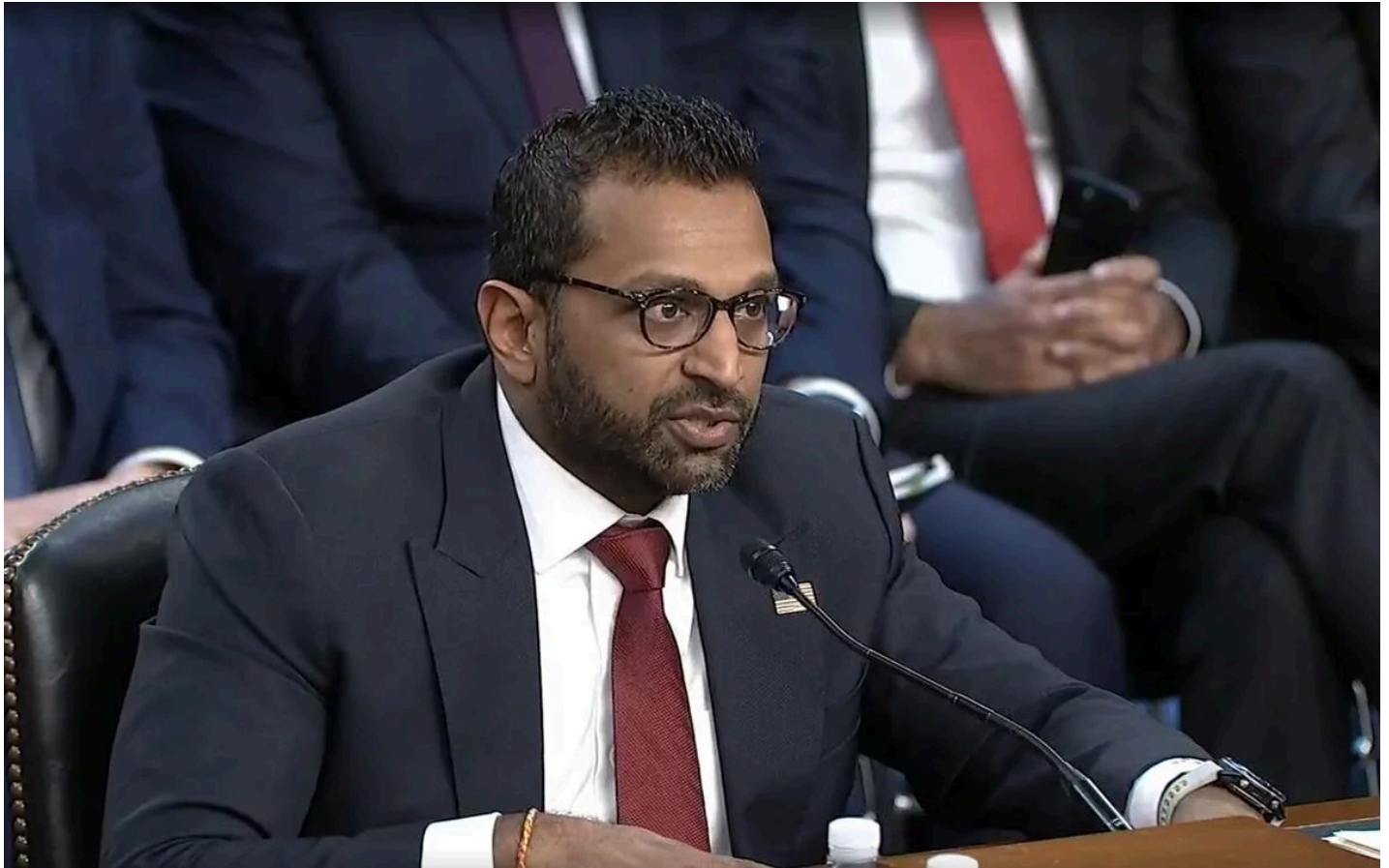


FBI director backtracks on administration's proposed budget cuts

By Morgan Sweeney | The Center Square
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FBI Director Kash Patel

U.S. Senate Committee on the Judiciary

(The Center Square) – FBI Director Kash Patel told lawmakers Wednesday that a White House proposal to cut the agency's budget was \$1 billion short – but then he walked the statement back on Thursday.

"I'm here today in full support of the president's budget, which reprioritizes and enhances our mission of law enforcement and national security," Patel said before the Senate Appropriations Committee. "We want an FBI, in support of the president's budget, that

puts law enforcement, fighting violent crime and national security first and that does only those things and nothing else.”

The White House’s proposal implied that substantial amounts of federal funding had been misdirected at the FBI toward diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives, “duplicative intelligence activities” and using the agency as a tool to achieve the political goals of the previous administration. The administration proposed a budget for fiscal year 2026 that’s about \$545 million less than the agency’s existing budget and \$1 billion less than the budget the agency proposed.

On Wednesday, Patel testified before the House Appropriations Committee and said the administration’s proposal wouldn’t enable the FBI to fully do its job.

“What we’re focusing on right now is working with our partners in [the Office of Management and Budget] to say that we cannot cover down on the mission at the levels that we would have to go to – which would be the 2011 levels – should all the budget cuts you just outlined be implemented,” Patel told Rep. Rosa DeLauro, D-CT, referring to the \$545 million cut.

Patel said the FBI would have to cut about 1,300 employees if the budget that is passed reflects the lower proposal from the White House.

When pressed Thursday on the contradiction with his statements from Wednesday, Patel said he could “do the mission” and is “in support of the budget here,” but that Wednesday, he was giving examples of the “more” he could do with additional funds.

“So you support the budget presented that cuts half a billion but you also support us adding \$1 billion should we choose to do that?” Sen. Jeff Merkley, D-Ore., asked.

“Well I can’t not support the budget as proposed because then I would be supporting no budget,” Patel responded.

Republicans in Congress are trying to reduce the federal budget, in line with President Donald Trump's fiscal goals, while preserving tax cuts from the president's first term and introducing a slate of other expensive tax changes Trump has put forward.

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