

“My good friend Sean O’Brien”

Teamsters bureaucracy lines up behind Trump’s DHS nominee Markwayne Mullin

Jacob Crosse
20 March 2026

Teamsters President Sean O’Brien appeared in person at Senator Markwayne Mullin’s confirmation hearing this week, following his earlier public endorsement of Trump’s nominee to head the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). Before testimony began, Mullin embraced O’Brien visually underscoring the political alliance between the Teamsters bureaucracy and the domestic police state.

Mullin’s nomination was then advanced out of committee by an 8-7 vote after Democratic Senator John Fetterman of Pennsylvania supplied the decisive vote. That margin was necessary because Republican committee chairman Rand Paul refused to support Mullin, citing, among other things, Mullin’s past praise for the assault Paul suffered at the hands of his neighbor and his refusal to offer a real apology. Mullin now appears likely to win confirmation on the Senate floor, where Republicans hold a narrow majority.

Before testimony even began, Mullin embraced Sean O’Brien, who then took a seat next to former Speaker of the House and former California Republican Rep. Kevin McCarthy. Democratic Rep. Josh Gottheimer of New Jersey, a supporter not only of the US-backed Israeli genocide in Gaza, but also of the ongoing illegal war against Iran and the war against Russia in Ukraine, also sat in the front row in support of Mullin. The scene provided a fitting image of the political relationship on display throughout the proceedings: the open alignment of the Teamsters bureaucracy, both political parties, and Trump’s next thug to head the Department of Homeland Security.

Chairman of the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, Republican Rand Paul of Kentucky, opened the hearing by denouncing

political violence and recalling an assault he suffered years ago. He noted that Mullin had stated publicly he “completely understood” why Paul had been assaulted by his neighbor.

“I just wonder if someone who applauds violence against their political opponents is the right person to lead an agency that has struggled to accept limits to the proper use of force,” Paul said.

While Paul was openly hostile to Mullin, Democratic Michigan Senator Gary Peters cordially thanked him for meeting with him before the hearing and welcomed Mullin’s family. He then said that Democrats were prepared to fund all of the Department of Homeland Security, except Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), until “reforms” were enacted. “We just want ICE to follow the same rules as local police,” Peters said. “Local police” in America routinely kill more than 1,000 people per year, overwhelmingly workers and poor people, with virtual impunity.

In his questioning, Peters raised Mullin’s previous comments following the murder of Alex Pretti by Customs and Border Protection agents. Like former Secretary Kristi Noem, Mullin smeared the Veterans Administration intensive care unit nurse after he was gunned down in the back, calling him a “deranged individual that came in to cause max damage.” Peters asked Mullin whether he would offer similar “quick responses” if he became secretary.

Mullin claimed he would not mirror Noem’s behavior and said he “probably should have” retracted his comments, something he neglected to do either at the hearing or in the two months since Pretti’s killing. When Peters gave him an opportunity to apologize to the Pretti family, Mullin declined, citing an “ongoing

investigation.”

In his opening questioning of Mullin, Paul played a video showing Mullin previously threatening to fight Sean O’Brien and then defending his actions in multiple media appearances. In one podcast, Mullin declared, “I’m not afraid of biting... and I don’t care where I’ll bite, it’s just going to be a bite.”

Paul asked Mullin whether he thought “fighting” was a good way to resolve political differences. Mullin replied, “As you can notice over my shoulder here is my good friend Sean O’Brien.”

O’Brien beamed as Mullin described going on his podcast and reconciling their differences.

On O’Brien’s podcast in October 2025, Mullin openly celebrated his relationship with the Teamsters president. Mullin noted that “President Trump loves” O’Brien and that Trump helped the pair become partners.

In a Senate statement released the same day, Mullin said that under Trump’s leadership he and O’Brien had found “quite a friendship,” and added, “We talk all the time.”

On the podcast, O’Brien added, “I think we’ve worked together well... and I think we talk more than people think.”

“Yeah,” Mullin replied.

“One of the examples of working together and collaborating was when the nomination [for US secretary of labor] of Lori Chavez DeRemer,” O’Brien said. O’Brien later favorably compared himself to the capitalist politician, saying they shared a similar “goal.”

“Your goal is to always get an agreement. Your goal is never to strike in our world,” said O’Brien.

Trump’s esteem for the Teamsters president is not a personal curiosity but a class fact. It signifies that O’Brien and the Teamsters bureaucracy are recognized by the administration as a dependable instrument for subordinating workers to the financial oligarchy. O’Brien’s collaboration with Mullin over the nomination of Chavez-DeRemer underscores that the Teamsters bureaucracy is integrating itself ever more directly into the capitalist state.

O’Brien’s endorsement of Markwayne Mullin for secretary of the DHS exposes the class character of the Teamsters bureaucracy. On March 6, after Trump

named Mullin to replace Kristi Noem, O’Brien declared, “If anyone is willing to stand their butt up to protect America, it’s Markwayne Mullin.”

No genuine workers’ organization could support the head of DHS, the department that oversees ICE, Customs and Border Protection (CBP), and the expanding network of concentration camps to imprison immigrants today and political opponents and native-born workers tomorrow.

The significance of O’Brien’s support is sharpened by the broader political context. In September 2025, Trump’s NSPM-7 memorandum cast “anti-fascism” as domestic terrorism and identified “anti-Americanism, anti-capitalism, and anti-Christianity” as ideological markers of supposed violent conspiracies.

O’Brien’s appearance at Mullin’s hearing also confirms the broader analysis made by the WSWS after the 2024 Republican National Convention, which explained that the union bureaucracy is “a natural base of support for fascism.” Completely integrated with management and dependent on the capitalist state, the bureaucracy is hostile to any independent movement from below. O’Brien’s support for Trump’s DHS nominee is not a personal aberration but the political expression of that social function.

Workers need new organizations of struggle—rank-and-file committees independent of the bureaucracy, uniting immigrant and native-born workers alike on an internationalist basis against deportations, war, fascism and capitalism.



To contact the WSWS and the Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact