



546 Rice Street, Suite 200  
Saint Paul, MN 55103  
651.224.5445  
[www.lwvmn.org](http://www.lwvmn.org)

January 14, 2021

The Honorable Paul Gazelka  
Senate Majority Leader  
95 University Avenue W.  
Minnesota Senate Bldg., Room 3113  
St. Paul, MN 55155

The Honorable Susan Kent  
Senate Minority Leader  
95 University Avenue W.  
Minnesota Senate Bldg., Room 2221  
St. Paul, MN 55155

The Honorable Melissa Hortman  
Speaker of the House  
463 State Office Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155

The Honorable Ryan Winkler  
House Majority Leader  
459 State Office Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155

The Honorable Kurt Daudt  
House Minority Leader  
267 State Office Building  
St. Paul, MN 55155

## **Time for Truth and Consequences**

Dear Senate Majority Leader Gazelka, Senate Minority Leader Kent, Speaker Hortman, House Majority Leader Winkler, and House Minority Leader Daudt:

As with most Minnesotans, we at the League of Women Voters of Minnesota find ourselves deeply disturbed by the events of the last few weeks. Our organization was founded on dissent—the long campaign to secure voting rights for women. But what we have seen lately is not dissent. Certain individuals in our state have acted to undermine our democracy, rather than expand it, and to destroy our republic, rather than protect it.

The League of Women Voters has for 100 years worked on a nonpartisan basis at the grassroots community level to register and educate voters, provide free and fair access to voting, and to protect the election integrity required for an inclusive and strong democracy. Therefore, we feel especially called at this time to appeal to you, as trusted leaders in both parties of our state legislature, to do what is necessary to stand up for the truth about our elections, and to demand of all state legislators

that while they have a right to free speech and dissent, they do not have a right to perpetuate lies that in turn incite distrust in our democracy and violence aimed at your fellow elected officials.

We call upon you to hold accountable those legislators who continue to tell lies about a “stolen election,” an election now certified by Democrats and Republicans alike. The ongoing use of the baseless claims of voter fraud and unlawful elections have fueled division and violence, and these lies disguised as dissent must be reckoned with immediately. **We demand that you require legislators who have participated in the dangerous rhetoric that has contributed to domestic violent extremism to disavow those falsehoods or be sanctioned.**

## Violent Insurrectionists Took Over the United States Capitol for Lies

On January 6, 2021, thousands of individuals besieged the United States Capitol in a violent mob. This historic event of “violence, sedition, and insurrection”<sup>1</sup> was the first time since 1814 that a malicious group had breached the United States Capitol.<sup>2</sup> Not even Confederate soldiers had been able to do so during the Civil War. The insurrectionists raised gallows in front of the Capitol, chanting, “Hang Mike Pence!” as they beat police officers with weapons to gain entry into the building.<sup>3</sup> They attempted to hunt down other members of Congress, livestreaming their rampage to online commenters who wrote things like, “hang all the congressmen” and “give them the rope.”<sup>4</sup> Several individuals carried ropes or zip-ties with the intention to capture hostages.<sup>5</sup> Others had prepared to fight to the death and to “go out ... covered in someone else’s blood.”<sup>6</sup> No fewer than two explosive devices were discovered in D.C. during the insurgency at each national party’s headquarters, demonstrating that mass violence and death was part of the plan.<sup>7</sup> Several journalists

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<sup>1</sup> Letter from the United States Joint Chiefs of Staff to the Joint Force, 1/12/2021.

<sup>2</sup> Sherman, Amy (2021): A history of breaches and violence at the US Capitol. PolitiFact. Available online at <https://www.politifact.com/article/2021/jan/07/history-breaches-and-violence-us-capitol/>, updated on 1/6/2021.

<sup>3</sup> Reeves, Jay; Mascaro, Lisa; Woodward, Calvin (1/11/2021): Capitol assault a more sinister attack than first appeared. AP News. Available online at <https://apnews.com/article/us-capitol-attack-14c73ee280c256ab4ec193ac0f49ad54>.

<sup>4</sup> Darby, Seyward (2021): The Far Right Told Us What It Had Planned. We Didn't Listen. In *New York Times*, 1/7/2021. Available online at <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/07/opinion/white-supremacists-capitol-riot.html>.

