

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-2107

January 7, 2021

The Honorable Zoe Lofgren
Chairwoman
Committee on House Administration
1309 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Carolyn B. Maloney
Chairwoman
House Committee on Oversight and Reform
2157 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairwomen Lofgren and Maloney,

I write to urge the Committee on House Administration and the Committee on Oversight and Reform, working in coordination with any other House and Senate Committees, to begin immediate and transparent investigations into the unprecedented insurrection by violent white supremacist domestic terrorists with the treasonous aim of undermining our Constitution and our democracy.

Over the last several weeks, Donald J. Trump has repeatedly spread baseless and illogical claims of election fraud to sow doubt in the legitimacy of the 2020 election and invigorate those who voted for him to travel to Washington, D.C., to overturn the will of the people. Across the United States and around the world, people watched in horror as hundreds violently stormed the U.S. Capitol building--easily overtaking barricades, breaching security and eventually occupying the Senate floor and Capitol rotunda bringing Congress's constitutionally mandated work to a screeching halt. Wednesday's domestic terrorist attack will forever be remembered as one of the most dangerous days in Congressional history. It is incumbent upon us to thoroughly examine the actions that transpired, review the failed response and hold the appropriate individuals and agencies to account.

Without a doubt, much of the blame is firmly placed at the doorstep of the White House. Over the course of his Administration, Donald J. Trump has used his position to intensify division and incite violence. Last year, when given the chance to denounce white supremacy, Donald Trump spoke directly to white supremacist group the Proud Boys instructing them to "stand back and stand by." On the very morning that Congress was scheduled to certify the election results, he encouraged thousands of his supporters to disrupt the vote counts and said, "You'll never take back our country with weakness. You have to show strength and you have to be strong." It is clear that Donald J. Trump helped orchestrate this domestic terrorism attack on our Legislative branch. It is critical that we investigate and hold him accountable for the violence and chaos that he has incited.

Despite the widespread media coverage of the planned actions of far-right extremists in the nation's capital, it is evident that our security apparatus and coordination with local and federal law enforcement failed to prevent the attack. It is absolutely paramount that we investigate how

these domestic terrorists were able to so easily breach the Capitol building in broad daylight and in clear view of the United States Capitol Police (USCP). Public reports and video footage of the attack raise significant questions that demand urgent answers. For example, some Capitol Police officers were recorded removing barriers from the Capitol grounds, taking selfies and even politely escorting terrorists out of buildings allowing them to leave freely.¹ The American people deserve to know if trespassing rioters seeking to disrupt a democratic process outlined in the U.S. Constitution were at all enabled by the very people responsible for stopping them. As the chief law enforcement agency in the building, the USCP is empowered with robust authority to detain and arrest people deemed as threats or a disruption to legislative business. The department has previously exercised this authority in a strikingly different manner against peaceful protestors advocating for disability rights, healthcare access and reproductive justice.² And the entire nation has repeatedly witnessed how police across the country use military grade weapons to attack people participating in Black Lives Matter protests. To be clear, there is no need to speculate how the response would have been different if it were a group of mostly Black people instead of mostly White people scaling the Capitol building, breaking windows, and ravaging the halls of Congress.

The American people deserve an explanation as to how these terrorist activities were carried out and security protocols were breached resulting in the failure to protect the United States Capitol, Members of Congress, and all of the hard-working people in the Capitol complex from armed and dangerous individuals with a demonstrated history of violence. The American people deserve to know why additional security capacity from federal agencies and the National Guard were not readily deployed considering the widely anticipated and publicized crusade against our nation's democracy. The American people deserve to know how we will ensure there is never another attack like this.

However, we must not allow the chaos, violence and failed coup attempt to overshadow the fact that at 3:41 AM on Thursday, January 7, 2021, Congress upheld the will of the American people and certified the election victory of President-Elect Joseph Biden and Vice President-Elect Kamala Harris. In the words of former Congressman John Lewis, "Democracy is not a state. It is an act, and each generation must do its part." In November, the American people did their part to uphold and preserve our democracy. It is incumbent upon us as lawmakers to ensure we do everything in our power to safeguard our democracy and ensure another attack like this never happens again.

Sincerely,



Ayanna Pressley

¹ Grace Hauck & Deborah Barfield Berry, 'Double standard', USA TODAY (Jan. 6, 2021), <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2021/01/06/us-capitol-attack-compared-response-black-lives-matter-protests/6570528002/>.

² David Lidsky, *Here's what the U.S. Capitol looked like when protesters wanted healthcare and equality*, FAST COMPANY (Jan. 6, 2021), <https://www.fastcompany.com/90591745/heres-what-the-u-s-capitol-looked-like-when-protestors-wanted-healthcare-and-equality>.