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Reps. Thomas Massie, R-Kentucky, and Ro Khanna, D-California, have been reviewing millions of confidential records related to Jeffrey Epstein. KENT NISHIMURA/REUTERS

Deadline looming for DHS reforms

White House, Congress continue negotiations

Zachary Schermele
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON – Congress and the White House are locked in negotiations over potential reforms to the Department of Homeland Security as a deadline to shut down the agency approaches.

Lawmakers have until the end of Feb. 13, to reach an agreement or risk jeopardizing funding for the Transportation Security Administration and U.S. Coast Guard, among other divisions of the 9/11-era Cabinet agency that could be impacted by yet another lapse in appropriations.

Unlike during the record-breaking government shutdown in the fall, Trump administration officials have been engaged in the last few weeks in serious talks with lawmakers on Capitol Hill. The ongoing discussions reflect a bipartisan unease over the tactics of federal agents in President Trump's nationwide immigration enforcement surge, especially after Alex Pretti's killing by federal officers in Minnesota in January.

Last week, House and Senate Democrats released a list of 10 demands to curb DHS, which oversees Immigration and Customs Enforcement and Customs and Border Protection. Those wishes included a ban on mask-wearing for federal agents, stricter use-of-force standards and prohibiting immigration enforcement operations in "sensitive locations" such as schools and churches.

Since then, Democrats have been trying to broker a deal with their GOP counterparts and the White House, which has offered a counterproposal, according to an administration official.

The contours of the White House's offer weren't immediately widely

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6 more suspects found in Epstein files, officials say

Names had been blacked out in public release

Bart Jansen
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON – Two House members who led the effort to force the Justice Department to release more documents about accused sex trafficker Jeffrey Epstein said they discovered at least six more suspected accomplices.

The department began Feb. 9 allowing lawmakers to review millions of records that remain confidential. Reps. Thomas Massie, R-Kentucky, and Ro Khanna, D-California, said they found additional suspects among names that

had previously remained blacked out in publicly released records.

"What we want is the men who Jeffrey Epstein trafficked women to – we want those names published," Massie told reporters. "In two hours, we found six men whose names have been redacted who are implicated in the way that the files are presented."

The revelations are part of the latest conflict between Congress and the Justice Department over the release of millions of documents about Epstein that remain confidential. Upcoming congressional hearings and depositions

will focus on what has remained secret for years.

Congress approved a law in November that directed the department to release all its files about Epstein, who died by suicide in prison in 2019 while awaiting trial on sex trafficking charges.

Lawmakers and people who accused Epstein of abuse aim to track down powerful business and political leaders who might have conspired with him other than Ghislaine Maxwell, an Epstein associate serving a 20-year prison sentence.

The department has released 3.5 million documents out of 6 million.

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Lawmakers grill immigration officials

Leaders defend tactics at committee hearing

Christopher Cann, Bart Jansen, Lauren Villagran and Zachary Schermele
USA TODAY

WASHINGTON – America is overrun with foreign "criminals." America is overrun by "fascist" federal agents.

These two opposing views – caricatures of a politically polarized country – dominated a Feb. 10 House Homeland Security Committee hearing in which the Trump administration's top immigration enforcers testified before Congress for the first time since two Americans died at the hands of federal agents

in Minneapolis.

The fatal shootings of Renee Good and Alex Pretti and agents' tactics have alienated a growing share of Americans and caused friction in the GOP. But Republicans appeared to be betting that hardcore immigration enforcement will continue to play well with voters this midterm elections year, while Democrats failed to extract any meaningful admissions from the leaders of Immigration and Customs Enforcement and Customs and Border Protection.

Congress faces a Feb. 13 deadline to avert a shutdown of the Department of Homeland Security, with Democrats and Republicans deadlocked over potential reforms.

Committee Chair Andrew R. Garbarino, R-New York, in his opening state-

ment, applauded some of the Trump administration's immigration efforts but said "the credibility of these successes is on the line."

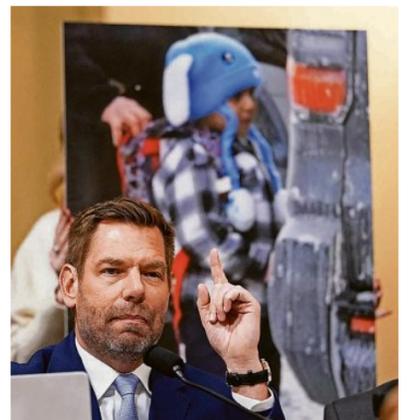
"We must take the temperature down," he said, calling the fatal shootings of Pretti and Good "unacceptable and preventable."

Garbarino demanded "complete and impartial" investigations, criticizing officials who chose to "rush to judgment" after the shootings.

"Public trust and public safety go hand in hand," he said. "We cannot have one without the other."

In his opening statement, ranking Democrat Bennie Thompson, D-Mississippi, said DHS' "reckless, careless" acts

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During a House Homeland Security Committee hearing, immigration officials were questioned about 5-year-old Liam Conejo Ramos, who was detained with his father by immigration officers and later released. KENT NISHIMURA/REUTERS

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