<sup>5</sup> Freiman, Jordan (1/11/2021): 2 men allegedly seen in viral photos carrying zip ties during Capitol assault arrested. CBSNews. Available online at <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/capitol-riots-zip-ties-larry-brock-eric-munchel-arrested/>.

<sup>6</sup> Swaine, Jon (2021): Man who posed at Pelosi desk said in Facebook post that he is prepared for violent death. In *Washington Post*, 1/7/2021. Available online at [https://www.washingtonpost.com/investigations/man-who-posed-at-pelosi-desk-said-in-facebook-post-that-he-is-prepared-for-violent-death/2021/01/07/cf5b0714-509a-11eb-83e3-322644d82356\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/investigations/man-who-posed-at-pelosi-desk-said-in-facebook-post-that-he-is-prepared-for-violent-death/2021/01/07/cf5b0714-509a-11eb-83e3-322644d82356_story.html).

<sup>7</sup> Balsamo, Michael (1/11/2021): Discovery of pipe bombs in DC obscured by riot at Capitol. AP News. Available online at <https://apnews.com/article/donald-trump-joe-biden-inaugurations-capitol-siege-8828a6a920198d0ea1ee0c73a49d8847>.

were brutally attacked and feared for their lives.<sup>8</sup> And at least five people died due to this terroristic riot.<sup>9</sup>

The insurrectionists had one common belief: They had been told, repeatedly, that the election had been stolen from them. That voter fraud and unlawful actions by judges and elected officials had taken the country from their allies and handed it to their “enemies.” They chanted “Stop the steal!” while assaulting Capitol officials and destroying federal property. They had been directed to “fight” for their preferred outcome, even if it required “trial by combat.” They came prepared to enact violence with weapons. These beliefs are founded in conspiracy theories and lies that have radicalized extremists in our country and within our local communities. As Claire Wardle, co-founder of anti-disinformation non-profit First Draft, recently noted on a Reuters panel, “This is not about false claims, or even conspiracies, but many of the people at the Capitol are now part of a completely alternate reality.” She added that people must stop thinking about online conspiracies as existing separately from real-world harm: “They’re not just sitting at home in their pajamas clicking ‘yes I agree,’ they’re out there with ... guns and pipe bombs.”<sup>10</sup>

Researchers have analyzed the connection between disinformation and domestic terrorism, and they have known for some time that the United States and its people are not immune to those evils. The Department of Homeland Security issued a threat assessment just before the November election, cautioning the danger of domestic violent extremists (“DVE’s”) and their use of disinformation: “Ideologies driven by such DVE’s often are reinforced by a variety of online content, including conspiracy theories and political commentary they view as controversial.”<sup>11</sup>

Due to the insurrection, we can no longer ignore that certain individuals are employing these tactics in our country. But some individuals are also employing these tactics within our own state and local communities.

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<sup>8</sup> Shammass, Brittany (2021): Journalists were attacked, threatened and detained during the Capitol siege. In *Washington Post*, 1/9/2021. Available online at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/media/2021/01/09/he-was-documenting-chaotic-scene-when-suddenly-trump-supporters-turned-their-ire-him/>.

<sup>9</sup> McEvoy, Jemima (1/8/2021): Woman Possibly ‘Crushed To Death’: These Are The Five People Who Died Amid Pro-Trump Riots. *Forbes*. Available online at <https://www.forbes.com/sites/jemimamcevoy/2021/01/08/woman-possibly-crushed-to-death-these-are-the-five-people-who-died-amid-pro-trump-riots/?sh=66e81826737c>.

<sup>10</sup> Culliford, Elizabeth (1/12/2021): Online misinformation that led to Capitol siege is 'radicalization,' say researchers. *AP News*. Available online at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-misinformation-socialmedia/online-misinformation-that-led-to-capitol-siege-is-radicalization-say-researchers-idUSKBN29H2HM>.

<sup>11</sup> Department of Homeland Security. *Homeland Threat Assessment*, October 2020. Available at [https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/2020\\_10\\_06\\_homeland-threat-assessment.pdf](https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/2020_10_06_homeland-threat-assessment.pdf).

