, it's not the entire Affordable Care Act, but I will... It's pending litigation, of course, within the department.

Senator Klobuchar (01:19:53):

Okay. Since the 1990s, the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act has protected patients, providers and facilities that provide reproductive health services. Will you commit to continuing

to enforce the FACE Act to address violence and threats against those providing reproductive healthcare services?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:20:12):

Senator, the FACE Act not only protects abortion clinics, but it also protects pregnancy centers and people going for counseling. The law should be applied even-handedly. Yes, Senator.

Senator Klobuchar (01:20:27):

So you'll uphold the enforcement of that law?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:20:29):

I'll uphold the enforcement of the law, Senator.

Senator Klobuchar (01:20:32):

Okay, and I will ask my antitrust questions in the next round. We had a good discussion about that and I do appreciate the nominee that has been put in place for the Antitrust Division, and there's incredibly important work that has to be done in that division. So thank you.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:20:48):

Gail Slater is remarkable. Thank you.

Senator Klobuchar (01:20:49):

Yep, thank you.

Mr. Grassley (01:20:50):

I thank all of my colleagues for abiding by the seven-minute rule. Before I call on Senator Lee, I want everybody to plan on our first break would be about 11:50, and that will be 30 minutes for lunch. Senator Lee.

Senator Lee (01:21:07):

Thank you Mr. Chairman. Thank you Ms. Bondi-

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:21:09):

Thank you.

Senator Lee (01:21:09):

... for being here today. I too share the assessment that Gail Slater is great. I had a great meeting with her yesterday, and just thrilled that you're here and that you're willing to serve. I'd like to talk to you, as a longtime lawyer and one who has handled a variety of criminal matters, about the Fourth Amendment. What can you tell us about the Fourth Amendment's warrant requirement and why it's so important?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:21:31):

Well, the warrant requirement is so important, which I've dealt with that since I was in my 20s as a state prosecutor. A warrant is so important because it protects citizens' rights and that's why it's so important.

Senator Lee (01:21:44):

And it does that specifically because under the Fourth Amendment you're required to go to a judge and you're required to show a judge evidence, evidence providing probable cause, and based on that probable cause, you can describe with particularity the things or persons to be searched or seized. And on that basis, the judge may issue or not issue the warrant, but without it you can't get it. Now, this is time-consuming, no doubt, right?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:22:08):

Oh, I've done many of them. Yes, it's very time-consuming, Senator.

Senator Lee (01:22:12):

And there's probably not a law enforcement officer anywhere in the world who wouldn't acknowledge that they could save time if they didn't have to go about it and yet we require it. Why is that so important that we do it?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:22:23):

Well, it's so important for the reasons you just laid out. When I said I've done many of them, I've approved them and not approved them as a state prosecutor, because law enforcement, there are checks and balances, and law enforcement must bring these warrants to prosecutors to see if there is sufficient evidence. Then after that's done, they have to take them to a judge to have a judge sign them. So there have to be sufficient checks and balances throughout our system.

Senator Lee (01:22:49):

So even after you as attorney general, as the chief law enforcement officer and prosecutorial authority in the state of Florida approved it within your office, you still had to go to the judge. And if it was late at night, early in the morning, didn't matter when, you had to find a judge.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:23:04):

All hours of the night. That was more when I was a state prosecutor. As attorney general, the Office of the Statewide Prosecutor, Nick Cox, would've done that many, many times, at all hours throughout the night, and woken up many, many judges throughout the state of Florida.

Senator Lee (01:23:20):

Is there an exception to the warrant requirement that exists anytime it would be inconvenient for prosecutors or anytime national security might be involved?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:23:30):

I'm not certain about national security, but absolutely no for a state prosecutor. No exception.

Senator Lee (01:23:36):

Right. Yeah, there's no catch-all exception-

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:23:37):

No.

Senator Lee (01:23:37):

... that just says this is important or it would be inconvenient for the prosecutor, and with good reason.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:23:42):

Right.

Senator Lee (01:23:42):

We've learned through sad experience over many hundreds of years, not only in our own country but also in that of our mother country, what happens when you don't have this in the loop. So you've been asked today a little bit about Section 702 of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, also known as FISA. There are those who have repeatedly assured members of this committee, including myself, don't worry, content of phone calls or electronic communications involving American citizens, sometimes resulting in the quote, unquote,

"incidental collection" of American citizen's private conversations. Don't worry, their Fourth Amendment rights are just fine. And yet when they incidentally collect the communications of American citizens, either because they're perhaps unwittingly talking to somebody who might be an agent of a foreign power and themselves, under 702 surveillance, they get onto this big database. And at times there are those in the government, including the Federal Bureau of Investigation, who have gotten into that database and done so, of course, without a warrant because there currently is no warrant requirement. This has the effect of what we call a de facto backdoor warrantless search.

(01:24:58)

Would you agree with me that that is potentially concerning? Anytime an American citizen's private conversations are intercepted, stored, whether as an incidental collection or otherwise, they ought not be searched without some kind of probable cause showing. I assume you'd agree with me on that.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:25:14):

Yes.

Senator Lee (01:25:16):

Yeah, it's important, sometimes people will defend that by saying, "National security is involved," as if that's the beginning at the end of the inquiry. That has never been the case and I hope and pray it never will be the case because that's not what the Fourth Amendment says, not what it does, not what it ever can't be. So it's my sincere hope that the next time FISA 702 comes up for reauthorization, Congress finally do what it has been avoiding for a long time, which is to ensure that this doesn't happen.

(01:25:42)

We've heard again and again from people who, if you're confirmed to this position, will soon be your predecessors, prior occupants of the position to which you've been nominated and to which Mr. Patel has been nominated. Don't worry, we have good people. Don't worry, we have good systems in place. Don't worry, it's as good as a warrant requirement, the internal approval procedure that we have within our system. And yet we found out, time and time again, that this has happened, by some accounts, hundreds of thousands of times. These things have been accessed where searches, for an American citizen's private communications that have been intercepted and stored through incidental collection, have been searched without those safeguards being met, including instances where people just wanted to check on, to cite one example, whether his father was cheating on his mother. Or in other instances, doing background checks on someone looking to lease an apartment that he owned and was looking to rent out. This is unacceptable and we've got to fix it.

(01:26:47)

Speaking of unacceptable, we have seen over the last few years, the weaponization of government, specifically within the Department of Justice, against law-abiding Americans, law-abiding Americans whose offense was something along the lines of them exercising their constitutional rights, ranging from Catholics attempting to practice their faith, to parents showing up to school board meetings, to people showing up to engage in peaceful protesting outside of abortion clinics. As attorney general, how will you prevent the weaponization of the Department of Justice against Americans?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:27:25):

And Senator, you just gave the classic example of what's been happening regarding the weaponization. Going after parents at a school board meeting has got to stop, for practicing your religion, sending informants in to Catholic churches must stop. We have-

Senator Lee (01:27:44):

What about branding parents as domestic terrorists, or trying to incarcerate one's political opponent as a sitting president of the United States?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:27:51):

Will stop, must stop, Senator.

Senator Lee (01:27:54):

That is exactly a sort of answer I was hoping and expecting to receive from you, and I look forward to doing everything I can to help get you confirmed. I've been pleased with your answers thus far. I've enjoyed knowing you, considering you a friend for many years, and look forward to the great things you will do as attorney general of the United States. You have my emphatic support and my vote.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:28:16):

Thank you, Senator.

Mr. Grassley (01:28:18):

Senator Coons.

Senator Coons (01:28:19):

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Welcome Attorney General Bondi, and to your family and supporters.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:28:24):

Thank you.

Senator Coons (01:28:25):

Thank you for your service and I look forward to our conversation today. I have a simple three factor test when considering the executive branch nominees before us, do you have the qualifications and experience to do the job, policy views to do the job in the best interest of the American people, and the character and integrity to conduct your job, and yours in particular, with the independence that the role requires. You demonstrably have the relevant experience. I understand we will not see eye to eye on some or even many policies, but we had a constructive conversation last week about our shared interest in fighting the opioid epidemic, countering human trafficking, criminal justice reform, and supporting law enforcement. But I need to know that you share a core value, ensuring the Department of Justice remains free from partisan or political influence, in particular by the White House. So I look forward to our discussion about that today. As attorney general, if confirmed, who would be your client?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:29:20):

My oath would be to support and defend the Constitution of the United States of America. The people of America would be my client, and it is also my job to advise the president, my client are the people of America.

Senator Coons (01:29:37):

A simple question of constitutional interpretation, is President-elect Trump eligible to run for another term as president in 2028?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:29:47):

No, Senator, not unless they change the constitution.

Senator Coons (01:29:51):

Thank you. One of the concerns I've raised with you is safeguarding the Department of Justice's independence in the face of some promises on the campaign trail by then candidate Trump, that he would use the department to target his political adversaries, or that he might interfere with prosecution. What would you do if your career DOJ prosecutors came to you with a case to prosecute, grounded in the facts and law, but the White House directs you to drop the case?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:30:22):

Senator, if I thought that would happen, I would not be sitting here today. That will not happen. Will not happen. Every case will be prosecuted based on the facts and the law that is applied in good faith, period. Politics have got to be taken out of the system.

Senator Coons (01:30:45):

I agree with you.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:30:45):

This department has been weaponized for years, and years, and years-

Senator Coons (01:30:49):

But let me, if I might-

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:30:52):

... and it has to stop.

Senator Coons (01:30:53):

Thank you. Let me if I might, Madam Attorney General, refer you back to Senator Durbin's opening comments about previous attorneys general, our former colleague Jeff Sessions, Bill Barr. I don't think it's credible to say that it may never happen that the president-elect would direct an unethical or illegal act. I think both of those attorneys general found themselves crosswise with the then president by doing things he didn't welcome or approve of. Just answer the question for me, if you would. I know you may not expect it. I know you wouldn't have accepted this nomination if you thought it possible, but let's imagine that once again, President-elect Trump issues a directive order, to you or to the FBI director, that is outside the boundaries of ethics or law. What will you do?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:31:45):

Senator, I will never speak on a hypothetical, especially one saying that the president would do something illegal. What I can tell you is my duty, if confirmed as the attorney general, will be to the Constitution and the United States of America. And the most important part of that oath that I will take are the last four words, so help me God.

Senator Coons (01:32:11):

Given the importance of that oath. I hope you can understand the importance of repeated questions from some of us about the importance of having independence in the Department of Justice. It has a long tradition of independent special prosecutors, especially to handle

high-profile or often political cases. If you got credible evidence of a criminal violation by a White House official, including even the president, would you bring in a special prosecutor?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:32:38):

Senator, that's a hypothetical. I can tell you what I do know is special prosecutors been abused in the past. On both sides, we have seen that for many, many years. They have cost the taxpayers countless dollars, countless, and I will look at each situation on a case-by-case basis, and consult the appropriate career ethics officials within the department to make that decision.

Senator Coons (01:33:03):

Attorney General, do you think special councils need to be confirmed by the Senate?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:33:12):

I will follow the law and I will consult with the appropriate ethics officials regarding the law. Right now, they do not need to be Senate confirmed, of course.

Senator Coons (01:33:23):

But you did sign an Eleventh Circuit brief arguing that they should be.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:33:27):

I will follow the law, Senator. That's why I said that.

Senator Coons (01:33:30):

Understood, but I was just getting to the clarity about the difference-

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:33:34):

Absolutely.

Senator Coons (01:33:34):

... between a position you've advocated and what the current law is. Thank you for that. Look, bluntly, to me, refusing to answer a hypothetical when there is clear and concrete previous history, raises some concerns for me. I think Chris Wray has done an outstanding job, as FBI director, at avoiding political pressure. And although he was chosen by President Trump, he's being driven out so that he can be replaced, my perception, I've not yet met with Mr. Patel, by a loyalist who has publicly said he will do what the president asks him. Given that Attorney General Barr was asked to go find evidence of election interference and improprieties, went and

looked for the evidence and said, "I can't find any," and was then dismissed, I'm just going to ask you one last time. Can you clarify for me that in following ethics in the law, you'd be willing to resign if ordered to do something improper?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:34:32):

Senator, I wouldn't work at a law firm, I wouldn't be a prosecutor, I wouldn't be attorney general, if anyone asked me to do something improper and I felt I had to carry that out. Of course I would not do that. That's one of the main things you learn when you're a young prosecutor, is to do the right thing, and I believe that has continued with me throughout my very long career.

Senator Coons (01:34:56):

As we discussed, protecting American invention and innovation, American intellectual property, is a real concern of mine and of several others on this committee. I look forward to talking with you about that pressing concern, but the most important question I had for you today is whether you will be willing and able to stand up to politicization and interference in the Department of Justice. And I look forward to further clarification from you about the specifics of that. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:35:22):

Thank you.

Mr. Grassley (01:35:23):

Thank you.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:35:23):

Thank you, Senator.

Mr. Grassley (01:35:24):

Senator Cruz would be next, but he's not here. So I call on Senator Kennedy.

Senator Kennedy (01:35:31):

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Ms. Bondi, welcome. Congratulations. Can we agree that legitimacy is important to America's criminal justice system?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:35:51):

Yes, Senator.

Senator Kennedy (01:35:53):

Can we agree that legitimacy is important to the Department of Justice, which in part administers our criminal justice system?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:36:08):

Yes, Senator.

Senator Kennedy (01:36:08):

And if Americans come to believe that our criminal justice system or our Department of Justice is acting illegitimately, that makes Americans less likely to accept the results of that system, does it not?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:36:39):

Yes, Senator.

Senator Kennedy (01:36:42):

And that makes Americans less likely to follow the substantive laws, that we pass, that are administered by the Department of Justice. Isn't that true?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:36:55):

Yes, Senator.

Senator Kennedy (01:36:56):

And if that happens, we have chaos, don't we?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:36:59):

Chaos.

Senator Kennedy (01:37:01):

And the social contract is breached, isn't it?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:37:05):

Yes.

Senator Kennedy (01:37:09):

Do you remember a person by the name of Michael Avenatti?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:37:17):

Yes.

Senator Kennedy (01:37:23):

Several years ago, he was a media star here in Washington.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:37:28):

An attorney, correct?

Senator Kennedy (01:37:29):

Yes. He was a media star and many members of our media loved him because he persistently bashed Donald Trump, and he was on TV every day. He was on CNN more than Wolf Blitzer. Do you know where Mr. Avenatti is today?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:37:54):

I believe he's sitting in prison, Senator.

Senator Kennedy (01:37:56):

He's in jail because he was a crook and the Department of Justice helped put him there, didn't it?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:38:07):

Yes, Senator.

Senator Kennedy (01:38:12):

Do you remember a gentleman by the name of Sam Bankman-Fried?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:38:20):

Yes, Senator

Senator Kennedy (01:38:22):

Boy genius, so smart and so powerful that he thought he could command the tides. So smart, and so powerful, and so rich that he would go to meetings with serious people like Bill Clinton, like Tony Blair, looking like a slob,

Senator Kennedy (01:39:00):

Looking like a fourth runner-up to a John Belushi look-alike contest and he thought it was cute. Where's Mr. Bankman-Fried today?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:39:14):

I believe he is in prison and I believe that's from the Netflix series I saw as well.

Senator Kennedy (01:39:20):

Because he's a crook and who else put him there?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:39:26):

The Department of Justice, Senator.

Senator Kennedy (01:39:29):

Can we agree that there's some really, really good men and women at the Department of Justice?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:39:34):

Many, many great men and women in the Justice Department as well, Senator, as all the law enforcement agencies that fall within the Department of Justice. They're out there risking their lives, especially the law enforcement officers every single day.

Senator Kennedy (01:39:52):

Can we agree though that there have been and may be today some bad people at the Department of Justice?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:40:04):

Yes, Senator.

Senator Kennedy (01:40:06):

We don't know for sure because for the last four years the curtains there have been tightly drawn, but I think some, a minority of people there have delegitimized America's criminal justice system. The most destabilizing act that I saw in the past four years, maybe in the history of the department is when Attorney General Garland decided on the basis of dubious facts and untested legal theories to criminally prosecute a former president of the United States. And not only that, this is the special part, he decided to do it after the former president of the United States had announced that he was going to run against Attorney General Garland's boss, didn't he?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:41:18):

Senator, are you referring to going after a political opponent?

Senator Kennedy (01:41:23):

I think so. Now this is one person's opinion that kind of stupid takes a plan. And I say that because number one, this is America, that had never happened before in America. That's the sort of thing that happens in a country whose Powerball jackpot is 287 chickens and a goat. It doesn't happen here and I call it stupid because it broke the seal. It broke the seal, it normalized it. There are a lot of ambitious prosecutors in America, Democrat and Republican, and I'll bet you right now there's some prosecutor in a particular state thinking about, "Well, maybe I ought to file criminal charges against President Biden's inner circle for conspiring to conceal his mental decline" and that's the road we're headed down and you've got to fix it, counselor. You've got to fix it.

(01:42:42)

And here's, in my judgment, what I would ask you to do. Find out who the bad guys are and the bad women and get rid of them. Find out who the good people are and lift them up, but do it on the basis of facts and evidence and fairness because the temptation of some people is going to be, they're going to tell you, "Look two wrongs, don't make a right, but they do make it even." Resist that temptation. Help us restore legitimacy to the Department of Justice.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:43:24):

Thank you Senator.

Mr. Grassley (01:43:26):

Senator Blumenthal.

Mr. Blumenthal (01:43:28):

Thank you Mr. Chairman. Welcome Ms. Bondi and to your family.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:43:32):

Thank you.

Mr. Blumenthal (01:43:34):

Thank you for visiting with me in my office and I have to say I'm sympathetic always to a former attorney general, particularly having been one myself, but I have to say also really troubled, deeply disturbed by some of your responses and non-responses to the question that you've been asked today. You say the right things that you're going to be the people's lawyer. That's what you have to say to be here, but I believe being the people's lawyer means you have to be able to say no to the president of the United States. You have to speak truth to power.

(01:44:20)

You have to be able to say that Donald Trump lost the 2020 election. You dodged that question when you were asked directly by Senator Durbin. You have to be able to say that January 6th insurrectionists who committed violence shouldn't be pardoned. You have to be able to say that a nominee for the FBI director who says he has an enemy list and that's just the beginning of what he has said in terms of politicizing deeply weaponizing the FBI against political opponents that he shouldn't be the FBI director.

(01:45:07)

We have some history here with your predecessors, Bar sessions and others who perhaps sincerely when they sat where you are now said that they would say no but they were working with a president that expected them to be his Roy Cohn, his personal attorney. Do you really think that you can avoid the disgrace that they encountered or the repercussions from the White House if you say no to the president? And so my question to you is can you say no to the president of the United States when he asks you to do something unethical or illegal?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:46:00):

Senator, first I need to clarify something that you said that I have to sit up here and say these things. No, I don't. I sit up here and speak the truth. I'm not going to sit up here and say anything that I need to say to get confirmed by this body. I don't have to say anything. I will answer the questions to the best of my ability and honestly-

Mr. Blumenthal (01:46:24):

Let me ask you, an individual who says that he is going to quote, "Come after" and quote, "People," he alleges quote, "Help Joe Biden rig the presidential elections," that he has a list of people who are part of this deep state who should be prosecuted, that he's going to close down the FBI building on his first day in office. Is that a person who appropriately should be the FBI

director? Aren't those comments inappropriate? Shouldn't you disavow them and ask him to recant them?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:47:04):

Senator, I am not familiar with all those comments. I have not discussed those comments with Mr. Patel. What I do know is Mr. Patel-

Mr. Blumenthal (01:47:13):

Well, I'm asking you for your view.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:47:14):

Excuse me. What I do know is Mr. Patel was a career prosecutor. He was a career public defender defending people and he also has great experience within the intelligence community. What I can sit here and tell you is Mr. Patel, if he works with running the FBI, if he is confirmed and if I am confirmed, he will follow the law if I am the attorney general of the United States of America and I don't believe he would do anything otherwise.

