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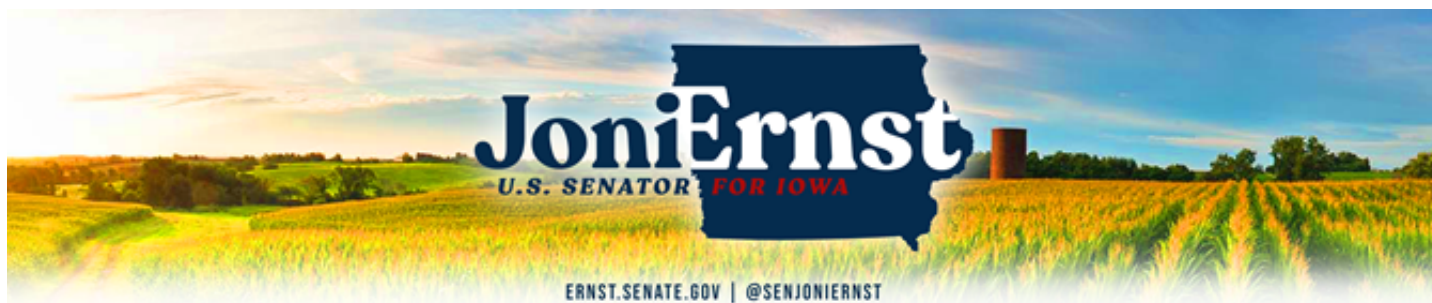
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**RELEASE | Ernst Statement After Hegseth Hearing**

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CONTACT: [Ernst\\_Press@ernst.senate.gov](mailto:Ernst_Press@ernst.senate.gov)**Ernst Statement After Hegseth Hearing**

WASHINGTON – Following nominee for Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth’s hearing today, U.S. Senator Joni Ernst (R-Iowa), a combat veteran and member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, released the following statement:

“After four years of weakness in the White House, Americans deserve a strong Secretary of Defense,” **said Senator Joni Ernst.** “Our next commander in chief selected Pete Hegseth to serve in this role, and after our conversations, hearing from Iowans, and doing my job as a United States Senator, I will support President Trump’s pick for Secretary of Defense. As I serve on the Armed Services Committee, I will work with Pete to create the most lethal fighting force and hold him to his commitments of auditing the Pentagon, ensuring opportunity for women in combat while maintaining high standards, and selecting a senior official to address and prevent sexual assault in the ranks.”

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