## Calls for Violence in Minnesota Have Also Been Rooted in Election Disinformation

We are gravely concerned for the safety of you, your caucus members, your staff, and your families. Several extremists in Minnesota have spread the same “Stop the Steal” lies that fueled the divisive and violent insurrection at the United States Capitol. These extremists have already planned additional radical events that law enforcement officials believe may lead to further violence.

An FBI report from December 29, 2020, notes that Minnesota-based extremists intent on causing a second civil war have already performed “reconnaissance to identify escape points and defensible positions in the event violence occurred.” They also had “scouted general law enforcement presence” at the earlier rallies, “identified law enforcement sniper locations and considered breaking into federal buildings for use as firing locations, if fighting occurred.”<sup>12</sup> Extremists said that these sniper locations would “need to be blown up.”<sup>13</sup> The report noted that “some followers indicated willingness to commit violence in support of their ideology” and that there were credible threats related to events planned for January 17 at the Minnesota State Capitol building.

We have already seen these radical plans for domestic terrorism accompanied by calls for violence at the state capitol last week. At the “rally” last week, multiple speakers encouraged violence and threatened elected officials and judges. Alley Waterbury, a local GOP leader in House District 53, announced, “We are going to fight, we are going to go down, there's going to be casualties.” She also exclaimed, “And these other judges that we're coming for, we're going to come for you in a way where we are going to back you into a corner!”<sup>14</sup> She continued, “[I]f you don't [meet our demands], you're going to make us do things we don't want to do. We will come for you...”<sup>15</sup> Another attendee

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<sup>12</sup> Dickson, Caitlin (1/11/2021): Exclusive: FBI warns of potential boogaloo violence during Jan. 17 rallies. Yahoo!News. Available online at <https://news.yahoo.com/exclusive-fbi-warns-of-potential-boogaloo-violence-during-jan-17-rallies-170801569.html>.

<sup>13</sup> Bakst, Brian; Sepic, Matt (1/12/2021): FBI warns of possible 'Boogaloo' violence at MN Capitol this weekend. MPR News. Available online at <https://www.mprnews.org/story/2021/01/12/fbi-warns-of-possible-boogaloo-violence-at-mn-capitol-this-weekend>.

<sup>14</sup> Bring Me The News (1/7/2021): 'There's going to be casualties': GOP activist speaks in support of insurrection at St. Paul rally. Available online at <https://bringmethenews.com/minnesota-news/theres-going-to-be-casualties-minnesota-house-district-chair-speaks-in-support-of-insurrection>.

<sup>15</sup> Van Berkel, Jessie: Gov. Tim Walz, Republican legislators start session with clash over Capitol attack. In Star Tribune. Available online at <https://www.startribune.com/gov-tim-walz-republican-legislators-start-session-with-clash-over-capitol-attack/600009399/>.

said, “This is 1776,” attempting to compare himself and his fellow attendees to American revolutionaries.<sup>16</sup>

These threats of violence were celebrated by attendees of the event, who engaged in a violent chant: “We are a garden that needs to grow. We cannot grow if we have weeds choking us off.” The audience chimes in, shouting: “Kill the root, kill the weeds!” and the speaker closes his rant with: “We need to pull the weeds!” The chant was, as one commentator put it, an endorsement of a “genocidal playbook.”<sup>17</sup> And when one attendee announced that the United States Capitol had been breached and members of Congress were in hiding, the crowd cheered in celebration.

At the same time, during the attempted insurrection, the radical group Minnesota Voters Alliance tweeted, “They had every chance to do the right thing and they failed. The election fraud that has been rampant in this country for decades can no longer be denied.”<sup>18</sup> Whoever the account author was, they clearly felt that members of Congress *deserved* the violence they were experiencing. Minnesota Voters Alliance has been one of several organizations in Minnesota that has spread disinformation under the guise of “election integrity.”

The commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Public Safety, John Harrington, had to warn state legislators not to incite further violence after the attempted insurrection.<sup>19</sup> This was an attempt to persuade certain Republicans “who have sought to encourage increasingly confrontational protests.”<sup>20</sup> We are worried for you, your fellow legislators, your families, and your staff.

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<sup>16</sup> Montemayor, Stephen (2021): At State Capitol, several hundred Trump supporters decry certification. In Star Tribune, 1/7/2021. Available online at <https://www.startribune.com/at-state-capitol-several-hundred-trump-supporters-decry-certification-move-toward-governor-s-residen/600007366/>.

<sup>17</sup> Baer, Alejandro (2021): After shocking assault on U.S. Capitol, don't overlook the rage-filled gathering at Minnesota's own. MinnPost. Available online at <https://www.minnpost.com/community-voices/2021/01/after-shocking-assault-on-u-s-capitol-dont-overlook-the-rage-filled-gathering-at-minnesotas-own/>, updated on 1/11/2021.

<sup>18</sup> Minnesota Voters Alliance (2021): Tweet. Available online at <https://twitter.com/MNVoters/status/1347193808635703297>, updated on 1/7/2021.

<sup>19</sup> Coolican, J. Patrick (2021): Department of Public Safety to Minnesota legislators: ‘Calls to action by elected leaders can and have had substantial consequences’. In Minnesota Reformer, 1/8/2021. Available online at <https://minnesotareformer.com/briefs/department-of-public-safety-to-minnesota-legislators-calls-to-action-by-elected-leaders-can-and-have-had-substantial-consequences/>.

<sup>20</sup> Orrick, Dave (2021a): MN Public Safety Commissioner Harrington cautions lawmakers about inflamed rhetoric after ‘insurrection’. In Pioneer Press, 1/8/2021. Available online at <https://www.twincities.com/2021/01/08/mn-public-safety-commissioner-harrington-cautions-lawmakers-about-inflamed-rhetoric-after-insurrection/>.

But it cannot be denied: “violent threats against Minnesota's political leaders are growing in frequency and intensity... In the backdrop were a pandemic and officials administering an election shrouded by unsubstantiated allegations of voter fraud.”<sup>21</sup> “Minnesota Secretary of State Steve Simon has been targeted for his role in administering the 2020 election. Multiple Republican state lawmakers have accused Simon of ‘knowingly’ running an ‘illegal’ election, stoking jeers at last week's rally in St. Paul.”<sup>22</sup>

Radical extremists are continuing such threats and explicitly tying them to election disinformation. Furthermore, they are encouraging others to arm themselves and kill. Darryl Knappen, a pastor in Alexandria, posted a 13-minute video to Facebook on January 13, 2021. In it, he repeats debunked claims about election fraud and rails against corruption and “fake news.” He urges people to take up arms as well, and says, “We are under a threat that is so grave that we would have to go back to the Civil War in order to find a threat as grave as this.”<sup>23</sup>

These threats of violence, explicitly tied to election disinformation, will continue unless something is done about it. As legislators—especially as legislative leaders—you have a public duty to protect your fellow legislators and other public officials, their families, and their staff from these dangers.

### **Certain Republican Legislators Have Incited and Celebrated Violence and Election Disinformation**

These radical lies and celebrations of violence have not been limited to extremists on the fringe of our society. Unfortunately, several Republican legislators have spread disinformation about our elections and encouraged or celebrated violence based on these lies. A lie spread by one person alone does not survive; but a lie with allies flourishes.

We are particularly concerned because many of these claims specifically challenge only where Republican candidates lost races, and strangely none where Republican candidates won. The claims also tend to focus on challenging the validity of voters in specific urban areas where voters of color

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<sup>21</sup> Montemayor, Stephen; Bierschbach, Briana (2021): Violent threats targeting Minnesota leaders on the rise. In Star Tribune, 1/13/2021. Available online at <https://www.startribune.com/violent-threats-targeting-minnesota-leaders-on-the-rise/600009849/>.

<sup>22</sup> Id.

<sup>23</sup> Nelson, Joe (1/13/2021): Minnesota pastor: Prepare to 'arm up and be part of a citizen militia'. Bring Me The News. Available online at <https://bringmethenews.com/minnesota-news/minnesota-pastor-prepare-to-arm-up-and-be-part-of-a-citizen-militia>.

are concentrated.<sup>24</sup> It therefore appears that these false claims are often targeted at disenfranchising people of color and these falsehoods appear to be tied to violent white supremacy.<sup>25</sup>

### **Letter to Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton**

On December 10, 2020, several Republican legislators sent a letter to Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton, asking Paxton to sue the state of Minnesota.<sup>26</sup> Signatories of this letter included: Representative Steve Drazkowski, Representative Jeremy Munson, Representative Tim Miller, Representative Cal Bahr, Representative Eric Lucero, Representative Mary Franson, Representative Glenn Gruenhagen, Representative Shane Mekeland, Senator Mary Kiffmeyer, Senator Mike Goggin, Senator Andrew Mathews, Senator Mark Koran, Senator Bill Weber, Senator John Jasinski, and Senator Rich Draheim.

