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January 8, 2021

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker of the House of Representatives  
204 Capitol Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Minority Leader  
H-107 Capitol Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Leader McCarthy,

It was with great sadness and anger that we witnessed this week's horrific events unfold at the U.S. Capitol. The violence that breached the halls of Congress with the intent to disrupt by force and terror the business of our government and to overturn the results of a national election poses a threat to our entire country. We were shocked, but we were not surprised – violence by domestic extremists is something ADL has been warning about for several years and especially over the last few months related to the 2020 elections.

We write to call on Congress to take five immediate, meaningful steps to respond to this act of domestic terrorism by combating the spread of violent conspiracy theories underpinning these actions and by responding vigorously to the crimes that have been committed.

**One, we urge you to take immediate action to counter and severely limit the influence of QAnon in Congress.**<sup>1</sup> Given the avowed purposes of the sprawling QAnon conspiracy theory and in light of the proven and dire consequences of allowing lies about public figures and affairs to go unchecked, we call on you to take immediate action to identify any Members of the 117th Congress who have endorsed, given credence to, or intentionally promoted QAnon content, to remove them from the Democratic Caucus and Republican Conference, and to decline to assign them to Congressional committees. Such action is in line with steps that have been taken in Congress in the past when Members

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.adl.org/media/15207/download>

espoused dangerous, extremist views that fostered violence and bigotry, such as in the case of former Representative Steven King.

QAnon is a dangerous conspiracy theory movement that has inspired supporters to commit acts of domestic terrorism, including murder and kidnapping, as well as other acts of violence and public disturbances. This week's violence at the Capitol, which resulted in several deaths and put members of Congress, their staff, law enforcement officers and bystanders in danger, was only one such manifestation of this kind of falsehood-motivated behavior. Congress must make clear that adherents of violent conspiracy theories that undermine democratic institutions and spread such virulent disinformation do not deserve seats of influence on Capitol Hill. And while Members of Congress are of course free to continue to express themselves both publicly and privately, the leadership has a responsibility to defend and preserve democracy, and fails in this duty if by action or inaction it amplifies those ideas or elevates Members who promote violent, antisemitic and racist belief systems to positions of significant influence and power.

Our additional asks address the need to take substantive action to both understand how violence and security breaches transpired on the Hill, and to ensure that America has every tool at its disposal to respond to any future such attacks.

**Two, we call for the formation of a joint select congressional committee with representatives from the Intelligence, Homeland Security, Energy and Commerce, Commerce, Science and Transportation, and Judiciary Committees to investigate any complicity between social media companies and extremists, and to probe how extremists used social media platforms to promulgate conspiracy theories, radicalize users, and incite violence.** Failure by social media companies to comply with Congress's investigation should result in severe penalties and other legislative or regulatory action as may be appropriate.

**Three, Congress must investigate the inadequate law enforcement response on January 6, 2021, particularly in contrast to law enforcement overreach in cases of legitimate exercise of free speech.** We urge you to immediately investigate the security failures that took place, including whether law enforcement was unprepared, unwilling, or ordered not to adequately address the threat to the Capitol. As part of your inquiry, we call on you to launch an investigation of the difference in approach by law enforcement to the January 6 attempted coup conspirators and this summer's racial justice protesters, including those peaceful individuals who were violently attacked by government forces on June 1, 2020 in and around Lafayette Square in Washington, D.C. These investigations must be accompanied by legislation that allocates adequate resources to mitigating extremist threats.

**Four, we ask you to explore legislative efforts to close existing gaps in federal law to prosecute domestic terrorists.** Some of these gaps are not directly related to criminal activity, such as the need to mandate the establishment of [domestic terrorism offices](#) and to appropriate sufficient funds so that the government is better equipped to address domestic terrorism using existing authorities. Others relate specifically to the current laws, which for example do not address the use of small-bore firearms in a mass shooting as a terrorist act. We believe the government can give greater attention to the threat posed by violent domestic extremists while also safeguarding fundamental civil rights and liberties, and we look forward to working with legislators to accomplish that.

**Five, we urge you to support the reintroduction and passage of the Domestic Terrorism Prevention Act (DTPA).** The DTPA would prevent domestic terrorism by requiring reporting on the threat of white supremacist and other extremist violence, require that the government apportion its resources to focus on documented threats, and authorize offices to address the threat.

We know that you share ADL's commitment to the eradication of extremism, racism, antisemitism, and all forms of bigotry and hate.

Thank you for your commitment to these issues.

Sincerely,



Jonathan A. Greenblatt  
CEO and National Director



Max Sevilla  
Vice President, Government Relations,  
Advocacy, and Community Engagement