Mr. Blumenthal (01:47:45):

Well, let me just submit that the response that I would've hoped to hear from you is that those comments are inappropriate and that you will ask him to disavow or recant them when he comes before this committee because they are indeed chilling to fair enforcement and the rule of law. Let me ask you on another topic. When we met, I welcomed your support for the goals of the Kids Online Safety Act and Senator Blackburn and I have spent a lot of time devoted a lot of effort to the passage of the Kids Online Safety Act, which happened by an overwhelming vote of 91 to 372 co-sponsors including Vice President-elect Vance. I appreciated our discussion and your support for protecting kids online when we met last week. I'm hopeful that this area is one where we can work together. Can we count on your support in working together to protect kids online?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:49:00):

Senator, absolutely. And thank you for that legislation and Senator Blackburn. I believe in this world right now, we have to find the things we have in common and that is certainly one of them, Senator, protecting our children from online predators. You've done so much on that front and I thank you. I attempted to do that as well when I was attorney general, but I'm committed to working with you on anything we can do to protect our children throughout this country. When I was attorney general, we started something called From Instant Message to Instant Nightmare and educating parents about online predators and that also, Senator, is one of the core functions of the FBI, the cyber unit. They sit there, these agents sit there all day long and investigate child predators. We tell parents constantly, you think you're talking to another child-

Mr. Blumenthal (01:50:00):

I apologize.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:50:00):

... and you're not.

Mr. Blumenthal (01:50:00):

I'm going to interrupt you. I welcome your positive response. I have one more question that I'm going to try to fit into this round. TikTok will be banned unless it is sold because it has become a tool for the Chinese to collect information and do surveillance and endanger our national security. Can you commit that you will enforce that law promptly and effectively? And I ask this question because President Trump's pick for your solicitor general in the Department of Justice went to the United States Supreme Court arguing that the ban should be delayed. Will you commit to enforce that law on your first day if you are confirmed?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:50:50):

Senator, as I discussed with you during our meeting, that is pending litigation within the Department of Justice.

Mr. Blumenthal (01:50:56):

Well, it's pending litigation, but will you enforce that law?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:50:59):

I can't discuss pending litigation, but I will talk to all the career-

Mr. Blumenthal (01:51:05):

Well, again-

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:51:05):

... prosecutors who are handling the case. Absolutely, Senator. Talk, discuss with me.

Mr. Blumenthal (01:51:10):

Thank you. Thank you Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Grassley (01:51:10):

Senator Tillis.

Sen. Tillis (01:51:13):

Ms. Bondi, thank you for being here. I think I told you when we met. Thank you for the time we met. I was born in Florida. Have a lot of friends and family and follow Florida politics pretty closely and you've had a very impressive career there though I do also have to admit I'm a gator hater so for the Florida alum and University of Tennessee. But anyway, I actually in some of these hearings I created a bingo card to see what some of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle were going to hit. I want to go back to a few of them really quickly. One, I was about you being a lobbyist paid for it on the payroll of Qatar. Would you mind going back and repeating what you said in case people did not hear the involvement of your law firm and precisely what you were doing for the government of Qatar?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:52:00):

Yes, Senator. I was very proud of that work. It was anti-human trafficking in advance of the World Cup and human trafficking has been something that's been very important to me my entire career, especially when I was attorney general of the state Florida.

Sen. Tillis (01:52:14):

And you also made it clear that you had a number of practitioners within the firm working on it. So this narrative that you were getting \$115,000 a month from Qatar is correct or not?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:52:26):

Not correct.

Sen. Tillis (01:52:26):

Okay, thank you. I want to talk a little bit about ... Well, first off I want to go back. You should be happy that so many comments have been directed towards Kash Patel whose confirmation I am supporting. In fact, I'm meeting with him today because that means they're out of stuff for you. So if it comes up again, you will once again know that you've got a great reputation and a great resume and they're just trying to find things to put your integrity into question. You have answered the question repeatedly that you will be loyal to the Constitution and you will live up to the oath to the Constitution and to protecting the American people.

(01:53:14)

And I think Mr. Patel, when he becomes here, he'll be able to get rid of the myth in the same way that you did as a lobbyist for Qatar, he'll be able to get rid of that list of the enemies, be able

to deal with the enemies list and the marketing department for your opposition is going to have to come up with new material because that stuff is getting old. Section 702, you heard Senator Lee talk about some concerns that he has with 702. I believe it's one of the most important things that you can do early into your confirmation. You will be confirmed and hopefully with some Democrat support that there have been dramatic reforms to 702.

(01:53:53)

I've sat through an extensive presentation to try and make sure that the abuses never occur again and that you have a throat to choke if somebody abuses the protocol that's in place. I believe that we need to codify a lot of that. As a matter of fact, when I went through it, I felt like there were so many blinding flashes of the obvious. How could this not have already been a part of the approval metrics? So can you, after your confirmed, commit that you or a designate will come back and provide for this committee an update on all of the protocols that have changed and recommended legislation for codifying so that when we do go to reauthorization we'll have what we need to make sure that that program stays in place?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:54:35):

Senator, I or a designee will review all of 702 before its terms of course in 2026 and come back and report to you on both sides of the aisle.

Sen. Tillis (01:54:47):

Thank you. You have a great perspective with your time in the state and working with the Department of Justice. Give me an idea of things that we need to do better in terms of ... And I'm talking primarily in the law enforcement role. I think many people don't understand the joint task forces, the law enforcement efforts that are going every single day in every one of our states. What an incredible job they do. So can you give me some sense of things that you would look at to say maybe we could do it better from your perspective of having been a prosecutor in Florida?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:55:24):

Yes, thank you. Thank you, Senator. Yeah, having been a career prosecutor, I think I have a unique perspective because I was a state prosecutor of course prior to becoming attorney general, so I worked on a daily basis with local law enforcement and state and not daily with federal, but I worked consistently with state, local and federal. Then when I was attorney general, I worked with all three as well.

(01:55:49)

I feel like we have to have better coordination among all our agencies, especially given all the terrorism issues that we've discussed earlier in this hearing. We have to wrap in and communicate better with our local and state law enforcement officers throughout this country.

There are so many great men and women in law enforcement and I don't know exactly how yet, but we have to figure out a better way to work together with the federal authorities.

Sen. Tillis (01:56:21):

Thank you. And I'm going to do a second round as well, but I think I also checked the bingo card for election denier. There were some people that seemed to suggest that you were denying the election. I think that you said that President Biden is our president.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:56:37):

President Biden is the president of the United States of America and President Trump will be the 47th president.

Sen. Tillis (01:56:43):

But I think you made a point, or at least I inferred from a comment that you made a very important point. Folks, there are election improprieties in every election. The question is a matter of scale and whether or not you can prove it. We've seen it in North Carolina and seen it in other places. It's one of the reasons why I support voter ID because we want to make elections easy to vote and hard to cheat, but the fact of the matter is people are cheating. So if anybody on this dais suggests that there aren't irregularities in every election that they need to spend more time at home and really studying the facts. I don't think though that you've said that Biden is an illegitimate president. In fact, I think you said just the opposite. He is the president of the United States and President Trump will be the next president, right?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:57:33):

Yes.

Sen. Tillis (01:57:34):

Okay. Last thing before the second round. January 6th, a lot of people are going to say you're going to have a rubber stamp for letting people have pardons or recommending a pardon for people who did violence to law enforcement. I'm not going to ask you a hypothetical because I want you to be consistent in not answering them, but I have to believe as a member, I was the last member out of the Senate on January the sixth. I walked past a lot of law enforcement officers, excuse me, who were injured. I find it hard to believe that the president of the United States or you, would look at facts that were used to convict the violent people on January the 6th and say it was just an intemperate moment. I don't even expect you to respond to that, but I think it's an absurd and unfair hypothetical here and you probably haven't heard the last of it. Thank you Mr. Chair.

Mr. Grassley (01:58:28):

Before I call on Senator Hirono, after her and Cruz's testimony, then we will take a lunch break and that break will be for 30 minutes and I can't control when my senators come back, but I expect you to be back after 30 minutes and I'll be here.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:58:52):

Yes, Chairman.

Mr. Grassley (01:58:54):

And then I may leave the meeting to open the Senate. So whoever's on our side is acting chairman during that period of time. Senator Hirono.

Speaker 1 (01:59:04):

Thank you Mr. Chairman. As part of my responsibility to ensure the fitness of all nominees, I asked the following two initial questions. First, since you became a legal adult, have you ever made unwanted requests for sexual favors or committed any verbal or physical harassment or assault of a sexual nature?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:59:24):

No, Senator.

Speaker 1 (01:59:24):

Have you ever faced discipline or entered into a settlement relating to this kind of conduct?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (01:59:29):

No, Senator.

Speaker 1 (01:59:31):

Ms. Bondi, I am focused on two things in my evaluation of President-elect Trump's nominees. The first is whether the nominee is qualified and experienced enough to do the job. The second is a fitness to serve, which includes putting loyalty to the constitution over loyalty to the president. Unfortunately, in my view, many of President-elect Trump's nominees are lacking in at least one of these two requirements. Ms. Bondi your experience as a prosecutor is the kind of thing we would expect to see in a nominee for attorney general, but I do have questions and concerns about potential conflicts of interest about whether you will keep DOJ's law enforcement responsibilities independent of the president's political whims and about whether you will let facts and evidence guide your decisions. So let's start with the importance of facts

which you say is important. Ms. Bondi, we want an attorney general who bases decisions on facts. So I want to ask you a factual question. Who won the 2020 presidential election?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (02:00:48):

Joe Biden is the president of the United States.

Speaker 1 (02:00:51):

Ms. Bondi, you know that there is a difference between acknowledging it and I can say that Donald Trump won the 2024 election. I may not like it, but I can say it. You cannot say who won the 2020 presidential election. Okay. It's disturbing that you can't give voice to that fact. Moving on to DOJ's independence from politics. Ms. Bondi, if you are confirmed as attorney general, you will take an oath to the Constitution and not to any individual including the president.

(02:01:28)

To start, I'd like to know whether you agree with some of the statements President-elect Trump made during the election, during the campaign. First, are the felons convicted of breaking into the Capitol on January 6th, hostages or patriots? Quoting Trump, as President-elect Trump has said repeatedly. Do you agree with his characterization of the felons that I referred to?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (02:01:55):

I'm not familiar with that statement, Senator.

Speaker 1 (02:01:59):

I just familiarized you with that statement. Do you agree with that statement?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (02:02:03):

I'm not familiar with it, Senator.

Speaker 1 (02:02:05):

No answer. He has also said, "Illegal immigration is poisoning the blood of our nation." He said that in December 2023. Do you agree with that statement?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (02:02:17):

Senator, I am not familiar with that statement, but what I can tell you is I went to the border a few months ago. I went to Yuma, Arizona and what I saw at that border was horrific, Senator. It was horrific.

Speaker 1 (02:02:33):

Ms. Bondi-

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (02:02:33):

I went to a rape crisis center-

Speaker 1 (02:02:35):

That is not my question.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (02:02:36):

If I could finish. I went to a rape crisis center. Well, I'm not familiar with the statement, but I went to a rape crisis center. I met with border patrol agents. I'm sure you've been to the border as well. So you could answer.

Speaker 1 (02:02:47):

I want to get to my next question. So I believe that you responded to a question from Senator Whitehouse and let me get your response again. You said that the White House, if I'm putting words in your mouth, correct me. Oh, you said that the White House will play no role in investigative or charging decisions in the DOJ. Is that correct?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (02:03:14):

Senator, what I said is that it is the Department of Justice's decision to determine what cases will be prosecuted.

Speaker 1 (02:03:23):

What role will the White House have in investigative or prosecutorial decisions of the DOJ?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (02:03:28):

It is the Department of Justice's decision, Senator.

Speaker 1 (02:03:32):

So that sounds to me that you're saying that the White House will not have any kind of role. Meanwhile, though you have an incoming president who said, "I have the absolute right to do what I want to do with the Justice Department" and in fact President-elect Trump considers the

DOJ to be his law firm. Ask you this. If President-elect Trump asks, suggests or hints that you as attorney general should investigate one of his proceedings, would you do so?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (02:04:23):

[inaudible 02:04:10] discussed is that the attorney general to follow the law.

Speaker 1 (02:04:27):

I'm very happy to listen to your responses under oath, Ms. Bondi. So I think it's really important to us that the attorney general be independent of the White House and you have a president-elect who considers the DOJ's office his law firm. I would like to know whether if the president suggests, hints, asks that you as attorney general should investigate one of his perceived enemies, what would you do?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (02:04:56):

Senator, I certainly have not heard the president say that. But what I will tell you is two-thirds of Americans have lost faith in the Department of Justice and its statements like that I believe make people continue to lose faith. If I am confirmed as attorney general, it will be my job to not only-

Speaker 1 (02:05:16):

Getting to my next question.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (02:05:17):

... keep America safe-

Speaker 1 (02:05:17):

You're not responding.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (02:05:19):

... but restore integrity to that department.

Speaker 1 (02:05:22):

Why don't we move on?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (02:05:23):

And that's what I plan on doing every single day as attorney general.

Speaker 1 (02:05:26):

On August 25th, 2025 on Fox News you said, "When Republicans [inaudible 02:05:36] will be prosecuted once the investigators will be investigated." Ms. Bondi is Jack Smith one of those bad prosecutors that you'll prosecute as AG?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (02:05:49):

Senator, you hesitated a bit when I said the bad ones. Every decision will be mad-

Speaker 1 (02:05:56):

Sometimes bad lies in the eye of the beholder. I'm just asking whether you would consider Jack Smith to be one of the people. How about Liz Cheney?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (02:06:05):

Senator-

Speaker 1 (02:06:05):

How about Merrick Garland?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (02:06:07):

I am not going [inaudible 02:06:09]. No one has been prejudged or nor will anyone be prejudged if I am confirmed.

Speaker 1 (02:06:15):

These are the kind of people, these are in fact the people that you would prosecute. I'm not getting an answer.

Mr. Grassley (02:06:20):

Your time is up. Would you like to-

Speaker 1 (02:06:24):

My time is up.

Mr. Grassley (02:06:24):

Would you like to respond?

Speaker 1 (02:06:27):

Mr. Chairman, she is clearly not going to answer that question, so let me get on to-

Mr. Grassley (02:06:31):

Would you like to respond?

Speaker 1 (02:06:32):

I do have [inaudible 02:06:33]-

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (02:06:33):

I'd like to respond.

Speaker 1 (02:06:33):

... for the second round.

Mr. Grassley (02:06:34):

You'll have a second round. Would you like to speak before I call on Senator Cruz?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (02:06:40):

No, sir. Thank you.

Mr. Grassley (02:06:42):

Okay. Senator Cruz.

Mr. Cruz (02:06:44):

Thank you Mr. Chairman. General Bondi, welcome. Thank you for your long career in public service and thank you for your willingness to take on this incredibly important office. I have to say I don't know that there is a more important position in this new administration than the position to which you had been nominated, attorney general of the United States. I thought the exchange just a moment ago with Senator Hirono was illustrative. She asked you how you would respond if the president asked you to target his political enemies. It's rather striking because it's not a hypothetical. It has happened over the last four years and I think perhaps the

most tragic legacy of the Biden-Harris administration has been the politicization and the weaponization of the United States Department of Justice. We don't need to ask hypothetically because Joe Biden publicly mused and allowed the New York Times to report it, calling on Merrick Garland, why will he not prosecute Trump more quickly?

(02:07:57)

And Merrick Garland, sadly, he sat in that chair and promised to be apolitical and he broke that promise almost the instant he walked into the Department of Justice. If you look on the West pediment of the Supreme Court of the United States just above the entrance, there's a simple yet profound forward phrase, equal justice under law. We have seen over the last four years a Department of Justice that systematically targeted the political opponents of Joe Biden and Kamala Harris and that systematically protected his friends and allies. And it is tragic to see the loss of confidence in the American people in the Department of Justice and in the FBI.

(02:08:45)

I would note I don't think there's an institution in America who has lost more respect from the American people than the FBI has in the last four years. That is a grotesque violation of the obligation of the Department of Justice and the FBI. So I want to start with just a very simple question. If you are confirmed as attorney general, will you pledge to fairly and faithfully uphold the law regardless of party?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (02:09:21):

So help me God.

Mr. Cruz (02:09:23):

Amen. Look, and I want to be clear for folks at home, I don't want a Republican Department of Justice. I don't want a Democrat Department of Justice. I want a Department of Justice that follows the damn law and I think the American people do too. That shouldn't be too much to expect.

(02:09:48)

Now I'm grateful to President Trump for nominating you. I think on any objective level, you're clearly qualified for this position. You have been a prosecutor for decades. You have been the elected attorney general of the state of Florida, the third-largest state in America for eight years. Let me ask you, in terms of your practice, how many criminal cases over the course of your career have you personally handled?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (02:10:28):

Handled thousands.

Mr. Cruz (02:10:31):

How many of those were before a jury?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (02:10:36):

Hundreds. I don't want to overstate, but hundreds. I was in a courtroom for many years. I tried four when I was an intern, jury trials. I think you had to try at least 20 in misdemeanor before you went to felony. Then you were in court every day. And I was also lead trial attorney for many years, trying many cases.

Mr. Cruz (02:10:58):

And how many of those cases would've been before a judge?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (02:11:01):

Oh, hundreds and hundreds as well, but hundreds before a jury, I would assume.

Mr. Cruz (02:11:06):

And as attorney general of Florida, how many lawyers did you supervise, roughly?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (02:11:11):

Approximately 400, Senator.

Mr. Cruz (02:11:14):

Now, I also want to clarify something. During the course of this hearing, several Democrat senators have referred to you as President Trump's, quote, "personal lawyer." Now, I don't believe that is an accurate characterization. As I understand it, you represented President Trump as a White House special advisor during his first impeachment trial. Is that correct?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (02:11:37):

Within Office of White House counsel, yes, Senator.

Mr. Cruz (02:11:40):

And is working within the White House counsel's office different than representing Donald J. Trump individually as his personal lawyer?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (02:11:51):

Absolutely.

Mr. Cruz (02:11:52):

How's it different?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (02:11:54):

You're working for the government, you're working for the office of White House counsel. You're not representing him

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (02:12:00):

... in his personal capacity.

Mr. Cruz (02:12:01):

And so, you have not represented him in his business affairs, in his personal life, or in any of the criminal trials he has faced.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (02:12:08):

No, Senator.

Mr. Cruz (02:12:10):

And yet, when it comes to weaponization, it's worth noting that, in more than two centuries of our nation's history, no president had previously been indicted, no president had previously been prosecuted until the Biden-Harris White House came along. And in the last four years, we've seen Donald Trump indicted and prosecuted not once, not twice, not three times, but four separate times.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (02:12:36):

And two assassination attempts, Senator.

Mr. Cruz (02:12:39):

I have to say, Javert from Les Mis would be chagrined at the efforts of Democrats to do anything possible to take him down. And I believe the real target in this was not President Trump, but it was the American people, that these prosecutions were brought because partisan prosecutors were terrified that the American people would do exactly what they did in November of 2024 and vote to re-elect Donald J. Trump.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (02:13:08):

By 77.3%. Million Americans. 77.3 million Americans.