In this letter, they claimed, "Secretaries of State across the nation have ignored their state election laws and unilaterally changed the rules that govern elections." They also said that "Here in Minnesota, similar illegal actions occurred..." They further claimed, "Secretary Simon illegally exercised power belonging to the legislative branch by writing his own rules with no regard for the law."

But this is false. The Secretary of State is explicitly authorized by the legislature to adopt alternative election procedures at the direction of a court order.<sup>27</sup> And as Senator Newman correctly noted in a commentary to his local paper, every person has the right to file grievances against the government and have access to the courts, and "If that means using the judicial branch to review the election process, a constitutional right has been correctly exercised."<sup>28</sup> Voters exercised their rights to file grievances with the court, the court reviewed those claims, and the court issued an order. When certain legislators and parties challenged this order in court, those legislators and parties dropped

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<sup>24</sup> See Johnson, Annalise (7/31/2020): Lawsuit Filed Against Olmsted County For Absentee Ballot Review Board Appointment Practices. KIMT3. Available online at <https://www.kimt.com/content/news/Lawsuit-filed-against-Olmsted-County-for-571973711.html>.

<sup>25</sup> Morrison, Aaron; Stafford, Kat; Fernando, Christine (11/22/2020): Trump election challenges sound alarm among voters of color. AP News. Available online at <https://apnews.com/article/joe-biden-donald-trump-race-and-ethnicity-georgia-wisconsin-a2f5155019a0c5aa09a7a6a82fb7d14b>.

<sup>26</sup> Letter available at <https://www.house.leg.state.mn.us/goppdf/74f1f8d2-100a-441e-94ec-aaae0f55f403.pdf>.

<sup>27</sup> Minn. Stat. 204B.47, available at <https://www.revisor.mn.gov/statutes/2020/cite/204B.47>.

<sup>28</sup> Schacherer, Brent; Wiblemo, Stephen (2021): EDITORIAL: Believing voter fraud does not make it true. In Litchfield Independent Review, 1/6/2021. Available online at [https://www.crowrivermedia.com/independentreview/news/opinion/editorial/editorial-believing-voter-fraud-does-not-make-it-true/article\\_4acf5bb2-f312-50fb-829b-0e1031053def.html](https://www.crowrivermedia.com/independentreview/news/opinion/editorial/editorial-believing-voter-fraud-does-not-make-it-true/article_4acf5bb2-f312-50fb-829b-0e1031053def.html).



their suit because they knew they would not have success with their legal arguments. They do not get to litigate their argument now in the court of public opinion with falsehoods.

### **Endorsement of the Storm the Capitol Event Where Attendees Called For Violence**

Several legislators spoke at the “Storm the Capitol” event where attendees advocated for violence. Representatives Susan Akland, Steve Drazkowski, Mary Franson, Glenn Gruenhagen, Eric Lucero and Jeremy Munson all attended. In addition to their attendance, both Representative Drazkowski and Representative Lucero “stoked chants against a state court judge...”<sup>29</sup> While each of these legislators have signed onto a generic letter drafted by their caucus staff saying they disapprove of violence, none have yet to disavow the Storm the Capitol event itself, the attendees, or the lies that incited the cries for violence.

### **Active Spread of Disinformation**

Immediately before, during, and after the attempted insurrection at the United States Capitol and during the Storm the Capitol event, several legislators continued to push the “Stop the Steal” rhetoric and falsehoods. For example, in the weeks before the election, both Senator Newman and Representative Gruenhagen submitted letters to their local newspaper claiming the election was carried out improperly. The day before the insurrection, Representative Franson tweeted to “#STOPTHESTEAL” and urged people to go to the Governor’s residence, where later that week, his family had to be evacuated.<sup>30</sup> On January 6, the morning of the insurrection, Representative Drazkowski posted a video to Facebook claiming there was “great uncertainty throughout the country about exactly what happened” and that “the election wasn’t carried out according to the law.”<sup>31</sup> As the insurrection was taking place, Representative Drazkowski also retweeted disinformation about the Pennsylvania election.

