

U.S. SENATOR ELISSA SLOTKIN

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

July 16, 2026

Contact: press@slotkin.senate.gov

Slotkin Introduces MERIT Act to Require National Security Experience for Intelligence Leadership

The MERIT Act comes as an unqualified loyalist of President Trump serves as acting DNI-- and while the broader weaponization of the intelligence community is at risk

WASHINGTON, D.C. - Today, U.S. Senator Elissa Slotkin (D-MI) [introduced the *Minimum Experience Requirements for Intelligence Transition \(MERIT\) Act*](#), legislation that would require any individual serving as Director of National Intelligence (DNI), including in an acting or interim capacity, to have extensive national security experience. The requirement reiterates the standard already applied to Senate-confirmed DNIs under the *Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004*, championed by Senator Susan Collins and lawmakers on both sides of the aisle.

The bill comes as Bill Pulte serves as Acting DNI, and [ahead of President Trump's address on elections this evening](#). Bill Pulte has spent his career in private equity and real estate and has no prior national security experience. As a federal housing official, he accessed and weaponized confidential mortgage records to target the President's perceived enemies. With access to the full breadth of U.S. intelligence tools and information as DNI, he would be able to further weaponize government resources for political gain. The President has made clear he expects Pulte to use the position to investigate his unsubstantiated claims of "rigged elections" and to declassify material at his own discretion.

"As someone who was detailed to DNI as a CIA officer, I know firsthand that the DNI should be focused on foreign threats, not used to further conspiracy theories about stolen elections," said Senator Slotkin. "The American people need intelligence leaders focused on defending our country, and who have experience in national security. Whether in a temporary role or otherwise, we need serious people who won't misuse the IC's time, personnel and tools to relitigate elections and undermine confidence in our democracy."

Background:

Throughout his time in office, President Trump has kept up a sustained effort to undermine confidence in U.S. elections. He has:

- **Repeated false fraud claims.** Over the past six months, President Trump has repeated his claim that elections are "rigged" nearly every day, **at least 107 times**. Going back to his first-ever campaign, the 2016 Iowa Caucuses, he has alleged voter fraud or a rigged process on at **least a dozen separate occasions**. In his first ever race, the 2016 Iowa Caucuses, he refused to accept he lost and alleged voter fraud.

- **Attempted to nationalize control of elections.** The President has called on Republicans to **"nationalize" the midterm elections and take over election administration in at least 15 states** and has pushed legislation and rule changes that voting-rights advocates warn would disenfranchise **millions** of voters. He has dismantled our Election Assistance Commission, which helps every state carry out their elections. He has pushed our U.S. Postal Service to restrict mail-in-voting unless states have given over their voter rolls to the DOJ. And he pressed the Supreme Court to gut parts of the Voting Rights Act, **allowing states to silence the voices of minority**

voters.

- **Weaponized our intelligence community.** The President has used the power of our intelligence community to selectively declassify intelligence to support his false claims about elections. He has **directed the intelligence community to target his enemies** through the creation of weaponization working groups and the implementation of NSPM-7. And he has sent the former Director of National Intelligence Gabbard to a partisan raid of ballots in Fulton County, Georgia.

- **Attempted to seize election materials.** Following the 2020 election, the administration drafted an executive order to **direct the military to seize voting machines and election materials in battleground states**; the President has since said he "should have" signed it. This year, armed FBI agents seized ballots in Fulton County, Georgia, the **Department of Justice demanded 2024 ballots and related records** from Detroit's Wayne County, and federal investigators have probed the 2020 election results in Arizona. DOJ has also sued 30 states to obtain their voter rolls.

- **Refused to rule out troops or armed agents at the polls.** The President has left open the possibility of deploying troops or armed federal agents to polling places, including during the upcoming midterms. Multiple senior officials, including the Acting Attorney General, the [Secretaries of Defense](#) and [Homeland Security](#), and other political appointees, have repeatedly declined to rule this out when asked [directly, by Senator Slotkin](#) and others.

As the Administration continues to erode public trust in our election systems, and as Bill Pulte, an unqualified loyalist of the President, serves as a leader in the intelligence community, the broader intelligence community is at risk of becoming weaponized against the American people for the political gain of the President. This is a dangerous precedent that would allow for future leaders to utilize the intelligence community's resources to further false conspiracy theories.

Read the full text of the [bill here](#).

###