Mr. Cruz (02:13:18):

Will you commit every day, as Attorney General, to follow the law, to follow the constitution, to uphold the rule of law without favor and without regard to the partisan position of any criminal defendant?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (02:13:40):

Yes, Senator.

Mr. Cruz (02:13:41):

That's what we should all expect from an attorney General. Thank you.

Mr. Grassley (02:13:46):

We'll now recess for 30-minute lunch break. That means we'll be back at 12:25 and, when we resume, Senator Booker will be recognized to ask his questions.

Speaker 2 (02:50:55):

Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Grassley (02:51:18):

Since senators that would've been called on before the senator from Vermont, I'm going to ask him to start the questioning so we don't waste any time.

Mr. Welch (02:51:30):

Mr. Chairman, thank you very much for this hearing. Ms. Bondi, thank you so much for the visit to my office. A couple of things. First of all, a congratulations on the nomination, and number two, a couple of Vermont things that we talked about. We're going to have a new US attorney in the state of Vermont and in the last Trump Administration, the Justice Department and the Trump Administration worked closely with Senator Leahy, Democrat, and with Governor Scott, Republican, and came up with a consensus choice. And I seek your assistance in helping make sure that we are successful in getting a very competent US attorney in Vermont, and hopefully with the cooperation of Governor Scott, a Republican as I mentioned, and Senator Sanders and me.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (02:52:28):

And Senator, as I discussed with you in our meeting, I look forward to working with you and cooperating with you and learning about many of the issues you have in Vermont.

Mr. Welch (02:52:38):

And thank you. And then on that, by the way, one of the issues we talked about, we are one of two states that does not have a residential reentry program. That is outrageous in my mind. I know you worked on the First Step Act, but our federal judges, our federal prosecutors, our federal public defender are all in support of a residential reentry program. Our state and Hawaii are the only two states without it, and our justice system and officials believe that we need it, and I seek your energetic assistance in helping us get that residential reentry program.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (02:53:19):

Can I address that, Senator?

Mr. Welch (02:53:20):

Yes, I'd like you to. Thank you.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (02:53:22):

Senator, I didn't realize that you were the only two states without a reentry program. We started that when I was a prosecutor and those are so vitally important. One thing that I just learned is the Bureau of Prisons, 98% of people in the Bureau of Prisons will be released.

Mr. Welch (02:53:38):

Right.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (02:53:39):

They're not serving life sentences. So we must do everything we can when people are in prison to help rehabilitate them for when they get out and that's why reentry is so-

Mr. Welch (02:53:49):

No, that's really helpful-

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (02:53:51):

... vital. But we tell people, "Get out of prison and become a productive member of society. Go get a job." Yet people don't know how to go find a driver's license.

Mr. Welch (02:53:59):

Well, I appreciate your help on that.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (02:54:00):

They don't know how to get to work.

Mr. Welch (02:54:01):

So, thank you very much.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (02:54:02):

Yes, Senator.

Mr. Welch (02:54:02):

And I have confidence that you will do that given your history on the First Step Act and other things that you did. The next... I do have some concerns, not so much about you, but what President Trump has said about a desire, on his part, to go after what he considers to be political adversaries. His own words, for instance, says that if he's elected, he'd seek to appoint a special prosecutor to go after Joe Biden. I assume you've had no discussion with President-elect Trump about that?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (02:54:41):

Absolutely not.

Mr. Welch (02:54:42):

And he-

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (02:54:45):

Nor against Senator Schiff. I'm looking at your next one.

Mr. Welch (02:54:50):

Well, my colleague Senator Schiff, who I think did an incredibly good job, President Biden had different points... Or pardon me, President Trump had different views about that where he said,

on a number of occasions, that he should be prosecuted, that everybody on the January 6th committee should be prosecuted for their lies and treason. No discussion about that?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (02:55:17):

No, Senator.

Mr. Welch (02:55:18):

And Liz Cheney also. He's said that she should be prosecuted for lies and treason as well.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (02:55:27):

We have had no discussions about Liz Cheney, Senator.

Mr. Welch (02:55:27):

All right. And you've satisfied me that this is not an agenda you have. President Trump has satisfied me that when he says things that are pretty provocative, he's often serious. And as Senator Cruz wants, I want, and that is to have a Justice Department that is not going after people on the basis of them being political opponents. And my understanding, in listening to your answers to the questions along this line, is that you have no intention. No intention of pursuing people on the basis of them being a political opponent.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (02:56:04):

No one will be prosecuted, investigated because they are a political opponent. That's what we've seen for the last four years in this administration.

Mr. Welch (02:56:15):

Well, I-

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (02:56:15):

People will be prosecuted based on the facts and the law and fairly, Senator. You have my word.

Mr. Welch (02:56:22):

All right, that's good. I disagree about the characterization of the past four years, but we don't have to discuss that, with your assurance that the next four years, there'll be no effort on the part of the Justice Department to pursue political adversaries, right?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (02:56:37):

Every case will be done on a case-by-case basis. No one should be prosecuted for political purposes.

Mr. Welch (02:56:44):

All right, just to... Thank you.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (02:56:44):

Absolutely not.

Mr. Welch (02:56:44):

I just have a couple of other things. One is the False Claims Act, Senator Grassley, thank you for that False Claims Act. In Vermont, there are incredible challenges for folks trying to get healthcare. It's really expensive. And there was a shocking report in the Wall Street Journal about a major insurer that is ripping off taxpayers by overbilling, overprescribing on Medicare Advantage, billions of dollars. And the report indicated that insurers are adding diagnosis basically to make money, not to help the patient, that insurers sent nurses to find diagnoses that doctors didn't find, that insurers got paid to cover patients who were already getting coverage through the VA, and it adds up to billions of dollars.

(02:57:37)

And Vermonters are struggling under the weight of incredibly expensive healthcare. The False Claims Act Senator Grassley authored is an area where the attorney general can protect consumers against ripoffs. I'm not asking you to comment on this particular Wall Street report, but I want your assurance that in addition to fighting crime, and we're all for you doing that, you're going to be there protecting consumers and taxpayers from ripoffs.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (02:58:06):

Absolutely, Senator. When I was attorney general, we went after a pharmaceutical company. It was Medicaid fraud. I can't remember the settlement value, it may even be ongoing, but it was a large, large number. And people don't understand, that's hurting the taxpayers of Florida, of Vermont.

Mr. Welch (02:58:26):

So use that False Claims Act that we can thank Senator Grassley for. It's cold out there in Vermont. We need vigorous enforcement to protect taxpayers and Vermonters from ripoff charges. Thank you. I yield

Mr. Grassley (02:58:41):

Senator Schmitt.

Mr. Schmitt (02:58:42):

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I can... It's good to see you.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (02:58:45):

Thank you.

Mr. Schmitt (02:58:46):

And I meant every word of those introductory remarks. I have the greatest deal of respect for you personally and professionally. This is a great pick by President Trump. You're going to do a great job.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (02:58:57):

Thank you. Thank you.

Mr. Schmitt (02:58:58):

I do want to say, though, that it appears as though Trump derangement syndrome is alive and well. The focus of these questions today are disturbing. I don't think my Democrat colleagues learned very much from the November 5th election. The American people rejected all this. Their obsession with President Trump didn't bode well for them electorally and I think if they stay on this path, they'll be in a permanent minority, but that's up to them.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (02:59:25):

[inaudible 02:59:26] 12 electoral votes, Senator.

Mr. Schmitt (02:59:27):

A landslide. But that's up to them to decide. I do want to comment a little bit, I guess, on this newfound religion on independence from the attorney general. I will remind my colleagues that the last three Democratic Attorneys General for the United States of America were perhaps the most biased, politically biased, AGs we've had in modern political history in the United States. And there are some receipts.

(02:59:55)

Eric Holder described himself as Obama's heat shield and wingman. This committee moved forward, and one of my colleagues referenced that the attorney general shouldn't be the

wingman of the president. Eric Holder's bragged about it. He bragged about it. Loretta Lynch met with Bill Clinton on the tarmac in a private meeting while she was investigating Hillary Clinton. And Merrick Garland probably gets however many gold stars you want to give for the most politicized, weaponized Department of Justice we have ever seen.

(03:00:33)

And I think it's worth exploring that, and I want to get your comment on it, to just sort of take a step back. I think part of leadership is understanding the moment that you're in and the landscape. We've never seen anything like this. And there is a story to be told. The arc of this story begins when Joe Biden gave a speech demonizing half the country, calling them threats to the republic, threats to democracy, these MAGA Republicans, and, "I'm going to do everything I can to make sure President Trump ever gets back into the White House."

(03:01:11)

Miraculously, these zombie cases are resurrected, and let's talk about a couple of those. You've got, of course, Jack Smith, the overzealous and disgraced special prosecutor who time and time again has been slapped down by courts for overcharging and taking an overtly political position. He, by the way, in his post- mortem this week, even acknowledged that it was unusual for him to be tasked with going after the political opponent of the President of the United States. It didn't stop him, though. The Supreme Court did, thankfully. But you had Jack Smith take on these unprecedented actions.

(03:01:48)

You had a raid at Mar-a-Lago. Staged photos at Mar-a-Lago for boxes of documents. Which by the way, boxes of documents were in Joe Biden's garage from his Senate days. And by the way, somebody who didn't register, like you did, under FARA, Hunter Biden was staying in. We don't know if he's compromised or not because that investigation was dropped. And give me a break that justice was meted out fairly for Hunter Biden. It wasn't. The Department of Justice went out of its way in documents to try to get him absolved of all potential crimes in the plea deal. It was only when the judge asked questions that unwound that, and they got back to the gun charge, but then President Biden did the dirty work himself. It was always going to be plan B.

(03:02:37)

You had Jonathan Su, Biden's Deputy White House Counsel, coordinated with the DOJ and Jay Bratt on those classified document cases. Matthew Colangelo. Who's that? The number three guy at DOJ goes to where? Alvin Bragg's office. Alvin Bragg then resurrects a zombie case in lawfare at a local level. Why would the number three person go do that? Maybe there was coordination. Maybe there was coordination, by the way, with the number two Assistant DA in Atlanta, in the Fani Willis case, who was meeting with the White House. Why would the White House care about a case in Atlanta?

(03:03:23)

Well, the truth is, is everybody knows, it was on full display, this was the worst case of lawfare we've ever seen. If this was happening in another country, our State Department would be

warning us about it. It's banana republic stuff. And one of the reasons why I'm so glad that you have been put up and nominated for this position is that I think you have the ability to level set. So when the Democrats ask you questions about your independence, it is beyond ironic that we're sitting here today because of the lack of independence from Merrick Carlin and Eric Holder bragging about being Obama's wingman.

(03:04:02)

So I just want to ask you, you've been asked this a bunch of times, you're going to make decisions as you always have, right? On the law and let investigations go where they're going to go, but they're not politically motivated, correct?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:04:14):

Yes, Senator, based on the law and the facts that apply.

Mr. Schmitt (03:04:18):

And in my limited time, I do want to give you an opportunity to talk about some of your experience working with law enforcement as Florida's Attorney General. This is something that, as you and I talked about over the years, you were known for this, the collaboration you had. And I think getting the Department of Justice back to its core function of taking on violent crime, protecting the constitutional rights of Americans, but taking on violent crime is really important. And how you went about doing it, you've gotten bipartisan praise for that over the years. You've got the support of all these law enforcement agencies. That's something that you're going to continue and take forward into this office, is that right?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:04:55):

Yes, Senator. Thank you so much. And I feel that my experience with that goes back to when I was a state prosecutor with state and local, our sheriffs, our police departments, our police chiefs, and then as attorney general on a statewide basis. And now, if I'm confirmed, all of our federal law enforcement agencies, I would be very proud to supervise those.

Mr. Schmitt (03:05:21):

I'll just close with this, Mr. Chairman. We heard one of my Democrat colleagues ask you the question that you're not going to pursue a case because of a name, but because of the crime. I would argue that the current Department of Justice adopted Lenin's claim, which was, show me the man and I'll show you the crime. And they did everything they could to throw President Trump in jail for the rest of his life because they didn't want to lose the ballot box. That is not what this country is about. That is not what this republic is about. But they did it, and it's up to you now to restore the integrity of that agency of the Department of Justice, and I have full confidence that you will.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:06:03):

Thank you, Senator.

Mr. Schmitt (03:06:03):

Thank you.

Senator Alex Padilla (03:06:07):

Thank you, Mr. Chair. Before I begin, I just want to remind us all for the record that the 34 convictions, not indictments, convictions of former president, incoming President Trump, were by a jury of his peers. Thank you, Ms. Bondi, for being here today, and I too would like to welcome your family and friends who are here.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:06:32):

Thank you.

Senator Alex Padilla (03:06:32):

Appreciated the opportunity to meet yesterday to learn about your priorities and discuss a number of issues that are important to me. But I got to tell you, as I reflected on our conversation yesterday and as I've observed the hearing today, I continue to have significant reservations on your ability to function as a truly independent attorney general for your friend. That's how you keep referring to him, your friend President-elect Trump. So I hope you can address some of these concerns through your responses to my questions here.

(03:07:07)

Now, the first issue area is something that we didn't get a chance to touch on yesterday. So I actually want to follow up on some of Senator Durbin's questions from earlier about the 2020 election. And to be specific, on the day after the 2020 presidential general election, you traveled to Philadelphia to appear alongside President Trump's then-attorney Rudy Giuliani, and together you falsely asserted that President Trump had, quote, "won Pennsylvania" in that election. Now I want to be clear, at that moment, there were still at least a million ballots left to be counted in Pennsylvania. Of course, President Biden went on to win the state by more than 80,000 votes.

(03:07:57)

But in the following days, even after the results were clear, you continued to double down on the big lie promoting falsehoods about election fraud and cheating without offering any actual evidence. And I remember it clearly because I served as California Secretary of State at the time and I invited anybody associated with the Trump Campaign who was making these claims to come forward with evidence of irregularities in the election, or massive voter fraud. Four years

later, I still have seen none. So I ask you today, do you have any evidence of election fraud or irregularities in the 2020 election?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:08:36):

So first, Senator-

Senator Alex Padilla (03:08:37):

Yes or no? It's a yes or no question.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:08:39):

First, Senator-

Senator Alex Padilla (03:08:39):

Do you have evidence, yes or no?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:08:41):

First, Senator... First, Senator, I'm so sorry about the fires to you and Senator Schiff, and what you're going through in your states. I have to say that. And I think all of our hearts-

Senator Alex Padilla (03:08:52):

I appreciate that, but my clock is ticking and I want to hear your answer.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:08:52):

I'll answer your question. All of our hearts answers go out to everyone in California for what you're facing right now. I'm glad you asked the question about Pennsylvania. I was hoping-

Senator Alex Padilla (03:09:02):

Yes or no question.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:09:03):

I was hoping someone would.

Senator Alex Padilla (03:09:05):

Do you have evidence, yes or no?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:09:06):

Senator, I was hoping you'd ask the question. Yes, I traveled-

Senator Alex Padilla (03:09:09):

Do you have evidence, yes or no?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:09:10):

I traveled to Pennsylvania.

Senator Alex Padilla (03:09:11):

Do you have the evidence, yes or no?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:09:13):

I traveled, Senator, to Pennsylvania.

Senator Alex Padilla (03:09:14):

Okay. You're not answering my question. If you have no evidence to offer, let me ask you this. Will you now retract your previous statements that Trump won Pennsylvania into the 2020 election, yes or no?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:09:28):

Oh, Senator, I traveled to Pennsylvania, and let me tell you what I saw firsthand. I didn't-

Senator Alex Padilla (03:09:33):

Yes or no?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:09:33):

I didn't talk about California because I was not in California. I talked about-

Senator Alex Padilla (03:09:38):

Yes or no? Last time I'm going to ask.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:09:40):

I talked about Pennsylvania because I was there.

Senator Alex Padilla (03:09:42):

Mr. Chair, I'm going to move on because she's clearing not answering my questions.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:09:45):

[inaudible 03:09:45] got a court order to [inaudible 03:09:46].

Senator Alex Padilla (03:09:45):

And I want to know, colleagues, for everybody, for everybody, members of the committee and everybody watching, that the attorney who stood beside Mr. Giuliani was making very similar statements, and he has since been disbarred from multiple jurisdictions for making these false claims about the 2020 election in court. And like Mr. Giuliani, as you've noted today, you've taken an oath to uphold the Constitution just as an attorney. And now you're asking us to consider you to serve as the chief law enforcement officer in our country. So it's imperative, Ms. Bondi, that you subscribe to facts and evidence and not politically-convenient conspiracy theories. Your job will be... I'm speaking. Your job will be to protect voters and election workers, not to undermine and dox them. Now, I know that earlier you agreed that Joe Biden is, in fact, president, but many of the president-elect's inner circle continued to spread the big lie about the 2020 election. Let me move on to a different topic, because I know that's one you're obviously not comfortable with.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:10:55):

Senator, you were speaking. May I speak? You cut me off when I was speaking.

Senator Alex Padilla (03:10:56):

When I ask you the next question, you can speak, and I hope you answer, Ms. Bondi. Now, when we met yesterday-

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:10:57):

Well, I'd like to answer your previous one, Senator.

Senator Alex Padilla (03:11:00):

When we met yesterday-

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:11:00):

You pointed your finger at me and said you were speaking.

Senator Alex Padilla (03:11:02):

... you did not seem to be familiar-

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:11:03):

Let me answer my question.

Senator Alex Padilla (03:11:04):

... with the citizenship clause-

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:11:05):

I'm not going to be bullied by you, Senator Padilla.

Senator Alex Padilla (03:11:08):

... the 14th Amendment of the United States of America, which was deeply disappointing.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:11:11):

I guess you didn't want to hear my answer about Pennsylvania.

Senator Alex Padilla (03:11:13):

Now, I'm hoping you're more familiar with it today after I gave an opportunity to study overnight. So can you tell me and this committee what the citizenship clause of the 14th Amendment says?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:11:22):

Senator, I'm here to answer your questions. I'm not here to do your homework and study for you. If I am confirmed as attorney general-

Senator Alex Padilla (03:11:29):

Oh, no, you're the one asking for a confirmation vote, ma'am.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:11:31):

Hey! You cut me off. Can I please finish?

Senator Alex Padilla (03:11:33):

What does the 14th Amendment say?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:11:35):

Senator... Senator, the 14th Amendment we all know addresses birthright citizenship. I have been a state prosecutor. I have been a state AG. I look forward to, even given your remarks today, working with you and the people of California if I am confirmed as the 87th Attorney General of the United States of America. I didn't take your homework assignment. I'm sorry. I was preparing for today.

Senator Alex Padilla (03:11:59):

Okay. So on the 14th Amendment, now, you've testified repeatedly to this committee that you will uphold the laws of this country and defend the Constitution of the United States. Do you believe birthright citizenship is the law of the land, and will you defend it regardless of a child born in the United States regardless of their parents' immigration status?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:12:21):

Senator, I will study birthright citizenship. I would love to meet with you regarding birthright citizenship.

Senator Alex Padilla (03:12:27):

Ma'am, you're asking us to consider you to serve-

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:12:28):

Can I answer the question?

Senator Alex Padilla (03:12:28):

... as the Attorney General of the United States and you still need to study the 14th Amendment of the Constitution? That is not helping me have more confidence in your ability to do this job. One other immigration-related question, and I'll steer clear of the constitution and the law.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:12:46):

I have one regarding that I'd like to talk about.

Senator Alex Padilla (03:12:49):

Senator Hirono asked you earlier, but I don't think you answered her question. Can you please tell us, do you agree with the statement that immigrants are, quote, "poisoning the blood of our country," yes or no?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:12:57):

I did not say that.