### **Encouragement or Celebration of Violence**

Several legislators also actively incited or celebrated violence. On January 4, 2021, Representative Munson shared on Facebook a link to the Wikipedia page on the Battle of Athens with an image of a plaque stating that the battle was “an armed revolt that gained national attention. Attempting to end the control of an entrenched political machine...” One commenter was concerned and

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<sup>29</sup> Montemayor, Stephen (2021): At State Capitol, several hundred Trump supporters decry certification. In *Star Tribune*, 1/7/2021. Available online at <https://www.startribune.com/at-state-capitol-several-hundred-trump-supporters-decry-certification-move-toward-governor-s-residen/600007366/>.

<sup>30</sup> <https://twitter.com/mbrodkorb/status/1348736844956098566>

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.facebook.com/116216213081826/videos/435896867542084>



questioned if he was “calling for civil war based on groundless allegations of voter fraud.” Munson was dismissive, telling people to “enjoy a five minute history lesson” and implied that the claims of voter fraud were not groundless.<sup>32</sup> Both Representatives Franson and Lucero left the Storm the Capitol event to record a video where they implored, “Our government is not being honest with you... we are going to continue to fight.” Days after the insurrection, Representative Franson posted to Facebook an image of a fake Lego set mockingly imitating the insurrection and violence with the caption, “Too soon?”<sup>33</sup>

These lies and incitements must end. We are deeply concerned about the future of our state and recognize the key role that you can play in protecting it at the legislature and within your political parties. You swore an oath to uphold the constitutions of the United States and Minnesota. As part of that oath, you have a duty to support the truth, defend our free and fair elections, and protect your colleagues from violent extremism.

## **Minnesotans Want and Need the Truth, Especially About our Elections**

No matter whether conservative or liberal, all Minnesotans value the importance of the truth. And we deserve the truth.

Yet in response to such threats and lies, “Republican [leaders] waffled in how they talked about last week’s attack on the U.S. Capitol and the falsehoods that appear to have inspired the mob.”<sup>34</sup> While both Majority Leader Gazelka and Minority Leader Dautt accepted Biden as the winner of the election, each persisted with the idea that it was somehow unlawful. Instead, Republican leadership continues to suggest that the distrust is reasonable and based on legitimate allegations. This cannot stand. Minnesotans want leaders who are willing and able to stop violent lies. Minority Leader Dautt argued, “I don’t get to decide what [these extremists] believe.” But each legislator, especially those in leadership, has the duty to honor the truth.

Republican legislators know the truth; they’ve just been denying it:

Numerous senior Minnesota Republicans have said privately they know the election results are accurate — that Biden won the state and the nation fair and square — and

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<sup>32</sup> <https://twitter.com/mbrodkorb/status/1348693632111534080>

<sup>33</sup> <https://twitter.com/mbrodkorb/status/1348394106611851264/photo/1>

<sup>34</sup> Orrick, Dave (2021b): Capitol attack, election falsehoods spark acrimony among Walz, legislative leaders. In Pioneer Press, 1/11/2021. Available online at <https://www.twincities.com/2021/01/11/u-s-capitol-attack-and-election-falsehoods-spark-acrimony-among-walz-legislative-leaders/>.

they've known that since shortly after the election. They've just refused to say it publicly, often out of a fear of backlash from Trump or his base and ultimately fear of losing a Republican primary when they're up for re-election. During their silence the false narrative has grown among far-right circles, allowing the appearance of "allegations" to remain alive.<sup>35</sup>

Legislators who perpetuate or abet these lies betray their oath and have "put political theater ahead of the defense of the Constitution and the Republic."<sup>36</sup> Many Republicans and conservatives have come forward to be honest with voters and repudiate the lies that our elections were rife with fraud or were carried out unlawfully:

