

TRUMP ADMINISTRATION

Senate confirms Markwayne Mullin to be DHS secretary, replacing Kristi Noem

The vote makes the Oklahoma Republican senator the newest member of President Donald Trump's Cabinet, leading a department facing a variety of challenges and controversies.



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Sen. Markwayne Mullin confirmed as new head of DHS

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March 24, 2026, 2:24 AM GMT+2

By **Sahil Kapur and Scott Wong**

WASHINGTON – The Senate voted Monday to confirm Markwayne Mullin to lead the Department of Homeland Security as the [shutdown of the sprawling agency](#) dragged into its sixth week with no end in sight.



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The vote to confirm Mullin, a Republican senator from Oklahoma, as the head of DHS was 54-45, with Sens. John Fetterman, D-Pa., and Martin Heinrich, D-N.M., supporting his confirmation.

Sen. Rand Paul, R-Ky., the chairman of the panel overseeing DHS, voted against Mullin on Monday after he [clashed with him](#) at his hearing last week and questioned whether a man with “anger issues” could be trusted to set a good example for ICE and Border Patrol agents.

Mullin, a staunch supporter of President Donald Trump on Capitol Hill, takes the reins at DHS during a volatile time for the agency. He replaces Secretary Kristi Noem, his former House colleague, whom [Trump fired](#) about six weeks after DHS agents shot and killed two American citizens during immigration enforcement operations in Minneapolis.

In the wake of the killings of Renee Good and Alex Pretti, Democrats withheld their votes and forced a shutdown of DHS after Republicans refused to give into their demands to rein in ICE and Customs and Border Protection.

Mullin’s confirmation is unlikely to unlock a deal, as Democrats have made it clear that their opposition to funding DHS is about policy, not personnel. They insist they won’t provide enough support to reach the crucial 60-vote threshold to pass the bill unless Republicans agree to add restrictions on ICE and Border Patrol agents – such as wearing identification, removing masks and requiring judicial warrants for them to conduct raids on private property.

Still, Mullin’s new position of power will test his clout in the Senate as lawmakers desperately seek to end the shutdown.

Because of the shutdown, thousands of TSA agents and other DHS employees are working without pay. And high rates of absences have resulted in long security lines at airports around the country. More than 400 TSA officers have quit since the shutdown began.

“He’s a courageous person,” Sen. John Cornyn, R-Texas, said of his colleague Mullin. “It’s a very challenging job under the best of circumstances, and this may not be the best of circumstances.”

Mullin has publicly suggested he’s familiar with the “smell” and “taste” of war, even though he hasn’t served in the military. Senators grilled him about a foreign trip he said he was asked in 2015 to take as a member of the House, which he said was classified. He declined to provide

details, saying he would discuss it in only a private setting. Democratic senators walked away from the meeting in a classified setting with more questions than answers, they said.

“When I heard President Trump would be nominating Sen. Mullin, I kept an open mind. However, throughout the nomination process, he has failed to be forthright and transparent,” said Gary Peters of Michigan, the top Democrat on the Senate Homeland Security Committee. “Sen. Mullin also showed that he doesn’t have the experience or the temperament to lead this critical department.”

Some Democrats who voted against Mullin said their opposition wasn’t personal. They strongly object to how the Trump administration has been carrying out ICE raids in Minneapolis and other parts of the country.

“I had a very long conversation” with Mullin, said Sen. Andy Kim, D-N.J., a former Obama national security official who is on the Homeland Security Committee. “A lot of this is just so deep to the core of the administration in terms of the problems. It really stems [from] Stephen Miller and Donald Trump.” Miller is the White House deputy chief of staff for policy and homeland security adviser.

Mullin, 48, is a former professional mixed martial arts fighter who has bonded with Trump over the years at various wrestling events. He made a small fortune through his family’s plumbing business and won election to the House in 2012.

A decade later, he won a special election to replace GOP Sen. Jim Inhofe, who had announced he would resign with four years left in his term. Mullin is a member of the Cherokee Nation.

While Fetterman signaled early on that he would support Mullin, Heinrich’s vote to confirm him wasn’t widely expected.

“This is going to surprise some people, but I consider Markwayne Mullin a friend,” Heinrich said in a statement, citing bills they have worked on together and calling him a principled voice. “I have also seen first-hand that Markwayne is not someone who can simply be bullied into changing his views, and I look forward to having a Secretary who doesn’t take their orders from Stephen Miller.” 📺



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