Senator Alex Padilla (03:12:59):

I did not say that you said that. I'm asking if you agree with it, yes or no?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:13:02):

I did not say that.

Senator Alex Padilla (03:13:03):

Do you agree with it, yes or no?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:13:05):

Senator, my great-grandparents are immigrants.

Senator Alex Padilla (03:13:07):

Do you agree with it, yes or no?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:13:08):

They came here from Sicily through Ellis Island-

Senator Alex Padilla (03:13:10):

Do you agree with it, yes or no?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:13:11):

... when they were teenagers.

Senator Alex Padilla (03:13:12):

Do you agree with it, yes or no?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:13:13):

Senator, let me answer the question.

Senator Alex Padilla (03:13:15):

Yes or no? It's real simple.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:13:16):

My great-grandparents came here, immigrated to this country from Sicily. Recently went and found each of their birth certificates. We are a nation made up of immigrants. Do I believe immigrants are poisoning our country? No, Senator.

Senator Alex Padilla (03:13:32):

Thank you very much. Mr. Chair, I can't wait for the second round.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:13:37):

Same, senator. Thank you. No, sir. Thank you.

Mr. Grassley (03:13:49):

Suggestions about unfair statements about the 2020 election, I thought I'd remind people that Senator Schumer and former Senator Casey raised questions about the Pennsylvania Senate race just a few months ago. In 2018, numerous Senate Democrats, some of them on this committee, claimed that the Georgia Governor's election was stolen. In 2016, Hillary Clinton and a host of Democrats claimed the election was stolen or illegitimate and blamed Russia for the loss. And every one of my Democrat colleagues voted last month to confirm Judge Anthony Brindisi. He engaged in lengthy litigation regarding his loss of the 2020 congressional election and did not concede until three months after the election. I think we all agree that our elections can be more secure and better run, but I find these lines of attack against the nominee very partisan. Senator Britt.

Ms. Britt (03:14:55):

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank you so much for being here today, and really glad to see your family. I had the opportunity to help them find where to come back in.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:15:05):

Thank you, Senator.

Ms. Britt (03:15:06):

They are all so excited, and rightfully so, and so proud of who you are and the work that you've done. And speaking of, I think it is absolutely completely ridiculous that anyone on the other side of the aisle would ever say that you were anything but immensely qualified for this job.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:15:22):

Thank you.

Ms. Britt (03:15:22):

From your time as a career prosecutor to then a two-time attorney general of the third-largest state with regards to all of the people that operated underneath you, with what you were able to achieve, it is truly remarkable. The United States of America could only be so fortunate if you were confirmed, and to have someone of your caliber, of your intellect, and of your experience running a department that unfortunately has been run into the ground. So I think that that is full-on gaslighting, which by the way, I had to get my children to explain to me what that was.

(03:15:59)

Not only that, but to act like you would be the one that would weaponize the Department of Justice. What I have heard you say time and time and time again is that you will follow the law. And this is coming from a side of the aisle that has allowed the Biden Administration, by saying nothing, they've allowed them to go after parents who are at school board meetings who want nothing more than their children to be taught and not indoctrinated. They have allowed them to go after people who are trying to practice their faith. And they have sat idly by while the weaponization of the Department of Justice has undermined the credibility and credence that Americans believe that they should have in equal justice under the law.

(03:16:43)

So I know that you will, as you have said here, you will follow the law and you will return this department to where it should be in the eyes of Americans. So thank you. And I wish the gaslighting on the other side of the aisle would stop, because for my perspective, I'm over it. And I believe that's exactly what the American people have said too. And speaking of my distinguished colleague who I have a great deal of respect from on the other side of the aisle just said, tried to make you answer a question about immigrants and, quote, "poisoning the blood of America."

(03:17:18)

When actually, the previous question by our colleague from Hawaii was illegal immigration. We are a nation of immigrants, but we are also a nation of laws. And the lawlessness under the Biden-Harris Administration has made every single state in this nation a border state. I am so

thrilled about what you've done when it comes to opioid use and human trafficking, and I look forward to you instituting that at the Department of Justice. Your credentials speak for themselves. When opioid and fentanyl overdoses are the leading cause of death between the ages of 18 and 45 in this nation, we need someone who takes it serious.

Ms. Britt (03:18:00):

... this, you not only take that serious, you have a track record of proving to the American people. You've done it for the people of Florida, and I look forward to what that means to the families that I have met. You talked about the families you met across Florida that showed you pictures of their loved ones that they lost, their brother, their sister, their cousin, their friend, their mother, and I know that there will be more lives that are saved as a result of your service when you are confirmed. So, on that, I say thank you. And when it comes to illegal immigration, which we need to put a stop to, I want to ask you a question that you and I had an opportunity to discuss a little bit. You share my desire, I know, to not only get away from the weaponization and wokeness that we are seeing in the department right now, but really prioritizing safety and security, and I want to say thank you for that commitment and your commitment to blind justice.

(03:18:55)

When we are looking at illegal immigration, the Executive Office of Immigration Review within DOJ, there have been a number of things that we have talked about with that, and I know as you are aware, some people call it EOIR, some people call it EOIR, but it houses our nation's immigration courts. Over the course of the Biden administration, the immigration court backlog has grown from 1.4 million at the end of 2021 to 3.5 million at the end of 2024. Over that same period, the Biden administration pursued policies both at DOJ and DHS to foster a culture within EOIR of failure to adjudicate cases. As an example, between FY '25 and FY '24, immigration judges failed to adjudicate over 340,000 asylum claims. That is compared to just under 13,000 non adjudicated asylum claims in the previous six fiscal years combined. Between cases dismissed, terminations, administrative closures and failures to adjudicate EOIR during the Biden administration has allowed around one million illegal aliens to remain in the United States on an indefinite basis.

(03:20:18)

Now, I've heard Laken Riley brought up multiple times today. Having talked to her parents, no parent should have to go through the heartbreak and tragedy that they have and we are working diligently to rectify that and ensure that we are keeping Americans safe and secure. But, a House Judiciary Committee report on this issue appropriately called it "Quiet amnesty" what we're talking here with EOIR. Will you commit to me that if confirmed you will make it a priority to reform the way that EOIR operates and put in place measures to ensure that immigration judges actually adjudicate these claims and cases?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:21:02):

Senator, thank you for meeting with me in advance, and I learned so much from you about this topic and I look forward to learning more and working with you to do everything we can to make sure that functions properly, if I am confirmed Senator.

Ms. Britt (03:21:18):

Thank you. Well, you are going to be confirmed, because America needs you. As a part of this effort I hope that you will consider a number of things including reinstating the performance metrics for immigration judges similar to that were in place during the first Trump administration, and a reevaluation of the Biden administration's decisions and policies that have encouraged the use of administrative closures. And I assume I have your commitment to examine those issues thoroughly.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:21:46):

We'll closely examine those, Senator, thank you.

Ms. Britt (03:21:49):

Thank you.

Speaker 3 (03:21:51):

Senator Booker.

Senator Booker (03:21:54):

Mr. Chairman, thank you very much for the time. Ms. Bondi, thank you very much.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:21:57):

Thank you Senator.

Senator Booker (03:21:58):

And thank you for being willing to meet with me in my office. I really value that time that we had together. If there's anything that's been demonstrated in this hearing thus far is there is a serious crisis of faith in our judicial system in America, and we are at a time where as Judge Learned Hand reminded us in his writings and speeches that, the power of the Constitution is only strong as long as it is believed in and had faith by the American people. That faith is shaken by so much of the political tumult.

(03:22:34)

And as we have a new administration coming in and a lot of the protestations about retribution or going after political opponents, I know you could expand your empathy enough to understand why there are many that really worry about your independence. But, I've heard you over and over again in this hearing, as much as I've tried to focus on it as I've gone back and forth between Senate Foreign Relations and another Floridian, Marco Rubio. But, I am hearing from you that you understand that the attorney general's guiding star is the U.S. Constitution and her client is the American people, that there can be no argument about that.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:23:11):

Yes, Senator.

Senator Booker (03:23:12):

And more than that though, I hope that you, should you be confirmed, understand that there is an urgency in not just demonstrating through your actions that independence, but beginning to heal this country's lack of faith and shaken faith in that independence in the U.S. Constitution. History may not long remember what any of us individually do here, but for the sake of our democracy, what you do to restore and repair the American faith, whether they be Democrats, independents or Republicans is vital. I want to switch here to say publicly that when Donald Trump appointed Craig Carpenito as the U.S. attorney in New Jersey, it was over the objections of myself, and then Senator Menendez. I was wrong in my anticipation that he would not do good things in our state. He partnered with local leaders like those in Newark, New Jersey to dramatically drive down crime. He was good for the safety of the city in which I live and the one that I led. Part of his strategy was to focus his resources on the most violent criminals, but that also meant that he used something that you know of called prosecutorial discretion.

(03:24:33)

His strategies aligned with that of local leaders and was able to create historic drops in our murder rate. You know through your experience and you're intimately familiar that enforcement decisions prosecutors must make every day, which charge to bring, which plea deal to offer or what sentencing recommendation to make, it's very important that local prosecutors understand that given this enormous discretion our legal system gives them, that they are best determined to make decisions about public safety. I'm very concerned that many people are starting to call for a time in our country where the Department of Justice should prosecute state and local prosecutors who exercise that prosecutorial discretion. As attorney general, will you commit to respecting the autonomy of state and local prosecutors?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:25:27):

Senator, we have to work together with state and local prosecutors. That's what I did my entire career. And if confirmed as attorney general, I will continue to do that. They serve a vital function in our justice system.

Senator Booker (03:25:42):

And you understand like in my state, that sometimes they'll decide not to go after certain low level offenses in order to use their scarce resources to focus on the strategy of pursuing more dangerous people?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:25:54):

Yes, Senator. I completely understand that.

Senator Booker (03:25:56):

And those decisions shouldn't be politicized if they're part of a larger public safety strategy?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:26:01):

No, Senator. When I was a state prosecutor, we used to sit down with the U.S. attorneys and talk about cases and work together, and that's what I'm discussing about bringing back the cooperation between state and local governments.

Senator Booker (03:26:17):

Thank you Ms. Bondi. I just want to continue. One of the most stunning hypocrisies I've found since I've been down here in Washington is, every politician gives lip service to driving down gun violence. But, the very federal authority, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearm that is primarily focused on enforcing America's gun laws and keeping people safe is hamstrung by federal leaders. The ATF's core responsibility is assisting in local law enforcement. When I was a mayor, I detailed local law enforcement to the ATF, but I'm stunned at how they have been stripped of resources, of their budget, and all of their capabilities to go after illegal gun running.

(03:26:58)

When I was mayor of the city of Newark, we couldn't find one gun crime that was done with a legally purchased gun. But, when I turned to the ATF, the ATF leader at that time told me in private, we don't have the resources, support or legal ability to go after these crimes. I am concerned about our ability to fight gun crime in America that threatens our law enforcement officers as well as people in communities from red counties to blue cities. Will you commit to doing everything you can to making sure the ATF has its resources and the legal power to pursue illegal gun runners in our country?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:27:36):

Senator, I will do everything in my power to prevent illegal gun runners in our country. When I left being a state prosecutor to run for attorney general, I almost didn't run because I was working on a wire case involving illegal gun runners.

Senator Booker (03:27:52):

The DOJ issued in 2022 a use of force policy for its federal law enforcement officers. It was approved by the heads of the DEA, FBI, U.S. Marshals and ATF, and many of them said it is actually a use of force policy that actually protects law enforcement officers as well as protects others from having their rights violated. It was also endorsed by the Fraternal Order of Police and NAPO, the National Association of Police Organizations. This policy is considered best practices in law enforcement. Will you commit to continuing this policy?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:28:28):

Senator, I have not read the policy. I will review the policy and I will report back directly to you if I am confirmed as attorney general, and consult with law enforcement, absolutely.

Senator Booker (03:28:38):

And I would appreciate if you looked at the policy and I submit questions for the record hoping that you can elucidate maybe more of your thoughts on this.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:28:45):

Certainly.

Senator Booker (03:28:46):

And then, I will also say, it's my last question because I see my time has run out, and I look forward to a second round. The DOJ issued a policy regarding chokeholds, which limited the use of no-knock warrants and chokeholds. It's worth noting that Florida has outlawed no-knock entries altogether since 1994. Would you commit to continuing the 2021 DOJ policy on these issues?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:29:12):

I'm familiar with the policy. I have not read it. I am committed to reading it and studying it and reporting back to you on that policy once again.

Senator Booker (03:29:20):

Thank you. Mr. Chairman, thank you.

Speaker 3 (03:29:21):

Senator Hawley.

Senator Hawley (03:29:23):

Thank you very much Mr. Chairman. Ms. Bondi, welcome. Congratulations on your nomination. I'm so glad that you've been nominated as we discussed when we had the chance to meet.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:29:31):

Thank you.

Senator Hawley (03:29:32):

It was a pleasure to work with you as a state attorney general for a number of years, and I'm delighted to see you here today before the committee. I look forward to your confirmation. You will be confirmed. I, too have taken note of the number of times you have been asked about weaponization of the Department of Justice as if it was a theoretical possibility that might happen in the future. One of my colleagues on the other side said, weaponization may well occur under your tenure. We all know that weaponization has occurred like we've never seen before in American history under this administration, and I want to get even more specific.

(03:30:03)

In the last four years, this administration has carried out an unprecedented attack and campaign against people of faith. If you look at the numbers, we've never seen anything like it before in American history. It has been one of the most disgraceful chapters in the history of the Justice Department and in the history of the FBI. And I hope that you will reverse this and do right by every American citizen, including especially people of faith. Let me give you some specifics. After the Dobbs case was decided by the Supreme Court, over 100 pregnancy care centers and over 300 churches in this country were attacked, vandalized, firebombed. Do you happen to know off the top of your head how many prosecutions Merrick Garland's Justice Department brought in those cases?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:30:56):

I do not Senator.

Senator Hawley (03:30:57):

It's a stunning number, it's two. Hundreds of churches, hundreds of pregnancy care centers, and I might just add, these pregnancy care centers, the attacks on them which were violent, which were gruesome, were egged on and encouraged by rhetoric from members of Congress, including members of this body, who have said that pregnancy care centers aren't real medicine, that they're not real doctors. They have legitimized these attacks.

(03:31:23)

And the same thing was true of churches and this Justice Department couldn't lift a finger to defend these Americans. But, at the same time, they used legislation, a law known as the Face Act to prosecute at least 53 different pro-life demonstrators, including people like Mark Houck from Pennsylvania to whom this Justice Department sent a SWAT team to his door in the early morning hours. He has, I think seven children. In the early morning hours, an FBI SWAT team shows up at his door to take him into custody and prosecute him. By the way, he was acquitted. This kind of outrageous disparate treatment has to end. So, here's my question to you. Will you protect churches and pregnancy care centers when they are targeted for violence, when they are targeted for intimidation, when their members or parishioners are threatened with violence or other acts of illegal behavior?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:32:18):

Yes, Senator.

Senator Hawley (03:32:19):

Will you stop the disparate treatment of Americans on the basis of religious faith?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:32:24):

Yes, Senator.

Senator Hawley (03:32:25):

Will you stop the deliberate persecution of pro-life Americans for nothing more than their pro-life beliefs?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:32:32):

Yes, Senator.

Senator Hawley (03:32:33):

Will you ensure that nothing like the Mark Houck case happens again, that Americans do not have SWAT teams arriving on their front doors with armed weapons to terrorize their children and their spouses only in the end of course to have the case lost because there was nothing to it. Will you put an end to that kind of deliberate intimidation of the good American citizens on the basis of their religious beliefs?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:32:57):

Yes, Senator.

Senator Hawley (03:32:57):

I'm glad to hear you say that, because we need it Ms. Bondi. We need a new chapter at the Justice Department and we need it quickly, and I'm glad you're committed to it. Now, I also have heard you've been asked about your comment that you thought that in some cases we need to investigate the investigators, the ones who're bad. I have to say I'm glad to hear you stand by that, we need to do that. You need to do that. And I'll give you another example. I'm sure you've read about this memo, which I now hold in my hands. This memo that was developed by the FBI field office in Richmond, Virginia, 23rd January 2023, targeting Catholic parishes for spying, for recruitment of infiltrators. The memo goes on and on and on about the FBI's plans to put assets into Catholic parishes, into choirs.

(03:33:53)

This is an unbelievable assault on America's First Amendment rights. And we only know of it because of a brave whistleblower who came forward and released it to us. And I will tell you, I have never been misled and lied to like I was by the current attorney general and the now former FBI director when they sat right where you're sitting now and told this committee, oh, we don't know anything about it. Oh, only one field office was involved. It was the single work of a single field office and a very few individuals. As it turns out, that's not true. Multiple field offices were involved, multiple individuals were involved. Under your leadership, will you put a stop to the use of FBI or Department of Justice resources to try and recruit informants and spies into Christian churches or any church or house of worship in this country on the basis of nothing more than faith?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:34:47):

Of course, Senator.

Senator Hawley (03:34:49):

Let me just say this. To our knowledge, no one who is involved in the writing and performance execution of this memo has been disciplined or fired. Will you conduct an investigation like you talked about Ms. Bondi, that will get to the bottom of abuses like this? And to be clear, this is an outrageous abuse. It is an outrageous abuse, one of the worst abuses of Department of Justice and FBI authority in our history. Will you conduct an investigation to find out who signed off on this, who approved it, who advocated for it within the Department of Justice? Will you open the books on these abuses so that the American people can have confidence in their DOJ?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:35:33):

Senator, and I think what you're talking about is the ultimate weaponization, what we've been discussing all day. If I'm confirmed as attorney general, one of the first things I will do, there'll be many, but I will personally read that memo, and if Mr. Patel is confirmed, discuss it with him right away.

Senator Hawley (03:35:50):

Fantastic. And will you work with this committee and our relevant subcommittees? I'm going to chair a subcommittee called the Crime and Terrorism Committee. We're going to do our own investigation into what happened here at the FBI and the DOJ. Will you work with us as you discover the nature of these abuses and as you put a stop to them, will you work with us to make sure the American people get all the facts and this never happens again?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:36:11):

Senator, yes, I look forward to working with you and the Democrats. I would think this is something that we can all agree on, on both sides that this should not be happening in the United States of America and work together on it.

Senator Hawley (03:36:24):

That's fantastic. Let me ask you one other question here in my just few seconds that are remaining. This memo targeting Catholic parishes repeatedly refers to as an expert source, a group called the Southern Poverty Law Center. Now, the Southern Poverty Law Center has a long history as an anti-religious group that has repeatedly gone after conservative and religious organizations, called them hate groups, called them sometimes terrorist groups. They're cited in this memo. They once infamously, the SPLC called the Family Research Council a terrorist hate group, and an armed gunman came into their lobby and opened fire. Will you put a stop to the use of the SPLC as an official source for any Department of Justice memorandum or finding?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:37:10):

That will be one of the first things we will look at as well, Senator, and report back to you and the committee.

Senator Hawley (03:37:16):

Thank you very much. Congratulations.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:37:17):

Thank you.

Senator Hawley (03:37:18):

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

Senator Schiff (03:37:22):

Thank you Mr. Chairman. Ms. Bondi, as you know, the Supreme Court in Trump versus United States, how the president has absolute immunity to commit crimes in certain core areas of the president's responsibility. One of those core areas is the Justice Department. So, in a breathtakingly dangerous and irresponsible decision, Justice Roberts and the majority held the president can commit crimes using the Department of Justice and be immune from prosecution. Justice Sotomayor correctly said this new immunity lies about like a loaded weapon.