- "Lying about the election is not conservative." - Chris Vance, former member of the Washington State Legislature and former Chair of the Washington State Republican Party<sup>37</sup>
- "It's past time for the president to accept the results of the election, quit misleading the American people, and repudiate mob violence." - U.S. Senator Tom Cotton (R-AR)<sup>38</sup>
- "No evidence of voter fraud has emerged that would warrant overturning the 2020 election. The President bears responsibility for today's events by promoting the unfounded conspiracy theories that have led to this point." - U.S. Senator Richard Burr (R-NC)<sup>39</sup>
- "Today's violence – an inevitable result when leaders in positions of power misled the public – will certainly empower dictators and damage struggling democracies." - Joint Statement of House Foreign Affairs Committee Lead Republican Michael McCaul (R-TX) and Chairman

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<sup>35</sup> Orrick, Dave (2021): Capitol attack, election falsehoods spark acrimony among Walz, legislative leaders. In *Pioneer Press*, 1/11/2021. Available online at <https://www.twincities.com/2021/01/11/u-s-capitol-attack-and-election-falsehoods-spark-acrimony-among-walz-legislative-leaders/>.

<sup>36</sup> Resignation letter of Jason Schmid, senior Republican aide to the House Armed Services Committee. See also Desiderio, Andrew (2021): GOP aide resigns while lashing 'congressional enablers of this mob'. In *POLITICO*, 1/12/2021. Available online at <https://www.politico.com/news/2021/01/12/gop-aide-resigns-after-capitol-riots-457867>.

<sup>37</sup> <https://twitter.com/Chrisvance123/status/1349017682272780296>

<sup>38</sup> Cotton, Tom (1/6/2021): COTTON STATEMENT ON VIOLENCE AT CAPITOL. Available online at <https://www.cotton.senate.gov/news/press-releases/cotton-statement-on-violence-at-capitol>.

<sup>39</sup> Burr, Richard (1/6/2021): Senator Burr Statement on Congressional Vote to Certify the 2020 Presidential Election. Available online at <https://www.burr.senate.gov/press/releases/senator-burr-statement-on-congressional-vote-to-certify-the-2020-presidential-election>.

Gregory Meeks (D-NY)<sup>40</sup>

- “[B]aseless, and reckless comments about the vote in Pennsylvania and elsewhere [and] unfounded allegations of fraud ... are clearly inappropriate and have the potential to undermine the rule of law as it applies to our electoral process.” - Joint Statement of 19 former U.S. Attorneys who served under Republican presidents<sup>41</sup>
- “We witnessed ... the damage that can result when men in power and responsibility refuse to acknowledge the truth. We saw bloodshed because a demagogue chose to spread falsehoods and sow distrust of his own fellow Americans. Let’s not abet such deception.”  
U.S. Senator Pat Toomey (R-PA)<sup>42</sup>
- “Telling people an election was stolen is crossing a line, because it’s just not where the facts land. And we have a duty to be honest with the American public.” - Alyssa Farah, former Trump White House communications director<sup>43</sup>
- “What happened on Capitol Hill ... is a direct result of his poisoning the minds of people with the lies and the frauds.” - Gen. John Kelly, former Trump White House chief of staff<sup>44</sup>
- “The best way we could show respect for the voters who were upset is by telling the truth.” - U.S. Senator Mitt Romney (R-UT)<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> McCaul, Michael; Meeks, Gregory (1/6/2021): McCaul, Meeks Release a Joint Statement on Today’s Violence in the Capitol. Available online at <https://gop-foreignaffairs.house.gov/press-release/mccaul-meeks-release-a-joint-statement-on-todays-violence-in-the-capitol/>.

<sup>41</sup> <https://big.assets.huffingtonpost.com/athena/files/2020/11/06/5fa4a68dc5b6f21920d994bb.pdf>; see also Reilly, Ryan J. (2021): Former GOP-Appointed Federal Prosecutors Blast Trump’s ‘Reckless’ Vote Fraud Comments. In *HuffPost*, 1/5/2021. Available online at [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/trump-voter-fraud-gop-us-attorneys\\_n\\_5fa4a1d3c5b623bfac4db023](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/trump-voter-fraud-gop-us-attorneys_n_5fa4a1d3c5b623bfac4db023).

<sup>42</sup> Floor speech during certification of the presidential election.

