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Michael Sheetz, President

January 11, 2023

Dear Speaker McCarthy and Leader Jeffries,

As we [have urged](#) in previous sessions of Congress, I write today to urge you to decline to assign Congressional committees to Members who have embraced anti-democratic conspiracy theories, groups, or movements that animate hate and violence. I do not make this recommendation lightly. While there may be many significant issues on which ADL and a Member of Congress might disagree – these disagreements do not and should not merit limiting the reach and power of those Members. However, when Members elevate anti-democratic conspiracy theories, groups, or movements that animate hate and violence, action must be taken to limit their influence.

Countless deadly attacks over the past few years – from Pittsburgh to Buffalo, from Charlottesville to Colorado Springs – reveal the violent consequences of the spread of conspiracy theories and the long-standing threat this rhetoric poses to the future of our democratic institutions and democracy itself. The impact of extremist violence and threats are not limited to their primary targets – there are dangerous ripple effects that reach entire communities and, indeed, the country as a whole. Unchecked violent extremism damages our social fabric and undermines our democratic norms. Congress must continue to make clear that actions or ideologies that undermine the safety and security of the American people and its leaders have no place in seats of influence on Capitol Hill.

Since membership in the House Democratic Caucus and the House Republican Conference signals acceptance by colleagues and ensures Members of Congress an amplified voice in setting the legislative and messaging agendas of the most important coalitions in the institution, denying this opportunity to adherents of violent conspiracy theories, groups, or movements would appropriately limit their influence on governance. Similarly, those who advance such extreme and dangerous positions should not benefit from Congressional committee assignments that function as an impactful recognition of Members' particular expertise and a delegation of responsibility for leading Congress' work on selected topics of great import.

While Members are free to continue to express their ideas both publicly and privately, Congress need not and should not raise and amplify those Members and ideas or provide those Members with positions of influence and power. Just as we would not allow a supporter of Al Qaeda to serve on the Armed Services Committee, Congressional leadership must not extend to any Member who has

endorsed, given credence to, or intentionally promoted conspiracy theories that animate groups such as Atomwaffen, Proud Boys, or the Oath Keepers. Members who have embraced violent anti-democratic conspiracy theories such as QAnon cannot commit to respecting the foundational values and principles upon which our system of government rests. Such action is in line [with steps that have been previously taken in Congress](#) when Members espoused dangerous extremist views that foster violence and bigotry.

Indeed, Congressional leaders previously have recognized withholding committee positions as a necessary and appropriate response to a Member's embrace of extremist credos when, for example, Congressman Steve King was removed from the Judiciary and Agriculture Committees in 2019 after publicly suggesting that white nationalism and white supremacy should not be considered offensive.

I know that you share ADL's commitment to the eradication of violent extremism, antisemitism, and all forms of bigotry. You can reinforce this in a dramatic way by removing from the House Republican Conference and House Democratic Caucus, and by declining to extend committee assignments to, Members who have embraced anti-democratic conspiracy theories, groups, or movements that animate hate and violence. Such a decisive and meaningful action will make clear that the U.S. House of Representatives will not allow itself to be manipulated as a vehicle to undermine national security.

Silence and inaction in the face of such unacceptable conduct will allow violent extremism to grow unchallenged.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Max Sevilla', with a stylized flourish at the end.

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