(03:37:59)

So, the fear and the concern we have is that the incoming president will use that loaded weapon, that immunity to commit crimes through the Department of Justice. And for that reason it is all the more important that we have an attorney general who has the independence, the strength, the intestinal fortitude to say no to the president when it is necessary. So, my first set of questions has to do whether you have the independence to say no when you must say no. And you can say this is hypothetical, but it is not hypothetical. So, let me start with one very specific non hypothetical. The president has said Jack Smith should go to jail. Will you investigate Jack Smith?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:38:51):

Senator, I haven't seen the file. I haven't seen the investigation. I haven't looked at anything. It would be irresponsible of me to make a commitment regarding anything without... You're a long practicing attorney, without looking at a file, period.

Senator Schiff (03:39:09):

So, you would need a factual predicate to open an investigation of Jack Smith, is that right?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:39:15):

Not a summary by you sitting here. Yes, sir.

Senator Schiff (03:39:18):

And not a summary by the president either, right?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:39:20):

Absolutely.

Senator Schiff (03:39:22):

So, a summary by the president or his desire to investigate Jack Smith would not be enough for you to open an investigation of Jack Smith, is that right?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:39:29):

I will look at the facts and evidence in any case. 72%-

Senator Schiff (03:39:33):

And sitting here-

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:39:37):

Excuse me, sir.

Senator Schiff (03:39:37):

... today-

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:39:37):

Senator, 72% of Americans-

Senator Schiff (03:39:39):

Please, I only have seven minutes.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:39:40):

... have lost faith in the Department of Justice [inaudible 03:39:44] like this.

Senator Schiff (03:39:44):

Sitting here today, are you aware of any factual predicate to investigate Jack Smith, sitting here today? Yes or no?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:39:51):

Senator, I will look at the facts and the circumstances-

Senator Schiff (03:39:54):

You can't answer that question?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:39:55):

... of anything that's brought to me.

Senator Schiff (03:39:56):

You're not a part of the department yet. There's no worry about divulging-

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:39:59):

I'm sitting here as a nominee.

Senator Schiff (03:40:00):

... law enforcement sensitive information. So, just tell us-

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:40:04):

I'm sitting here as a nominee.

Senator Schiff (03:40:05):

... are you aware of a factual predicate to investigate Jack Smith? Yes or no?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:40:09):

Senator, what I'm hearing on the news is horrible. Do I know if he committed a crime? I have not looked at.

Senator Schiff (03:40:14):

You seem reluctant to answer a simple question. Let me ask you a different simple question. The president also wants to jail Liz Cheney sitting here today. Are you aware of any factual basis to investigate Liz Cheney? Yes or no?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:40:27):

Senator, that's a hypothetical, and I'm not going to answer that question.

Senator Schiff (03:40:30):

No, it's not hypothetical. I'm asking you sitting here today whether you are aware of a factual predicate to investigate Liz Cheney? Based on what you know.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:40:37):

Senator, no one has asked me to investigate Liz Cheney. That is a hypothetical.

Senator Schiff (03:40:41):

The president has called for it publicly. You are aware of that, aren't you?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:40:45):

No one has asked me to investigate Liz. We're also worried about Liz Cheney, Senator.

Senator Schiff (03:40:47):

The president has called for this-

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:40:50):

You know what we should be worried about?

Senator Schiff (03:40:52):

Ms. Bondi, please answer my questions.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:40:54):

The crime rate in California right now is through the roof.

Senator Schiff (03:40:54):

You are aware, Ms. Bondi-

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:40:56):

Your robberies are 87% higher than the national average.

Senator Schiff (03:41:00):

My question is this-

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:41:01):

That's what I want to be focused on, Senator, if I'm confirmed as attorney general.

Senator Schiff (03:41:04):

... do you have the power to say no to the president? And what you're suggesting today by your non-answer is you don't have the independence to say no to the president. So, let me ask you a different question. It also requires you, if you're going to be a good attorney general to be able to tell hard truths to the president. So, my questions now are, can you tell hard truths to the president? So, let me start with an easy truth that you could speak to the president. Can you tell us, can tell him, that Donald Trump lost the 2020 election? Can you say that? Do you have the independence to say that? Do you have the gravitas, the stature, the intestinal fortitude to say Donald Trump, you lost the 2020 election? Can you tell us that here today?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:41:46):

Senator, what I can tell you is I will never play politics. You're trying to engage me in a got you. I won't do it.

Senator Schiff (03:41:52):

I'm just asking a simple question-

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:41:53):

I won't play politics-

Senator Schiff (03:41:54):

... if you speak truth to power?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:41:55):

... with any ongoing investigation like you did leaking your colleague Devin Nunes' memo.

Senator Schiff (03:42:00):

If you can't answer the question, let me ask you a different, what should be a simple truth, not a hard one. Was there massive fraud affecting the result of the 2020 election, yes or no?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:42:10):

Senator, I'm glad you asked that question. If you'll let me answer what I saw in Pennsylvania.

Senator Schiff (03:42:15):

No, I asked a simple question about massive fraud.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:42:18):

I can only tell you what I saw in Pennsylvania.

Senator Schiff (03:42:20):

I know you want to answer a different question, but my question is, can you tell us whether there was massive fraud affecting the results of the 2020 election, yes or no? Was there or was there not?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:42:29):

I can tell you what I saw when I went [inaudible 03:42:32].

Senator Schiff (03:42:32):

That's not my question. So, you can't answer that question. You can't speak that even easy truth to us, let alone to the president. So, let me ask you a different question. It will also be important that you give good advice to the president. Are you prepared to advise the president not to pardon people who beat police officers?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:42:54):

Senator, as I said, the pardons are at the direction of the president. We will look and we will advise. I will look at every case on a case, let me finish, on a case by case basis, and-

Senator Schiff (03:43:04):

Good. Let me-

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:43:05):

... I abhor violence to police officers.

Senator Schiff (03:43:07):

... follow up with that. So, will it be your advice to the president, Mr. president, I know you said you want to issue hundreds of pardons on day one. Will it be your advice to the president, no, Mr. president, I need to go over them on a case by case basis. Do not issue blanket pardons. Will that be your advice to the president?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:43:25):

Senator, I have not looked at any of those files. If confirmed, I will look at the files for the pardons, as well as the ongoing investigations.

Senator Schiff (03:43:32):

And will you be able to review hundreds of cases on day one?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:43:36):

I will look at every file I am asked to look at.

Senator Schiff (03:43:38):

Of course, you won't. So, will you advise the president?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:43:40):

Can I answer the question?

Senator Schiff (03:43:41):

Well, my question is-

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:43:42):

I would have plenty of staff. You said, of course you won't.

Senator Schiff (03:43:45):

You'll be able to review hundreds of cases on the fist day?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:43:48):

I'm not going to mislead this body nor you.

Senator Schiff (03:43:51):

All right, let me ask another question. You don't want to answer that. Let me you ask you another question.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:43:54):

You were censured by Congress, Senator, for comments just like this that are so reckless.

Senator Schiff (03:43:59):

It'll also be important for you to be able to preserve the records, the evidence of the department. Are you ready to commit that none of the evidence in the January 6th investigation will be destroyed under your watch?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:44:12):

Senator, I will follow the law. I will consult with ethical officials in the department.

Senator Schiff (03:44:17):

Do you see any ethical basis to destroy evidence in the January 6th investigation? Then why can't you answer the question? Why can't you say, I commit to this committee, we will never destroy the evidence in the January 6th investigation, why can't you give this committee and the American people that assurance?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:44:33):

Are you frightened because evidence was destroyed against President Trump that was false. Is that why you're frightened now? I can't believe this is even-

Senator Schiff (03:44:39):

Why do you have difficulty answering that question?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:44:41):

I can't believe you're asking such a question.

Senator Schiff (03:44:42):

Why do you have difficulty promising to preserve evidence at the Department of Justice? Why is that a difficult question?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:44:50):

I will follow the law.

Senator Schiff (03:44:53):

It shouldn't be a difficult question.

Speaker 3 (03:44:54):

Senator [inaudible 03:44:55]

Senator Marsha Blackburn (03:44:56):

Thank you Mr. Chairman. Ms. Bondi, I know that you are pleased that we are [inaudible 03:45:00] to the end of round one, and we appreciate your being here. And I appreciate that you told my California colleagues you were willing to work with them even in light of the manner in which they have approached you. Now, one thing I think we need to have everybody understand that is watching this hearing today and everyone sitting in here, what we have witnessed over the last four years with a weaponized DOJ, my colleagues have talked about this and the American people know this. They know what was carried out against President Trump and his administration. And in November they voted to see an end to two tiers of justice, two tiers of treatment, two tiers of access, because they have absolutely had it with the lies, with the accusations, and with the attacks that have come against so many people who were just seeking to live their lives, and then all of a sudden found the FBI or another federal agency or the DOJ knocking at their door.

(03:46:31)

Ms. Bondi, it would make you believe that my colleagues have learned nothing, nothing from the elections in November. They don't see this as a movie script that someone may have liked to write. What they see is this is real life and they want a restoration to equal justice, equal access, equal treatment, abiding by the rule of law. Many of us have talked today about making America safe again, and in Tennessee I hear a good bit about this. And as we've discussed your nomination, one of the things I've mentioned to people is your career as a prosecutor. And you have touched on that some today, and you are bringing that insight of being a prosecutor to bear. And I do appreciate that.

(03:47:40)

Now, one thing that I think is noteworthy, and in preparation for the hearing I looked some of these numbers up. During President Trump's first term violent crime in this country actually failed. It failed by 17%. And in the first two years of the Biden administration, it soared by 43%. This is crime that is taking place in all of our communities. We've seen a rise, whether it's California or Tennessee, we have seen a rise. So, I want you to talk to Tennesseans, to Californians, to all Americans about what you are going to do to get this crime rate down in this country.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:48:36):

Senator, thank you for that question. And despite the questions from Senator Schiff, I look forward to working with you and the state of California to do everything we can to fight violent crime in California. And you know as well as I, that crime is only going to go through the roof now after these forest fires. You're going to have looting, you're going to have price gouging. You're going to have so many things that I have dealt with in the state of Florida and I am committed to working with California just as much as I'm committed to working with you, Senator Kennedy, and the tragedy that just took place in Louisiana, given all the human beings that were

murdered in your state. And we have the Super Bowl coming up in less than three weeks now, I believe, Senator, I've been a little busy, but we've got to ensure if I'm confirmed that everyone in this country is safe.

(03:49:30)

And I will work with you. I will work with you, Senator. I will work with all of you in this country. For everything that Senator Blackburn said, we have got to reduce violent crime and we have got to restore integrity to our law enforcement officers. Donald Trump, we keep saying he won this election by 77.3 million votes and 312 electoral votes. Look at the map of California, Senator Schiff. It's bright red, the popular vote for a reason. People want law and order. They want to be safe so they can take their children to school, so they can go to church, Senator Hawley. People want safe streets. Of course, we care about our economy and what's happening in this world, but if we're not safe, none of that works. We have got to come together. We have got to work together to make America safe again, and that in turn will make America great again. And I don't know why that phrase has become a bad word because I think that's a great one, making America great again.

Senator Marsha Blackburn (03:50:32):

Let me move on with you to something else that's about law and order, and that is section 1507, because making certain that our justices are protected is important. And we also, with our judges, section 1507 makes it illegal any protest outside of a judge's residence if the intent is to influence the judge's decision-making. And we have heard about the protest

Senator Marsha Blackburn (03:51:00):

... to outside of justices' homes, where they were shouting loud and clear things like, and I'm quoting some of that, "If you take away our choices, we will riot." End quote. Another one, "No privacy for us, no peace for you." End quote. In other words, if the justices did not vote to uphold Roe and Casey, the protesters would continue to harass them. Despite this clear violation of the law, Merrick Garland did not bring a single charge, not one single charge under Section 1507. Will you commit to faithfully enforcing section 1507 as attorney general?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:51:46):

I will faithfully enforce that law and all laws that I am asked to review. And senator, I watched that on TV and it horrified me, the protesters outside their houses. You can't do that for a reason, because our justices have to remain safe and unbiased and protected from threats, as do we all. But they do enjoy a special protection, and yes, that should be enforced.

Senator Marsha Blackburn (03:52:13):

And thank you Ms. Bondi. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Grassley (03:52:17):

We'll now have our second round that I announced earlier, we'll each have four minutes. When we were talking in my office, I brought up the importance of your listening to whistleblowers, and about 30 or 35 investigations I've got underway of the executive branch, and not just because of a Democrat president, some of them are probably carryovers from Republican presidents. It's very important that the executive branch understand the cooperation that you must have with us to carry out our responsibilities, to see that the president faithfully executes the laws. And I think that too often, whistleblowers being patriotic people they are, wanting government to do what government's just supposed to do and find something wrong, they want to report it and they want to report it within the agency. They don't come to Congress unless they don't get any help in the executive branch.

(03:53:27)

It seems to me that it's very important that you respect whistleblowers, but I've seen them treated like a skunk at a picnic by the agency they're in. I've seen them ruin themselves professionally. I see themselves, one time an FBI agent came to me, was escorted out of headquarters with his gun and badge taken away from him just because the laboratory there was not using science to make sure that crime was actually committed. So now we have a new \$40 million science lab so that people are protected and get their constitutional rights. So will you protect whistleblowers from retaliation and promote a culture? And I think that last thing, promote a culture is more important than values the important contribution of whistleblowers.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:54:31):

Yes, and Senator, I think so people fully understand the importance of whistleblowers, they have to be able to tell the truth and come forward without fear of retaliation. And that's the purpose of the whistleblower statute.

Mr. Grassley (03:54:45):

When there's retaliation, the taxpayer's money's paying for that retaliation in most cases. The Biden Justice Department issued guidance telling prosecutors to stop charging mandatory minimums and ignore laws setting penalties on drug type. It also allowed folks to pay civil and criminal fines to politicize non-government organizations instead of the government treasury. I put together a list of their guidance, I find it very concerning and unfair to the tax paying public, and I would like to have you review those policies very soon after your confirmed.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:55:31):

Absolutely, senator.

Mr. Grassley (03:55:33):

In regard to antitrust, enforcing antitrust laws is extremely important to ensure that markets are fair and that consumers are protected. I've been active in making sure that the Justice Department and the FTC carefully scrutinize mergers and that they look out for anti-competitive behavior and predatory practices. I keep a close eye on these issues as they impact my state of Iowa and particularly agriculture, healthcare and technology industries, and I'm interested in your commitment to make antitrust enforcement a priority.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:56:15):

Anti-trust enforcement was a priority when I was a state AG and it will be a priority if I am confirmed as Attorney General. And again, I'm so proud to have Gail Slater handling that. She is-

Mr. Grassley (03:56:29):

Do you agree that-

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:56:30):

... loved by both sides of the aisle.

Mr. Grassley (03:56:31):

Okay. Well, my time's up. Go ahead, senator.

Mr. Durbin (03:56:34):

Go ahead if you want to.

Mr. Grassley (03:56:39):

Okay. The civil rights division in your department, if you're head of it, are supposed to enforce laws against race and sex discrimination, but under the Biden administration, the Justice Department has arguably promoted discrimination and turned a blind eye to racist hiring practices. Do you agree that race and sex discrimination by employers is illegal even if the discrimination is called diversity or equity?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:57:11):

No one should be discriminated against.

Mr. Grassley (03:57:13):

Go ahead. I'm done.

Mr. Durbin (03:57:15):

You owe me 44 seconds. Ms. Bondi, I'd like to say something and I hope you agree with it. Violence is never acceptable when it comes to political expression.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:57:28):

I think I said that initially. Yes, I do agree. Of course I agree.

Mr. Durbin (03:57:33):

I abhor that sort of thing happening when it comes to conservative Supreme Court justices, and I abhor it when it comes to Nancy Pelosi's husband being attacked in his home.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:57:45):

That was horrible.

Mr. Durbin (03:57:47):

Which we should all say unequivocally both or unacceptable. I think you agree, correct?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:57:53):

Horrible.

Mr. Durbin (03:57:54):

All right. I guess as I reflect on what you've said today, a couple things surprise me. I did not expect you to be as outspoken as you are about Kash Patel. He's been characterized as a professional career defense attorney and a career prosecutor, that's a pretty amazing achievement in his life. But he also has said and done some things which are impossible to understand and justify. For example, are you familiar with something called the QAnon Conspiracy?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:58:25):

I have heard of it. I do not know what it is, but I've heard of it many times, senator.

Mr. Durbin (03:58:32):

So let me tell you what I've learned about it. Its core belief is that a cabal of satanic cannibalistic child molesters are embedded within our government and are conspiring against president-elect

Trump. They asked Mr. Patel about it and he said, quote, "I agree with a lot that the movement says." End of quote. Does that sound like a good preparation to run the FBI?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:59:00):

Senator, I don't know anything about. Actually, I had heard of QAnon, but I've never heard that definition attached to it at all. You're going to have to ask Mr. Patel about those statements.

Mr. Durbin (03:59:14):

We will. And I'll tell you, until we get answers to those questions, I don't know many people on this side of the table give him an unequivocal endorsement. This and his enemies list, what he calls is government gangsters, this is what you expect of Stasi, this is what you expect of secret police. It is not what you expect of justice in America, as you've even described it at the table today. So I would say this unequivocal support of Mr. Patel should at least have some reservation until he explains some of these outrageous positions he has taken.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (03:59:48):

I look forward to hearing his testimony about QAnon in front of this committee.

Mr. Durbin (03:59:53):

You will. Let me say another word about January 6th and what happened. We lived through it, many of us. We'll never forget it. To think that the United States of America's Capitol building would desecrated by an insurrectionist mob that came in and did horrible things, particularly to our police force that keeps you safe as you sit there and keeps us safe every single day. Over 100 of them were attacked by these demonstrators. One, Kenneth Bonawitz, a member of the so-called Proud Boys, another alt-right group, assaulted at least six officers, placed one in a choke hold and lifted him up by the neck. Bonawitz injured one officer so severely he had to retire.

(04:00:40)

Kyle Fitzsimons, convicted for five separate assaults against law enforcement, including one that caused a career-ending and life-altering injury to US Capitol police sergeant, Akelino Genel. Can you understand why when Donald Trump says "The day I'm inaugurated as president, I will issue a blanket pardon to these political prisoners," we view this with an outrage on our side? These men and women risk their lives for us every day and they almost died, some of them did die, in the course of this attack. Why aren't we treating them as such, and why do you have to reserve judgment? Vice President Vance didn't when he was asked this week, he said the pardon should not be extended to those who were guilty of violence against policemen.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (04:01:25):

And senator, I do not agree with violence against anyone, but especially police officers. And every time I've been walking through these halls meeting with all of you, the men and women of the Capitol Police Department are incredible. They do a great job, they deserve to be safe. I do not agree with violence against any police officer.

Mr. Durbin (04:01:50):

I would hope-

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (04:01:51):

I never have, senator.

Mr. Durbin (04:01:53):

You weren't able to answer my question affirmatively earlier, but I would hope that if this moves forward in a positive way in your nomination, you will speak up at some point on behalf of these police officers who's keeping you safe today and your family safe. I yield.

Mr. Grassley (04:02:08):

Okay. Before Senator Graham, I want to enter into the record without objection from the members of this committee, letters from law enforcement groups who support Ms. Bondi's nomination. These groups include the Fraternal Order of Police, the National Sheriff's Association, the National Association of Police Organizations. They praise her, quote, "Support for law enforcement, crime prevention and public safety," end of quote. Without objection, so ordered. Senator Graham.

Mr. Graham (04:02:43):

Thank you. Well, I've been gone for a while, so they're asking you about Kash Patel, it must be going pretty well.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (04:02:50):

You didn't miss anything, senator.