<sup>43</sup> Schacherer, Brent; Wiblemo, Stephen (2021b): OUR VIEW: Words have consequences. In *Litchfield Independent Review*, 1/13/2021. Available online at [https://www.crowrivermedia.com/independentreview/news/opinion/editorial/our-view-words-have-consequences/article\\_64daab6f-b2cc-5c32-b8cb-f6712cf7538f.html](https://www.crowrivermedia.com/independentreview/news/opinion/editorial/our-view-words-have-consequences/article_64daab6f-b2cc-5c32-b8cb-f6712cf7538f.html).

<sup>44</sup> Id.

<sup>45</sup> Floor speech during certification of the presidential election.

“Words have consequences. Politicians must be willing to tell supporters the truth, even when it is inconvenient to their own aspirations.”<sup>46</sup> And we believe U.S. Representative Jaime Herrera Beutler, R-WA, spoke with the courageous and patriotic honesty and faith that we need from you now when she voted to impeach President Trump on January 13: “I am not choosing a side. I am choosing truth. It's the only way to defeat fear.”<sup>47</sup>

On January 13, the National Counterterrorism Center, Department of Justice, and Department of Homeland Security issued a bulletin to all state and local law enforcement officials stating that extremists “very likely pose the greatest domestic terrorism threats in 2021.”<sup>48</sup> The bulletin states: **“The shared false narrative of a 'stolen' election and opposition to the change in control of the executive and legislative branches of the federal government may lead some individuals to adopt the belief that there is no political solution to address their grievances and violent action is necessary.”** These falsehoods cannot continue, as they threaten our country, our state, our communities, and our families by fueling domestic violent extremists.

## Preventing More Violence and Holding Liars and Inciters Accountable

Josh Berthume, an expert in political risk analysis and a fellow at the Truman National Security Project, recently wrote:

Our current information ecosystem encourages elected officials to lie and rewards them with power. It incentivizes platforms and media outlets to enable those who are ill-suited to public service to engage instead in destructive behavior. ... Every political scientist knows the consequences for anyone participating in an attempted coup against the United States must be swift, harsh and public — or else the next attack will come soon and be worse. These consequences must reach and include the active participants in the disinformation campaign that generated the attack. This will serve as a necessary first step in an information war we must fight, or else face extinction.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Schacherer, Brent; Wiblemo, Stephen (2021b): OUR VIEW: Words have consequences. In *Litchfield Independent Review*, 1/13/2021. Available online at [https://www.crowrivermedia.com/independentreview/news/opinion/editorial/our-view-words-have-consequences/article\\_64daab6f-b2cc-5c32-b8cb-f6712cf7538f.html](https://www.crowrivermedia.com/independentreview/news/opinion/editorial/our-view-words-have-consequences/article_64daab6f-b2cc-5c32-b8cb-f6712cf7538f.html).

<sup>47</sup> Floor speech during impeachment vote.

<sup>48</sup> Kanno-Youngs, Zolan: Federal authorities warn that the Capitol breach will be a ‘significant driver of violence.’ In *New York Times*, 1/13/2021. Available online at <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/01/13/us/politics/capitol-breach-driver-of-violence.html>

<sup>49</sup> Berthume, Josh (2021): The Capitol mob was put down. The disinformation spreaders need to be defeated next. In *The Fulcrum*, 1/12/2021. Available online at <https://thefulcrum.us/civic-ed/disinformation-campaign>.

You must remove those incentives for prevarication and incitement. With this evidence of the clear and present danger from the ongoing lies about the 2020 election being told by specific elected officials, we demand you to:

- 1) Require that all Minnesota State Representatives and Senators tell the truth about the settled 2020 elections as a duty to fulfill their oath to the United States and Minnesota constitutions;
- 2) Require certain legislators who have incited lies and violence to issue a public message immediately disavowing the falsehoods about a “stolen election,” apologizing for the use of those lies for political purposes, and accepting of the 2020 election validity and integrity, and a clear message that harassment and calls for violence toward our public officials will not be tolerated; and
- 3) Seek consequences and accountability of those legislators who have continued to violate their oath of office by spreading lies about the election through formal censure, the revocation of committee assignments, and even expulsion if needed.

**Failure to disavow these lies is to ally oneself with domestic terrorism.** No state legislator should be allowed to use the platform their office affords them to betray the very country and state they pledged to serve.

Sincerely,



Laura Helmer  
President



Michelle Witte  
Executive Director

On behalf of the board of directors of the League of Women Voters of Minnesota Education Fund