Mr. Graham (04:02:51):

That's just an observation. So anyway, thanks to my colleagues on the Democratic side, it's been a good hearing. A couple things. Pardons. If somebody applies for a pardon, you'll give the president legal advice as to whether or not he should grant it. Is that the way the system works?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (04:03:14):

Yes, senator.

Mr. Graham (04:03:15):

Okay. So rather than prejudging what you would do, you would look at the application and give him your best advice, and you don't like people who beat up cops?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (04:03:25):

Correct, I hope no one does.

Mr. Graham (04:03:26):

Yeah, okay. Fair enough. So let's just get back to the process.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (04:03:29):

I'm not going to speak for the president, but the president does not like people that abuse police officers either.

Mr. Graham (04:03:36):

Yeah, well the hope is that through this pardon process, you'll make a rational decision based on the applicant rather than deciding the outcome in a senate hearing, that's all I'm asking. That's what I would want. If I represented somebody, I'd want at least to be heard. Now, section 230, are you familiar with it?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (04:03:58):

Yes, senator.

Mr. Graham (04:03:59):

One thing that unites this committee is protecting children and society at large from social media abuse. We passed online privacy legislation, Senator Durbin's been great to work with, everybody, Klobuchar, we're all trying to find out how to empower people who may be victims of social media. To empower a parent whose child's been bullied, when you call the social media platform and they blow you off, you go to court and they kick you out of court because of section 230. Sexual exploitation of children on the internet, we've heard stories that make us just, break our hearts. We're united of trying to give people a say. If they take your content down, you're appealing to the people who've made the decision to take your content down. So what I want to do, along with Senator Hawley, everybody, is repeal section 230 or replace it with a system that empowers consumers who may have been hurt. Do you agree with that?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (04:05:05):

Senator, I would love to look at that with you. I'm not familiar with what you want to do on the issue, I've talked to Senator Klobuchar. I think Senator Durbin and I may have even discussed it, but I'm committed to looking at that with you. There are so many issues online. That's one of the things, we have to find things that can bring us together now, and this has to be one of them, protecting our children.

Mr. Graham (04:05:31):

Here's what the FBI director said, Wray, whether you agree with them not, I agree with this. "I see blinking lights everywhere I turn regarding the national security threats." Does that make sense to you?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (04:05:46):

Yes, senator. I was looking at the date of that, that was a year ago. Yes, senator. I also heard about, I haven't seen it yet, his 60 minutes interview. That was very troubling to me, for our country.

Mr. Graham (04:05:57):

We know we found eight guys from Tajikistan that were released, caught again, guys who are tied to ISIS. So the point I'm trying to make is January 20th5, we own this. I just urge you to the extent you can to urge the president to secure that border, we need money. The idea of moving money around from defense is not going to cut it. We need a lot of money for bed space to finish the wall, do technology, hire ICE agents to accelerate deportation of people who are criminals and gang members. We don't have time to waste. I hope you'll make that an urgency because the threat is real. Are you worried about an attack on our homeland being generated from ISIS or their affiliates, and what should we do about it?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (04:06:47):

Senator, I don't have a security clearance yet, but only from the public reporting that I've seen, I'm terrified.

Mr. Grassley (04:06:55):

Senator Whitehouse.

Mr. Whitehouse (04:06:56):

Thank you Chairman. I'm going to try to fit in two questions in my four minutes. Lindsay, stick around because I'm going to say something nice about you. First, yes to 230, we've got to really work on that. There's a lot of support for fixing 230, in fact, outright repealing 230 in this committee. First question. Presumably, your commitment to fairly enforcing the law based on facts and evidence would also apply to environmental cases.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (04:07:30):

Yes, senator.

Mr. Whitehouse (04:07:32):

I'm concerned because under Trump, criminal prosecutions for pollution dropped sharply in his first term, and you'll be running an environment natural resources division that has things like for instance a methane task force, that big polluters who spent big money to get President Trump reelected don't like, and they're going to be coming to you to say, hey, we don't want a whole lot of enforcement on this. Methane leaks, carbon dioxide leaks, it's a pollutant, polluting our water, polluting our air. Will you be strong when that happens?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (04:08:12):

Senator, if you haven't learned yet, I'm pretty strong and I'm pretty independent. I think you and I spoke about this in your office a bit.

Mr. Whitehouse (04:08:20):

We did.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (04:08:21):

I don't know a lot about that issue, but I am committed to meeting with the ENRD division and talking to you about it. I wish I knew more about the issue you faced, but I don't, but I'm committed to absolutely looking at it and doing what I can to help you and your state.

Mr. Whitehouse (04:08:35):

I don't want environmental prosecutions to be an ignored stepchild subset. Its law just like any other law. The second question that I'd like to get to goes back to Chairman Grassley's opening comments, that it's going to be really important for the Department of Justice, under your leadership, to answer questions from senators, both Republican and Democrat, and to give us real answers. Sometimes the best oversight comes from the other party, and indeed, sometimes the best oversight comes from one senator who sticks to one issue and persists at it without necessarily support from the rest of the committee. And that oversight has been really consequential in the past and it's really important. So Chairman Grassley has been very good

about trying to enforce that rule, and I want to tell you just a quick story about something that went the wrong way, I believe. Crossfire Hurricane was mentioned by Senator Graham.

(04:09:42)

There was a committee investigation into Crossfire Hurricane. During that Crossfire Hurricane investigation, box loads of material was provided by the department and the bureau to Senate Republicans. They got files, they got investigative reports, they got internal memos, they got stuff that would not be FOIA-able. They really were able to do a deep dive because they got everything they asked for, even stuff that the FBI would ordinarily not produce. That was happening on that side of the aisle. For me, I had questions about Justice Kavanaugh's supplemental background investigation, and I asked for things like what is the Department of Justice's policy for how tip lines work? That's a FOIA-able question. I didn't get a single piece of paper. I asked for things like what are the ground rules for investigations of supplemental background investigations? I didn't get a single piece of paper.

(04:10:52)

Senator Graham called the Deputy Attorney General up into his office to say, "Will you guys please knock it off and give this guy some information?" So I have lived the example of if you're a Republican on this committee in a Republican administration, you get everything you ask for and more, and if you're a Democrat you get zero. That was not a great moment for me and not a great moment for the department. And so I will take the chairman at his word that he wants the department to be responsive to requests from all of us, and I would ask you, will you be responsive to all of us irrespective of our party affiliation if we are asking questions that you have the power to answer?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (04:11:41):

Senator, I think I've said that from the beginning. Yes, especially on Freedom of Information Act. I will follow the laws that apply to the Freedom of Information Act, I believe in that. I actually dealt with the public records when I was a state prosecutor. It's been so long ago, I'd forgotten about that. So I handled all the public records.

Mr. Whitehouse (04:12:00):

One point of order here. The Freedom of Information Act process is one thing, anybody can get information under the Freedom of Information Act process. As senators we should be able to do better than that. When we're doing worse than that, that's a sign that somebody's hiding something. When we're doing better than that, that's a good thing for congressional oversight. Thank you, chairman.

Mr. Grassley (04:12:17):

Thank you. Senator Tillis-

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (04:12:19):

Can we take a minute off Senator Schiff? I'm joking. Since he took an extra minute. I'm joking.

Mr. Grassley (04:12:23):

Yes, you can. You wanted to say something to Senator Schiff?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (04:12:30):

No sir, I asked if we could take a minute off Senator Schiff since Senator Whitehouse took an extra minute. I was teasing. I'm sorry.

Mr. Grassley (04:12:38):

Okay. Senator Tillis.

Sen. Tillis (04:12:39):

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Ms. Bondi, I wanted to come back and I'm glad I did. I got another mark on my bingo card, QAnon came up. It's a little-known fact but the so-called, I think I heard someone say that that's a cabal that has cannibalistic tendencies. I don't know if y'all know this, it's a well documented fact that the so-called QAnon shaman is a vegetarian who actually had to be transferred to another prison to satisfy his dietary needs after being sentenced to 41 months in prison. So I don't know if all the QAnon people are cannibals, but it's a little bit absurd. I just wanted to add a little levity here and let y'all know I'm one mark away from hitting bingo. But it's important to talk about those folks because this is the part I don't like about the big committee. I love Intellectual Property Subcommittee because we don't get into this theater.

(04:13:39)

But it's just absurd to think that, and it was mentioned in reference to a comment that Kash Patel made, who I spoke with earlier today. It's just absurd to kind of throw that stuff out there. Does anybody honestly believe someone with a distinguished career like Kash Patel thinks that a cannibalistic cabal controlling the internals of government really exists? Let me give you an example why I resist that notion. I resist the notion that most of the members here who all raise tens of millions of dollars through ActBlue, that has a sub-page that only until Senator Butler finally told them to take it down after I spent a year ranting about it on their ActBlue, a sub-page on ActBlue had the all cops are bastards sub-page and fundraising drive. I came to this committee for a year and tried to encourage my members to say this is absurd, so would it be fair for me to say that President Biden is embracing an organization that thinks all cops are bastards and you should have a fundraising run for 13.12 miles and protest outside of police departments and put pressure on them?

(04:14:57)

Saying that President Trump or you or anybody else or somehow, or Kash Patel, have an allegiance, it's so absurd. To think in a big hearing like this, we actually just talked about, that we actually think someone of the stature and the experience that would come before this committee would actually think a bunch of people-eating cabals controlling the innards of government was real. I get the theatrics, I get the marketing department thought it'd be really cool if it was said, but guys, that's not us at our best. And I just thought it was funny that he's a vegetarian too. But I want to go back to, this is a narrative that people are going to force, and I'm going to trust you to do what you do as a prosecutor. Like you said earlier, you're going to examine the facts of a case. You're going to give the -president your best advice.

(04:15:53)

I cannot believe if there is compelling evidence that you as a prosecutor know, that this person breached the Capitol and injured a police officer, that the president would even ask you to consider it, and I certainly can't imagine you recommending that they move forward. It's a hypothetical, I don't want you to respond to it, but your track record as a prosecutor would suggest otherwise. Last question. You mentioned that when you were dealing with some of the opioid challenge, I think it was opiates, OxyContin I believe you mentioned, that you went up against your own party or you got some pushback from your own party. Would you explain how you have looked at your party and done the courageous thing of speaking truth to them?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (04:16:36):

Oh, I remember when that started. Several of my former colleagues are behind me, they're probably smiling, but I remember when that started I said, oh, I'll never get elected to a second term, because yes, I fought for what I believed in based on meeting these victims' families and seeing the need, and I fought the industry. That was a big industry, and the doctors.

Sen. Tillis (04:17:00):

You were in an elected position with a lot of people with a target on you and you stood firm. Thank you.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (04:17:06):

More than once, senator. Thank you.

Mr. Grassley (04:17:08):

Senator Coons.

Senator Coons (04:17:10):

Thank you Chairman Grassley. Attorney General Bondi, in our previous conversation we talked about criminal justice reform, and in particular, your contribution to the enactment of the First

Step Act in the previous Trump administration. And I just want to talk with you about a couple of bipartisan initiatives in this area. Senators Cornyn, Lee, Durbin, Tillis, Booker and I have introduced a bipartisan bill called the Safer Supervision Act. It focuses on the fact that federal probation officers have a massive caseload, often more than 100 folks they are supposed to be closely supervising. And this bill would work on focusing supervised release resources on those who really need it and creating positive incentives for those who are willing and able to be rehabilitated and leave prison much less likely to re-offend. What's your experience about the need to support people when they get out of prison and to provide them with positive incentives rather than just leaving them to their own free will and the very high likelihood they may re-offend and thus violate public safety concerns?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (04:18:15):

And Senator Coons, that's why re-entry we call it, halfway houses, what you need, Senator Welch, are so important, because many people deserve to go to prison, but many people are going to get out of prison, and we don't want a revolving door. We want to do everything we can to make productive members of society. And when someone goes to prison, I mean, I saw this every day, you saw this as a revolving door. People get out.

(04:18:47)

And first of all, back up, we need drug programs, I could go on. We need drug programs, more drug programs in our prison. We have to. Mental health, we would be here for another two days, we have to get more mental health in our prison system, counseling to help people. I think our local jails actually do a better job of it, at least in Florida, but we've got to work on that because when people get out we expect them to do well. Many people don't even know how to go get a driver's license yet we're telling you, go get a job, have a place to live. So we have to do everything we can to help.

Senator Coons (04:19:20):

If I could move to the driver's license question, I've also led a bipartisan bill with Senator Wicker. Senator Grassley is also a co-sponsor. It's called the Driving for Opportunity Act. And it recognizes that in many states there is a practice of suspending driver's licenses where someone is too poor to pay their court-related or public safety-related fines and fees. But the driver's license isn't suspended because they're dangerously driving, it's just because they haven't paid their fines and fees. And then without a driver's license, they lose their job or they're not able to get a job. Would you be willing to work with this bipartisan group of us on these two bills, Driving for Opportunity and the Safer Supervision Act?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (04:20:01):

I would love to read both of them, and I was unaware of that happening with driver's license.

Senator Coons (04:20:06):

Last two questions. Clemency. As we discussed, often near the end of an administration, there's a rush to consider pardons. Would you be willing to work at a more institutionalized clemency process where there aren't just lots of commutations near the end of a term, but where there's a regular process where the DOJ and the clemency process is looked at to see whether there are reforms that should be made and recommendations that could be made to the president throughout his term?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (04:20:37):

I would love to look at that process. I can tell you that the pardons, the commutations that Joe Biden just made were abhorrent to me, absolutely abhorrent, taking people off death row. I looked at the facts of many of those cases and they were so troubling to me. I don't know what process you intend to implement, but I would love to study that with you.

Senator Coons (04:21:01):

Well, we talk positively about your experience in mind with drug courts, veterans, courts, mental health courts. There are some things we will continue to disagree about and other things I hope we can work on together. Thank you.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (04:21:11):

Thank you, senator.

Mr. Grassley (04:21:12):

Senator Lee.

Senator Lee (04:21:15):

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Ms. Bondi, as you're aware, criminal justice reform has been an important part of my role on this committee. I worked for the better part of a decade with Senator Durbin, Chairman Grassley, Senator Whitehouse, Senator Cornyn, Senator Booker, and a bunch of others who eventually passed the First Step Act, which President Trump signed into law in December of 2018. The First Step Act, as the name implies, was intended to be the first of multiple steps, much remains to be done, including with the implementation of the First Step Act. The credits available under the First Step Act are still being implemented and need more. I assume you'd be willing if confirmed to help us continue to implement the First Step Act.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (04:22:00):

Yes, senator. And also, I just learned, I don't know for a fact, but it's my understanding that a lot of those beds for halfway houses, for reentry, have not been filled under the First Step Act. So if that's true, I want to look at that right away and figure out why.

Senator Lee (04:22:19):

Right. And I think other reforms like the Safer Supervision Act, of which I'm a co-sponsor, can also be helpful on that front. It's always important to make sure that we're running, although ours is not the largest criminal law enforcement institution in the country, meaning the states themselves have far more criminal cases, far more prisoners under their jurisdiction collectively than the United States government does. Nonetheless, it is a significant presence. And states often look to the federal government, sometimes for good, other times for ill, on leadership as to where they should take their own criminal justice system. And so it's important that we get this right and especially given that we've been wrong at times in the past. I also think it's important to address the topic of over-criminalization. A few years ago, a few of us on this committee decided that we wanted to find out how many federal crimes are on the books.

(04:23:16)

We reached out to the Congressional Research Service, the CRS, whose job it is to answer such questions like this when members have these questions. The answer that came back was stunning. The answer that came back was to the effect that the answer is unknown and unknowable, but at least 300,000. A lot of the reason for this is that there are a lot of instances in which federal regulations impose criminal penalties, impose criminal penalties often without Congress independently enacting anything, just using some sort of delegated lawmaking authority from Congress, which ought not be okay, incorporating elements of a criminal offense into a criminal regulation, which

Senator Lee (04:24:00):

... we add to the code of federal regulations at a clip of around 100,000 pages a year, give or take, depending on which parts of the Federal Register that you add to the CFR at the end of each year. This seems highly problematic to me for multiple reasons. Reason number one, of course, or that Article One Sections one and seven make clear that you cannot make a federal law or change a federal law without Congress, without both houses of Congress passing the same text, submitting it to the President. Reason number two, oftentimes when this happens you end up with an either absent or hugely ambiguous mens rea, meaning the standard of intent with which one must have acted in order to commit the criminal offense in question is often absent or at least so murky that nobody can tell what it means. Both of these things of course lead to huge problems for defendants and for the liberty interests of the American people. So I'd ask that you, if confirmed, help work with us on these things and share any thoughts you might have on them.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (04:25:07):

Yes, Senator. And I wasn't aware of the mens rea issue, yes.

Senator Lee (04:25:10):

Thanks.

Mr. Grassley (04:25:11):

Senator Klobuchar.

Senator Klobuchar (04:25:13):

Very good. Thank you very much Mr. Chairman and thank you for mentioning antitrust, I am really proud of the work you and I have done together as well as Senator Lee and I. And I know we discussed with you, Ms. Bondi, the work on allowing state AGs, a Bill that Senator Lee led and I was the Democratic lead on letting state AGs keep the antitrust cases involving tech in their states, and Senator Grassley and I successfully passed our bill to finally update the merger fees which have allowed larger mergers have to pay in more, smaller mergers less, and that has led and along with other reasons to beef up the antitrust division of antitrust during the last few years, and I want to make sure that you are committed to continuing a strong antitrust division with adequate personnel.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (04:26:06):

And if I am confirmed, I intend on bringing in Gail Slater, she is amazing and I think bipartisan support for her and did a lot of antitrust. Well, I had someone who knew antitrust much better than I when I was State Attorney General and it's very important. Very important.

Senator Klobuchar (04:26:23):

But how about the resources for the division? It has been under this administration, the current outgoing one, they have added lawyers and others to it, and my question was is if you'll continue that.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (04:26:38):

Yes, I was actually looking at the structure of that unit and if I am confirmed, I've been a little busy, I plan on working with Gail Slater and all the lawyers in that unit.

Senator Klobuchar (04:26:48):

Okay. And then you and I discussed some of the important cases, the Google case, Live Nation, Ticketmaster, the Apple case, I don't know if we talked about that one, but a... RealPage. And will you commit to continue these cases and to pursue remedies that will fully protect consumers

from anti-competitive conduct? I'm not asking what the result will be. I can imagine you couldn't answer that, but I'm just asking that if you are confirmed that you will continue the work on these cases?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (04:27:22):

Yes, Senator. I haven't looked at those on a case-by-case basis, but I'm committed to that type of case and protecting consumers and I will look at that and have that unit look at that right away.

Senator Klobuchar (04:27:35):

Thank you. At its founding in 1870, the Justice Department's priority was to enforce civil rights, that's what was founded, the reason guaranteed by the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments during reconstruction. Today's civil rights enforcement is led by the Civil Rights Division. Do you believe it is a critical mission of the Justice Department to vigorously enforce our nation's civil rights laws?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (04:27:58):

Yes, Senator.

Senator Klobuchar (04:27:59):

Okay, thank you. Voting rights, will you commit to properly enforcing federal laws that protect the right to vote that are critical to ensuring free and fair elections like the Voting Rights Act?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (04:28:12):

Yes, Senator.

Senator Klobuchar (04:28:12):

Okay. We're back to the FBI nominee, again, I expressed my deep concern, Kash Patel, he has vowed to retaliate against the president-elect's enemies, "Not just in the government but in the media." As we know, the president-elect has already sued a pollster in Iowa whose predictions turned out to be wrong, which happens with pollsters all over the place, as we all know, but a free press is essential to our democracy, reporters must be able to do their job without fear of being investigated or prosecuted. Will you commit that the Justice Department under your leadership, if confirmed, will respect the importance of a free press?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (04:29:00):

Absolutely.

Senator Klobuchar (04:29:01):

And if the president or the, depends on who the FBI director is, I have some strong views on that, tries to push to go after the media, how would you respond to that?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (04:29:17):

I have not... Clearly he's made some statements, but I haven't talked to Mr. Patel about those statements. But going after the media, just because they're the media is wrong, of course.

Senator Klobuchar (04:29:29):

All right, thank you.

Mr. Grassley (04:29:31):

Senator Kennedy.

Senator Kennedy (04:29:35):

Thank you Mr. Chairman. General, I admire your spunk.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (04:29:47):

Coming from you, Senator, that is a huge compliment.

Senator Kennedy (04:29:53):

I learned the hard way up here, you may know it already, but up here, if you turn the other cheek, you just get it in the neck. You're friends with President Trump, are you?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (04:30:09):

Yes, Senator and I spoke to him this morning.

Senator Kennedy (04:30:11):

You're not enemies?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (04:30:13):

No, Senator. I don't think I'd be sitting here if I was an enemy. He'd be crazy to have me sitting here if I was an enemy.

Senator Kennedy (04:30:21):

So you're friends?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (04:30:22):

Yes, Senator.

Senator Kennedy (04:30:24):

I find otherworldly this suggestion by some of my colleagues that that somehow disqualifies you. Have you ever seen a President of the United States appoint his enemies to his cabinet?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (04:30:45):

Exactly, Senator. I think many presidents, including President Obama, were friends with his Attorney General throughout the years.

Senator Kennedy (04:30:56):

Okay. I want to also ask you about one of the suggestions of my colleagues, I wrote it down, he said he was concerned that, "You would start with a name to prosecute and then look for a crime." It made me immediately think of District Attorney Bragg in New York who actually in 2019 ran a campaign in large part suggesting that if you elect me, I'll prosecute Donald Trump.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (04:31:39):

I believe there were others as well, Senator.

Senator Kennedy (04:31:41):

Right. How long were you a prosecutor?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (04:31:46):

18 years.

Senator Kennedy (04:31:48):

Okay. Is there anything in your background to suggests that my colleague's suggestion that you would start with a name and then look for a crime, is there anything in your background that would give him basis to say that?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (04:32:05):

No, Senator.

Senator Kennedy (04:32:06):

Okay. Have you ever done that?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (04:32:09):

No, Senator. And I think I have a lot of former colleagues sitting behind me who would back me up on that as well.

Senator Kennedy (04:32:15):

Do you plan to do that as Attorney General?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (04:32:17):

Of course not, Senator. I hope no Attorney General going forward would ever do that.

Senator Kennedy (04:32:27):

Well, I thank you for your time today. One need not be clairvoyant to see that you're going to be confirmed. And you talked a lot about bringing us together today, I'll make this suggestion, Senator Durbin talked about it, you can bring us together, if you will just answer Grassley's letters. That will be a really good start because you'll never hear the end of it, nor should you. The man, he's like a dog on a bone.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (04:33:04):

Thank you, Senator.

Mr. Grassley (04:33:05):

Senator [inaudible 04:33:12].

Mr. Schmitt (04:33:05):

You can go.

Mr. Grassley (04:33:15):

Go on Senator Welch.

Mr. Schmitt (04:33:16):

That's fine.

Mr. Grassley (04:33:16):

[inaudible 04:33:17].

Mr. Welch (04:33:19):

Thank you very much. Thank you, Ms. Bondi. Three things, one, I do have some concern that whoever is the Attorney General, you or anyone will be under a significant amount of pressure at some point from the President, Attorney General Barr was, Attorney General Sessions was. And you've made it very clear your client is the Constitution, I think that's very reassuring to us. But the President does have now a Supreme Court provided immunity, and I just want to express to you my concern and it really does align with what Senator Schiff said, you have what I regard as a very bad decision by the Supreme Court, the President should not be above the law, never has been. And my concern on the basis of statements that President-elect Trump has made is that he does identify people as political enemies including Senator Schiff.

(04:34:25)

And there may come a day where there is pressure on you and I'm just going to express my hope that, that independence that you've had throughout your career when it comes to the Constitution or pressure from a higher official that you're going to choose the Constitution. So you don't even have to answer that, but it's a concern I share, I think not just with colleagues here but with many Americans. My colleagues have made the case about weaponization in this administration, we can have a debate about that. But there's been a universal statement here that we want the rule of law to be the basis of going forward, so thank you for allowing me to say that.

(04:35:08)

Second, I'm really interested in your focus on how do we cut down in recidivism. I was a public defender, that's how I got started, you started prosecutor in Vermont. Prosecutors and defenders were good friends, we each had a job to do. But my experience with my clients and I'm accepting folks who they're really dangerous, you've got to lock them up, you've got to throw away the key. But the vast majority of people had a substance abuse problem, oftentimes had very limited education, oftentimes face these incredible dilemmas that Senator Coons was talking about where they get fines and they get their license suspended, so the job they had now they lose. So can you just elaborate bit on what you want to do to inject some energy into dealing with cutting down on recidivism?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (04:36:01):

Well first we can address it at the Bureau of Prison level, of course, what we talked about, those are for the people who will be locked up in prison serving sentences to make sure they get the resources that they need. Upon release, 98% of the people in the Bureau of Prisons will be released, I believe it's a mess right now. A mess. And when you look at an organizational chart of the office, assuming I may get confirmed, I was looking at all the slots and my eyes went down to the bottom to Bureau of Prisons because of my career experience as a prosecutor and caring about what happens there for the very reasons you said, we need more drug courts. And you were talking about drug addicts as well, it's more than that, and we both know that it's also people who are dual diagnosed, meaning you have a drug addiction but also mental health issues, and that's something I can't wrap my head around yet.

Mr. Welch (04:36:56):

Right. I'd like to work with you on that. And then the third thing is that I mentioned this earlier, the consumer issues, the False Claims Act efforts that you can bring, the challenge to ripoffs in the civil sphere where companies are doing things that are just crushing our consumers and overcharging. That is very, very important and I hope that there'll be as much emphasis on protecting consumers as there will be on protecting public safety, which obviously is a high priority for you and for the department.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (04:37:35):

Yes, Senator.

Mr. Welch (04:37:36):

Okay, thank you.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (04:37:37):

Thank you.

Mr. Welch (04:37:38):

I yield back.

Mr. Grassley (04:37:39):

Senator.

Mr. Schmitt (04:37:40):

Thank you Mr. Chairman. I think you're doing incredible today, I'm not surprised. Mom, how are you doing? Good?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (04:37:51):

I told her not to react, no matter what.

Mr. Schmitt (04:37:54):

That's probably harder for her than it is for you. Well listen, we've talked about this over the years, so for me, I didn't know any lawyers growing up. I'm trying to think when I actually met a lawyer in my life, I grew up in a really blue collar neighborhood, but I was attracted to the law because I felt like it gave guardrails for people to pursue their dreams, that you would be on equal footing. And I think that your fights for the little guy I referenced this in the opening statements are admirable and you got some questions earlier about are you willing to stand up against corporate interests or are you willing to fight back? I mean I think you've demonstrated that, right?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (04:38:40):

I think we did it together when we were Attorneys General as well.

Mr. Schmitt (04:38:43):

Yeah, your client is the people and it's your job to fight for them because in these jobs, especially even a local prosecutor I think is even even more appropriate scenario, there's only one prosecutor in that county. So it's interesting when we have these discussions about some of these prosecutors across the country and Senator Hawley and I know there's been a couple in Missouri and they're all around, when they decide not to charge violent criminals, there's nobody else who can do that. There's nobody else that can do that. One of the things that when I was Attorney General we were able to do when President Trump was in office, sadly the Biden administration dropped this effort was we had assistant AGs deputized as assistant US attorneys to help fight violent crime, to add capacity.

(04:39:26)

And when there was a surge to take on some of the most violent criminals on the streets, we were there to help. Those are the kind of partnerships I'm guessing that you'll look towards, right? To get back to the core mission of taking on violent crime and fighting for the little guy. So I wanted to give you a little bit of an opportunity to talk about that, and also sort of what's your vision? You're answering a lot of questions, what's your vision for the department? I mean, how do you see your role? How do you want to go do that? I think you're incredibly qualified to do it, but just in your own words, what are the things that you're going to focus on?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (04:40:01):

Senator, it's truly overwhelming when you look at the volume of that department, the Department of Justice, it is the largest law firm in the world and manages the largest law enforcement agencies. And that's why first and foremost what I did when I was Attorney General, you surround yourself with great people. And that includes Gail Slater, that includes my chief of staff, if I am confirmed, my deputy and so on and so on, and work from there, but look at each and every department and I don't know if one department is more important than the other, but I will work very hard every day. And as Senator Welch had said, it's not only fighting crime, I think that's just first and foremost on American's minds right now, but that's why there is an entire huge civil division that falls under the Department of Justice to protect consumers, to do the antitrust cases, to do all the Medicare cases, to do all of the other cases. So it's multifaceted, but first and foremost, of course, to keep America safe and restore integrity to that department. I don't think I can stress enough that 72% of Americans have lost faith in the Department of Justice.

Mr. Schmitt (04:41:16):

Yeah, and I think that the belief that the American people need to have, again, is that people are going to be treated the same. As you said earlier, there's only one tier, there's not two tiers of justice and I think that's when you really dig down to some of the comments you've heard and questions at least on this side, that's the big concern. I don't want it tilted in anybody's direction, you just want it to be fair. And you want certainly the top law enforcement official in the country to view it that way, I think you do and I think your history, your qualifications, your demeanor, your character warrant a bipartisan vote, I hope you get it. I really do. You deserve it.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (04:41:52):

Thank you Senator.

Mr. Grassley (04:41:54):

Senator Blumenthal.

Mr. Blumenthal (04:41:56):

Thanks Mr. Chairman. Again, thank you Ms. Bondi, for answering our questions. I want to come back to TikTok and we ran out of time when I was asking you before about the importance of the law that was passed overwhelmingly bipartisan majority here in the United States Congress. As you know, last year a Chinese hacking group, it was called Salt Typhoon, broke into several American phone companies, reportedly used that access to spy on the White House, the FBI, other sensitive government targets, the threat of Chinese communist espionage goes beyond just watching it. Also involved potentially shutting down our grids, other critical infrastructure. [inaudible 04:42:51], I assume you agree with me that Chinese cyber warfare espionage, malign influence is an existential threat to America.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (04:43:02):

It is an existential threat, Senator, and also I have not seen it yet, but from what I've heard about former FBI director Ray's comments on 60 minutes regarding China sleeper cells within our own country infiltrating our water systems, our natural gas lines, telecommunications a very, very real threat to our country.

Mr. Blumenthal (04:43:27):

I'm glad that we agree and as you know and as the Department of Justice has noted, it's not classified so we can talk about it openly, ByteDance is beholden to the demands of the Chinese government, it is controlled by the Chinese government and it in turn controls TikTok. Do you agree that ByteDance's control, ownership, exploitation of TikTok is a threat to American National Security?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (04:43:59):

Senator, this is pending litigation within the Department of Justice-

Mr. Blumenthal (04:44:03):

Okay, let me put it a different way.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (04:44:05):

... and I can't talk about that at all.

Mr. Blumenthal (04:44:07):

It's not pending litigation within the Department of Justice, it's in the courts.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (04:44:09):

In the courts.

Mr. Blumenthal (04:44:11):

And the Department of Justice is currently defending.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (04:44:16):

Yes.

Mr. Blumenthal (04:44:17):

The constitutionality of American law.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (04:44:20):

Pending.

Mr. Blumenthal (04:44:20):

Will you continue to defend the law passed by the Congress defending America's National Security?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (04:44:30):

Senator, I cannot... It would be irresponsible for me to talk about anything and it is pending litigation, we can talk semantics all day long-

Mr. Blumenthal (04:44:38):

I was Attorney General, and very often-

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (04:44:38):

I'm not trying to hedge on anything, Senator. I just can't comment on any-

Mr. Blumenthal (04:44:42):

I'm having with the idea that you won't tell that the Department of Justice will continue to defend against constitutional attacks the law of the United States. When I was Attorney General of the state of Connecticut, I would say I have an obligation to defend the law of Connecticut against any attacks, you have an obligation or you did as Attorney General of Florida to go to court when those laws were attacked. You have an obligation as United States Attorney General to do what this Attorney General is doing, whether you agree with it or not, and frankly, whatever the President thinks about that law, you have an obligation to defend it. This is an easy question for you, will you defend laws of the United States of America against constitutional attacks? I'm asking you in general.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (04:45:36):

In general, yes.

Mr. Blumenthal (04:45:37):

And with respect to the law that would require the divestiture of TikTok, which is a law passed by this body and supported by I think a majority of members on both sides of the aisle, why can't you tell us that you will defend it?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (04:45:56):

Senator, I'm not hedging. This is all pending litigation and I can't talk about pending litigation if confirmed as Attorney General.

Mr. Blumenthal (04:46:03):

I have to tell you, with all due respect, that answer is unacceptable to me. Thank you.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (04:46:10):

Thank you.

Mr. Grassley (04:46:11):

Before I go to Senator Britt, I'd like to enter a letter into the record from former Department of Justice employees who support Ms. Bondi's nomination. This bipartisan group of attorneys include several former AGs, assistant attorneys general, US attorneys, write to share both strong and enthusiastic support, unquote for Ms. Bondi and attest to, "Her integrity and devotion to the rule of law." Without objection, I would enter these into the record. Hearing none, so order. Senator Britt.

Ms. Britt (04:47:00):

Thank you Mr. Chairman. Several of my colleagues on the other side of the aisle have insinuated that your friendship with Donald Trump is a problem. My colleagues on my side of the aisle have leaned into this exposing the hypocrisy given what we have seen before from previous administrations. And I would just like to read something to you from 1961, Washington, January 13th, the Senate Judiciary Committee approved without objection, today, President-elect John F. Kennedy's selection of his brother Robert as Attorney General. The vote came after two-hour hearing, would you like a two-hour hearing by the way?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (04:47:49):

Can we redo this?

Ms. Britt (04:47:50):

Yeah, that's right. The vote came after a two-hour hearing devoted in large part to the praise of Mr. Kennedy. Forecast that there would be several critical questionings, especially from

Republicans proved incorrect. All 14 committee members present voted to approve the nomination when it was formally made, the New York Times. As it said, blood is thicker than water, meaning family bonds are stronger than any other relationship. I just think that that needs to be before the American people once again, and I appreciate you continuing to reiterate that you will serve the people of this great country and that you will follow the law.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (04:48:40):

Thank you Senator.

Ms. Britt (04:48:41):

I'd like to move to something that has become another theme of this hearing and that is Senator Grassley's letters. So I myself sent a letter to our current Attorney General and unfortunately received the very same treatment. So in front of this committee, Merrick Garland, Attorney General Garland had made a testimony that we found evidence to possibly contradict what he had said. On March 23rd, he came in front of the Appropriations Committee where I was a member and I presented him with evidence that the DOJ had actively discouraged the enforcement of 18 United States Code Section 1507 at the homes of Supreme Court Justices in the wake of the leak of the Dobbs decision. Evidence that appeared that he had clearly either misled or misinformed this committee, evidence that showed that the department was putting politics above duty.

(04:49:44)

Section 1507, as you well know, makes it illegal to picket or parade near a judge's residence with the intent of influencing them and the discharge of their duty. It was openly and fragrantly violated on numerous occasions in the summer of 2022, yet never enforced by US Marshals stationed at the home of the justices. In large part because of the evidence that we showed that they had been actively discouraged from making arrest. When we asked Attorney General Garland why no one had been prosecuted, he said because no one had been arrested. Really going back to the fact that the US marshals in these slides were actively discouraged from making them. On May 3rd, 2023, I led a group of senators, many on this committee sending a letter to the Attorney General asking him for response to 19 questions by the end of May. And to this day, I have yet to receive any actual response to any of my questions.

(04:50:43)

To Senator Grassley's second point, if you do get a response, which mine came almost a year late, it was just words on paper. And so what I'd like to know from you is two things. One, if confirmed, will you do everything in your power to have yourself or one of your top officials respond in a timely manner to those of us on this committee? And second, since I am almost out of time, will you commit to working to help me get answers about why this happened in the Department of Justice so that we can ensure that it never happens again?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (04:51:18):

Yes, Senator. And it sounds like we're going to have to open an entire unit to handle Senator Grassley's letters to respond to them.

Ms. Britt (04:51:26):

Good. That's what we all like to hear.

Mr. Grassley (04:51:30):

Senator Booker.

Senator Booker (04:51:32):

Thank you. And I'm grateful to Senator Britt for bringing that up. It's probably one of the bipartisan commitments if we're going to fulfill our duties of the Constitution to give oversight, it's really important that we get timely responses and I'm grateful for that. I want to jump back right in where we were talking in last, is just about the crack and powder cocaine disparities that we discussed in my office. It's something that this committee in a bipartisan way have done a lot on. We discussed about the 18 to one sentencing disparity, which came down from 100 to one. I've been working in good faith with people like Senator Grassley on trying to just get justice with that, move it as much towards one-to-one as possible. We know that actually in Florida, your home state as well as 43 other states, it's a-

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (04:52:19):

One-to-one.

Senator Booker (04:52:19):

It's one-to-one, thank you for making my question quicker. Will you commit to continuing the DOJ 2002 policy of just enforcing it as if it was one-to-one?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (04:52:29):

Yeah, and I will look at that policy, if I am confirmed as Attorney General, I had no idea it was 18 to one, that... I will look at that policy if confirmed and report back to you right away. It sounds like if I'm confirmed, I have a lot of reporting backs to do right away.

Senator Booker (04:52:46):

Thank you.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (04:52:46):

But I will. Senator [inaudible 04:52:48].

Senator Booker (04:52:47):

Am I overly saying the fact that reading from your expression that you seem that think that 18 to one, especially given what's going on in Florida seems unreasonable.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (04:52:54):

I was unaware that that was happening and why you would want it to be one-to-one.

Senator Booker (04:52:59):

Right. I know you're sincere and heartfelt beliefs on abortion in general, and I respect that and our differences on it. But when it comes to medication abortion over two decades ago, the Food and Drug Administration approved the medication abortion pill, Mifepristone as safe and effective, decades of research continued to confirm the drug safety. However, access to Mifepristone was threatened by several law students that second guessed the FDA's expert judgment about the drug. The Department of Justice has vigorously defended the FDA's judgment about the safety and effectiveness, and I guess a lot of people are concerned about reversing a policy that could deeply affect people's access to Mifepristone. I'm wondering if you would commit to continuing the US Department of Justice's efforts to defend the FDA's judgment in lawsuits against Mifepristone?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (04:53:47):

And I was not aware of that Senator, until we spoke, and I think I told you I will look at that policy. I was not aware of the policy, I will look at that policy. I am personally pro-life, I've always been pro-life, but I will look at that policy. I will not let my personal beliefs affect how I carry out the law.

Senator Booker (04:54:08):

I wish I had more than 90 seconds to talk to you about an issue, but you've been so willing to talk to me about it, but the First Step Act implementation is, in my opinion, in a dire state. We had a bipartisan bill with 87 senators voting for it, 88 if Lindsey Graham was not off fighting the world's fight, I would like to make sure that you work with us to have implementation done. One of the reasons why it's so poorly implemented is because the disastrous realities in the Bureau of Prisons. We've had bipartisan hearings here about the egregious stuff. The hearing was so disturbing that one of my colleagues on the side came over and said, "Whatever I can do, let's work together." It is understaffed and therefore a lot of the people that are supposed to be implementing the programs that would help for people to earn time, credit to get out, the

education programs that are proven to reduce recidivism can't be done because the Bureau of Prisons is a disaster in terms of staffing and funding.

(04:55:02)

People leave their federal correctional officer's jobs to go to state because they can make significantly more money. Is this-

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (04:55:11):

Morale is horrible.

Senator Booker (04:55:12):

Yes, morale is horrible. Is do you feel a sense of urgency like I do to focus on the Bureau of Prisons to deal with the staffing issues and help for the full implementation of the First Step Act?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (04:55:22):

Yes, Senator. And yes, and I spoke about that I think when you were in another committee hearing, but yes, I will, of course.

Senator Booker (04:55:29):

Thank you for the latitude Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Grassley (04:55:30):

A question for both the nominee and you, Senator Booker, you were talking about this one-to-one equation. If your implication to her was that it could be done through her actions, then it seems we've been wasting our time trying to find a compromise between you and me on that subject for legislation.

Senator Booker (04:55:58):

I didn't prepare for this hearing, sir, I didn't know I'd be asked questions. I look forward to working with you, I do believe that it should be done judicially as well as with prosecutorial discretion.

Mr. Grassley (04:56:11):

Okay.

Senator Booker (04:56:11):

It should done legislatively along as well as prosecutorial discretion. Thank you, sir.

Mr. Cruz (04:56:17):

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. General Bondi, I congratulate you on an excellent job at this hearing. And I want to go back to the topic you and I discussed before, which is the politicization of the Department of Justice, I want to focus on a different aspect of it. We talked about the Department of Justice under Joe Biden and Kamala Harris being used to target the President's political enemies, we talked about it being used to protect the political friends and allies of the White House. But there's another aspect of politicization and lawlessness, and that is refusing to follow the law, utterly defying federal statutory law. And I think there's no area where this has been more egregious than as it concerns our immigration laws.

Mr. Cruz (04:57:00):

We have had four years of a wide open southern border. My state, Texas, has borne a disproportionate burden as a consequence of that, as 12 million illegal aliens have flooded into this country and what the Biden administration has done, no other president history of America has done.

(04:57:20)

The Biden administration has simply ignored the law, and when illegal aliens are apprehended, they release them. Federal law says they shall be detained, says they shall be deported. And frankly, our constitutional system is not meant to deal with a president who defies the law. Article II says, the President shall take care that the laws be faithfully executed. This administration utterly defied the law.

(04:57:46)

I have said somewhat tongue in cheek, Joe Biden did something I previously thought was impossible. He made me miss Barack Obama because Barack Obama, for all my disagreements with him, when it came to illegal immigration, he by and large followed the law.

(04:58:00)

Barack Obama deported millions of people. The left got mad at him and called him the deporter in chief. No administration has ever done what this administration has done, which has said, "We are going to facilitate the invasion of this country. We're going to release 12 million people and we are going to see Americans murdered, women raped, children abused and murdered. We're going to see drugs flood into this country, fentanyl flood into this country."

(04:58:25)

And so I want to ask you several things on this. First of all, in your experience, what are the consequences of open borders and who pays the price when illegal immigrants and in particular violent criminal, illegal immigrants are released in this country?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (04:58:47):

American Citizens, Senator, and I think they're paying... I know they're paying the price every single day. We're seeing it. We're watching it. We've talked about Laken Riley, of course, multiple times, but there are multiple victims.

(04:59:01)

Violent crime in all of our states. And as we say now, every state is a border state. I was at the border at... not in your state, but in Yuma, Arizona several months ago, and I saw firsthand, I saw...

(04:59:17)

The border patrol agents and customs showed us IDs and driver's license, Venezuela. From all of these countries IDs just thrown on the ground, and people were allowed to walk freely into our country.

(04:59:31)

Senator, I never knew the definition of a disposable child. I never heard that term in my entire career until I was there; a disposable child. The agents kept recognizing a little boy coming over and over. You're familiar with it, I'm sure. Same little boy over-

Mr. Cruz (04:59:47):

And let me ask just because my time-

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (04:59:48):

And he had been trafficked.

Mr. Cruz (04:59:50):

Let me ask because my time has expired and the issue you're raising is so incredibly important. One statistic that every American should know is the number 300,000. There are over 300,000 children that this administration has lost. Little girls and little boys who came here unaccompanied were in this administration's custody. They handed them over to adults, many of them not blood relatives, and they don't know where they are.

(05:00:13)

I've never seen a single Democrat in this committee ask one question about the 300,000 children. I want to ask you a commitment, will you as attorney general investigate and make every effort to find those children and if they are subject to abuse, get them out of those abusive situations that the federal government has put them into?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (05:00:31):

Yes, Senator.

Mr. Cruz (05:00:31):

Thank you.

Mr. Grassley (05:00:31):

Senator Padilla.

Senator Alex Padilla (05:00:32):

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I'll just follow up Senator Cruz's final comment with suggesting that we include targeting those children who are victims of unscrupulous employers as well, and happy to follow up with articles and reports too as you prepare for this position.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (05:00:56):

Senator, I'm sorry, employers?

Senator Alex Padilla (05:00:59):

Yes.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (05:01:00):

Okay. I didn't understand that.

Senator Alex Padilla (05:01:02):

Yeah. Many employers across the country who are employing and exploiting-

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (05:01:06):

Got it.

Senator Alex Padilla (05:01:06):

... dangerous conditions--these are children that we're talking about. Ms. Bondi, we have even less time in this round than the first round.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (05:01:15):

Oh, darn.

Senator Alex Padilla (05:01:15):

And I don't have some yes or no questions, but a couple of important issues I do want to make sure to cover for the record. When you were a Florida attorney general, you defended restrictive abortion laws including mandatory waiting periods and parental consent requirements. If confirmed as attorney general, would you advocate for similar restrictions at the federal level?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (05:01:36):

I will follow the law of the United States of America.

Senator Alex Padilla (05:01:40):

Okay. Well, I'm asking this question because there's a difference between federal law and Florida law. There's a difference between the law and your personal views. So how would you ensure-

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (05:01:52):

According to Dobbs, those are left to the states.

Senator Alex Padilla (05:01:55):

How would you ensure that your personal views don't influence your decisions as attorney general in cases involving reproductive health?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (05:02:03):

Oh, my personal... No, my personal feelings would not influence Senator.

Senator Alex Padilla (05:02:12):

Okay. Next questions on the topic of gun violence, which continues to be a challenge and a problem in many parts of the country. As you know the Department of Justice plays a key role in enforcing federal gun laws and working to prevent gun violence. In the wake of the Parkland shooting in 2018, you expressed support for certain gun control measures in Florida, including raising the minimum age for firearm purchases and implementing red flag laws, which I agree with. I support and they're proven to make a difference and to save lives. How would you use the position of attorney general to advance these common sense gun safety policies on a national level?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (05:03:01):

First Senator, let me say I am pro-Second Amendment. I have always been pro-Second Amendment. I will follow the laws of my state of Florida and our country, of course. Regarding any gun laws, I worked that shooting, meaning I was there when 17 family members were notified, I was there, that their children were murdered.

(05:03:27)

Also, Pulse Nightclub. I also went to Nevada to help with the MGM shooting. The attorney general at the time asked me to come out there. I believe over 60 people were murdered there. I am an advocate for the Second Amendment, but I will enforce the laws of the land.

Senator Alex Padilla (05:03:46):

Okay. Well, I appreciate that. I would certainly hope so. But any specific ideas that you have on advancing the common sense gun safety proposals that you support as you were attorney general? I gave you two examples: raising the minimum age for firearm purchases or implementing red flag laws. There's, I think, a growing national consensus on universal background checks.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (05:04:10):

I would be glad to meet with you and review any legislation that you have, Senator.

Senator Alex Padilla (05:04:14):

Okay. All right. I only have a few seconds left, but thank you for your testimony. I know we ask some tough questions in this hearing. That's what the confirmation hearing process is supposed to be about.

(05:04:26)

I know how to count and I know how to read tea leaves. It seems to me you're very, very, very, very likely to be confirmed and certainly look forward to working with you in your office on the issues that I've raised today and more. And I certainly look forward to seeing you demonstrate the independence and respect for the rule of law that you have suggested to the committee today. Thank you.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (05:04:54):

Thank you, Senator. And my prayers are with you in California, again, on the horrific fires and what you're doing-

Senator Alex Padilla (05:05:01):

Thank you very much

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (05:05:01):

... to combat them.

Mr. Grassley (05:05:02):

[inaudible 05:05:04]

Senator Marsha Blackburn (05:05:05):

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And I know you're so pleased that we're about to the end of the day and we thank you so much for your time and your dedication and your desire to serve. And there are several things that we work together on here in this committee and we will need your help.

(05:05:24)

Online privacy, we have never addressed. Senator Blumenthal and I have worked on that--the Kids Online Safety Act, which we are looking forward to finishing here, this under President Trump's leadership so that we can protect children in the virtual space.

(05:05:42)

And another portion of the work that I put a good bit of time into is combating human trafficking. And I know you have such a background in that and we are so appreciative that you bring that background to the AG's position because this is an issue that is languished.

(05:06:01)

Now, Senator Cruz mentioned the 300,000 children that are not accounted for. Nearly two years ago I wrote the HHS secretary. It was at 75,000 at that point. And the number has increased, and there are steps that could be taken that this administration, the Biden administration has tossed to the side. We have legislation to address those, but General Bondi, this is something that you can begin to do on day one. This administration has stopped doing fingerprints. They have stopped doing DNA testing. And because of that, we know that about 40% of the kids that come to that border are being trafficked. And there is a way to put an end to this.

(05:07:01)

So we think creating a database, a human trafficking database at DOJ is a good step forward. We do have legislation on that. Another thing that we're working on is having Child Protective Services actually record the interviews with children and adults to help to protect these children.

(05:07:29)

But I would really like to get your commitment on the record for your help and a statement about the work that you have done in human trafficking and your commitment to ending that in our country.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (05:07:49):

Thank you, Senator. And I have not yet reviewed your legislation, but I would love to review that legislation. Yeah, I learned about the fingerprinting and the DNA when I was at the border a few months ago, and I really couldn't believe that. And while I was there, I went to a rape crisis center and what I saw and learned at that border, there is nothing humane happening at that border.

Senator Marsha Blackburn (05:08:19):

No.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (05:08:20):

And so many women and children are being trafficked coming into this country. And when I was attorney general for the state of Florida, I went to Mexico and I went to a safe house and I met victims of human trafficking--women and children.

(05:08:39)

I held babies who had been trafficked, and what gets a young drug addicted... Because they addict all these women to drugs when they're trafficked. Young drug addicted mother to break free from her captor, they were sending her to New York.

(05:08:57)

And when they were going to do that, what did they do? They were going to kill her baby. And that's what got her to break away and get to a safe house. So I am committed to fighting human trafficking alongside you and I have not yet read your legislation.

Senator Marsha Blackburn (05:09:11):

I appreciate that. We appreciate so much your commitment to that. There is nothing compassionate about what is going on at that southern border, and we will need your attention to fix those issues.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (05:09:24):

Thank you.

Senator Marsha Blackburn (05:09:25):

Thank you. Thank you Mr. Chairman.

Mr. Grassley (05:09:26):

On behalf of the chair, Senator Schiff.

Senator Schiff (05:09:31):

Thank you Mr. chair. It's been suggested, Ms. Bondi, by a number of my colleagues, that the concern Democrats have is that you are friends with the president. That's not our concern. It's not our concern that you're loyal to the former president. President has a right to choose people who he believes will be loyal to him.

(05:09:53)

Our concern comes when that loyalty to the president conflicts with your duty, conflicts with the constitution, conflicts with your oath, and our questions have been designed to try to ascertain what you'll do when that inevitable conflict arises.

(05:10:09)

And you may say that you believe that conflict will never come. But every day, week, month, and year of the first Trump administration demonstrated that conflict will come. Jeff Sessions may not have believed it would come to him; it came to him. Bill Barr may not have believed it would come to him; it came to him. It came to everyone.

(05:10:33)

It will come to you. And what you do in that moment will define your attorney general ship. Your public service, everything you've done up to that moment will be judged by what you do in that moment.

(05:10:49)

I would encourage you to talk to Secretary Mattis, someone who had broad respect and has broad respect of Americans and both sides of the aisle who felt it incumbent on him to leave his post because he could not in good conscience continue to do as he was asked.

(05:11:08)

I would encourage you to talk to Chris Wright who perhaps as well as anyone walked that difficult line, avoiding unnecessary and gratuitous fights with the former president, but at the same time defending his workforce, defending the democracy and our institutions. So I would talk to those who have been where you're about to be because you'll surely be faced with that difficult challenge if you are confirmed.

(05:11:40)

Let me turn to some California particular concerns. I'm grateful for your acknowledgement of the trauma we've been through with the fires. That is not over. We will need your help in going after those who are committing arson or who are looting or the inevitable fraudsters who will take advantage of the situation to try to defraud taxpayers

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (05:12:05):

Price gouging.

Senator Schiff (05:12:06):

As well as price gouging. Indeed, on the subject of price gouging, and we talked quite a bit about the 2020 election. The 2024 election was about the high cost of living. I hope you will demonstrate a willingness to go after anyone who's engaged in price gouging.

(05:12:26)

I think the oil companies are engaged in price gouging. The price of the pump in California is through the roof. Are you willing to take on even powerful interests like the oil industry if you determine that they're gouging consumers?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (05:12:40):

I handled the BP oil spill, Senator, when I was attorney general for the state of Florida. Right now as an immediate concern, I would be concerned about helping you in California with all the criminal acts that I'm sure are happening throughout your state with the looting.

(05:12:59)

And this is just from me watching it on the news. You've been there on the ground, but crime is rampant in California and it's only going to get worse based on these fires and what happened.

(05:13:08)

And price gouging is when people come in and they try to raise the price of goods: water, essential commodities. When people have lost their homes... And not everyone lives in a big home. Most people don't. And people have lost everything that they have had. And I am committed to working with everyone in California constantly to help the people in the aftermath of these fires and do everything that I can.

Senator Schiff (05:13:34):

We will need your help on that. We will need your help on attacking the scourge of fentanyl. We can't solve this problem as a local government or state government or federal government alone. We need to work together on that.

(05:13:49)

And let me ask one last question if I may, Mr. Chairman, important to a great many Californians and people around the country. And that is, will you respect their marriage? Will you respect marriage equality? Will you defend marriage equality?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (05:14:05):

I will respect the law. Absolutely.

Senator Schiff (05:14:09):

Thank you Mr. Chairman.

Senator Hawley (05:14:11):

Thank you Senator. I'm sitting here in the Chairman's seat. General Bondi, it's a great feeling of power. So-

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (05:14:20):

Do you have documents you want me to review?

Senator Hawley (05:14:23):

Maybe some things I'd like you to sign. Let me just ask you here, and I think I may be your last interlocutor for the day. So congratulations, you've just done fantastic. Thank you for answering all of our questions.

(05:14:34)

Let me just ask you about another of the abuses that this past administration perpetrated and that is still in place and I'm referring to the October 2021 memo from Attorney General Garland targeting parents at school board meetings. Do you remember this?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (05:14:50):

Yes. Senator.

Senator Hawley (05:14:51):

What happened was, as I'm sure you recall, we now know the Biden administration, the White House, the Secretary of Education solicited a letter from the National School Board Association. They ginned it up. It was fake from beginning to end.

(05:15:05)

They ginned it up, calling for law enforcement scrutiny against parents, taxpaying parents who are going to school board meetings, inquiring what their children were being taught, inquiring about face masks, critical race theory. And Attorney General Garland...

(05:15:20)

You talk about bowing to political pressure, when the White House demanded he activate the FBI against these parents, amazingly, unbelievably, he did it and he issued this memorandum in October of 2021.

(05:15:34)

All of this time later, that memorandum has still never been formally rescinded. Even after the National School Board Association withdrew their letter, admitted they had been wrong to call parents potential domestic terrorists who were merely raising questions about what their children were being taught.

(05:15:49)

Garland never apologized for it. He never did anything about it. It is still in effect. Here's my question for you: as attorney general, if and when you are confirmed, will you finally rescind that memorandum and do right on behalf of all of these parents who have been wrongly unjustly targeted by the FBI and DOJ?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (05:16:10):

Senator, I have not yet read the memo. If I am confirmed, I will read the memo and I will do the right thing just like I told Senators on both sides of the aisle regarding their issues.

Senator Hawley (05:16:20):

Good. I look forward to you doing that and I would hope this is something you could do on the first day after you're confirmed to send a message to parents and law-abiding citizens everywhere. This shouldn't be a partisan issue.

(05:16:31)

I bet the parents who went to these meetings, they're Republicans or Democrats, they have no partisanship, but they want to know that their First Amendment rights will be protected and you rescinding that memo formally after, frankly, the current attorney general lied to us about it for years would send a tremendous message.

(05:16:46)

Let me just ask you about the one other thing, and this is something near and dear to me. We talked about this when you came to my office. The Department of Justice administers a fund called the Radiation Exposure Compensation Fund. This is a fund that helps pay for the healthcare bills of Americans who have been exposed to nuclear radiation by the government through no fault of their own.

(05:17:10)

In the West and other parts of the country, the Department of Justice has administered that program for years. Senator Orrin Hatch actually wrote the initial bill. It has been in existence since 1990. It's been supported by senators from both parties. It's extremely important to my

state because in the state of Missouri, we have a lot of nuclear radiation that has occurred. That's still in our groundwater, still in our soil, not cleaned up yet.

(05:17:31)

My question for you is: since you'll be in charge of administering it, will you administer that program fairly and equitably? Will you defend it? Will you make sure that radiation victims who are under the statute entitled to compensation from their government get what they deserve?

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (05:17:44):

Senator, I was speaking about that with someone yesterday because I did not know... Again, there's going to be a lot if I am confirmed that I don't know. That's why it's so important to keep an open dialogue with every senator from every state. And yes, I'm committed to looking at that and I did not realize you had that horrific problem in your state.

Senator Hawley (05:18:04):

Thank you very much. Thank you for answering our questions. And with that, Mr. Chairman, I yield back my time.

Mr. Grassley (05:18:12):

Before I close down this meeting, I would enter into a record from a bipartisan group of attorneys who have served as attorney general in their respective states. This includes New York, Delaware, New Jersey, Illinois, and Hawaii. They write that Ms. Bondi has worked, quote, across both state and party lines to solve problems, and a further quote that she is, quote, unquote, "highly qualified nominee."

(05:18:48)

Without objection, that will be put in the record. You've done extremely well. I thank you for your testimony today and I thank your family. Whatever pressures they felt, we apologize for it, but thank you for being so patient through all this process.

(05:19:13)

You should be very proud Ms. Bondi. You performed well. I think admirably is another adjective and showed this entire country that you're eminently qualified to serve as attorney general. If confirmed, you'll be a chief protector of the rule of law and I have every confidence that you're going to do a superb job.

(05:19:41)

Now for information for the future, written questions can be submitted for the record until tomorrow at 5:00 P.M. Ms. Bondi, when you receive these questions, please enter and return them to the committee as soon as possible because under our rules, that has something to do with when we can schedule action for your confirmation.

(05:20:12)

You're excused at this point. This committee is adjourned. We will reconvene tomorrow right here. Is it right here in this room? Well, right here at 10:15 A.M. to hear from a panel of outside witnesses in regard to Ms. Bondi's nomination. We're adjourned.

Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi (05:20:32):

Thank you, Senator.