

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

August 22, 2017

Hon. Jefferson B. Sessions
Attorney General of the United States of America
The United States Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530-0001

Dear Attorney General Sessions,

We write to request clarification concerning reported changes to the Department of Justice's Countering Violent Extremist (CVE) program. On February 1st, 2017, it was reported, with the confirmation of five individuals, that the program would be transitioned and begin ignoring multiple and direct domestic terror threats.¹

Following these reports, several white supremacist forums celebrated the news. The founder and editor of *The Daily Stormer*, a neo-Nazi website, wrote: "Donald Trump wants to remove us from undue federal scrutiny by removing 'white supremacists' from the definition of 'extremism'... Yes, this is real life. Our memes are all real life. Donald Trump is setting us free." This post also included a slur for members of the Jewish community.

It's clear that removing or deemphasizing white supremacists in the CVE program would play directly into the hands of these domestic terrorists and put American lives at risk.

The recent events in Charlottesville, VA have shown that white supremacists can and will conduct terrorist attacks on American soil with the goal of terrorizing, intimidating and/or killing American citizens. The decision of white supremacist organizations to march in Charlottesville, their failure to abide by their public demonstration permit and the homicidal intent of their members directly resulted in the death of three Americans: Heather Heyer, Virginia State Police Lieutenant H. Jay Cullen and Virginia State Trooper-Pilot Berke M. M. Bates.

This was a terrorist attack that occurred on American soil.

In particular, we were encouraged by your statements on ABC's *Good Morning America* referring to the events in Charlottesville as "domestic terrorism." Additionally, we strongly

¹ Edwards Ainsley, J., Volz, D., & Cooke, K. (2017, February 01). "Exclusive: Trump to focus counter-extremism program solely on Islam - sources [Reuters]." Retrieved from <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trump-extremists-program-exclusiv-idUSKBN15G5VO>

support your Department's swift action to pursue the highest-possible level of charges against the accused murderer of Heather Heyer.

Tragically, these are not the first Americans to be killed by white supremacists. In the 15 years since 9/11, "right-wing extremists," as defined by the New America Foundation, have killed nearly twice as many Americans as jihadist extremists. Over the same period, "right-wing extremists" carried out nineteen fatal attacks, nearly three times the number of attacks conducted by jihadist extremists.²

For decades, law enforcement has been raising the real threat posed by these organizations. A 2015 survey of 328 police and sheriff departments found that 74 percent of sheriffs/chiefs of police listed anti-government violence as a top three concern, compared to just 39 percent who listed "al-Qaeda-inspired" violence.³

These findings were echoed in a *Joint Intelligence Bulletin*, dated May 10th, 2017, from the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). The *Bulletin* stated: "the white supremacist extremist (WSE) movement likely will continue to pose a threat of lethal violence over the next year." It also confirmed that "WSEs were responsible for 49 homicides in 26 attacks from 2000 to 2016, more than any other domestic extremist movement."

As Members of Congress, we have no higher responsibility than protecting the lives of American citizens.

It is clear from government and non-government reports, that white supremacists pose a great, if not the greatest, terrorist threat to Americans. Given the clear and present danger posed by white supremacists, right-wing extremists and anti-government nationalists, we are requesting clarity on the following points:

1. Will or has the CVE program be transitioned to no longer focus on or include combatting the real, clear and present danger posed by white supremacists and associated organizations?
2. What is the current operational capacity ratio for the identified extremist groups within the CVE program?
3. What additional programs are currently operating without the Department of Justice and Department of Homeland Security to counter the real threat of violence posed by white supremacist organizations?
4. Following the terrorist attack in Charlottesville, will the Department of Justice be adding additional programs or operational capacity to address this real threat and save lives?

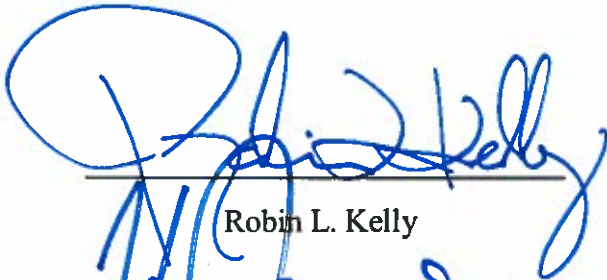
² Bergen, P., Ford, A., Sims, A., & Sterman, D. (2016, September 07). *Terrorism in America After 9/11*. New American Foundation. Retrieved from <https://www.newamerica.org/in-depth/terrorism-in-america/>

³ Pfadt, A. (2015, June 25). *Law Enforcement Assessment of Terrorist Threat*. The Triangle Center for Terrorism and Homeland Security at Duke University. Retrieved <https://sites.duke.edu/tcths/2015/06/25/report-law-enforcement-assessment-of-terrorist-threat/>

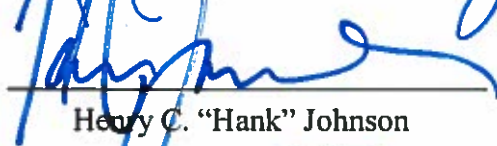
5. Is the current funding level of the CVE program sufficient to maintain robust and successful counter terrorism programs, against white supremacists and other extremist groups, that save American lives?

Thank you for your consideration of this request. We appreciate your time in responding and look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,



Robin L. Kelly



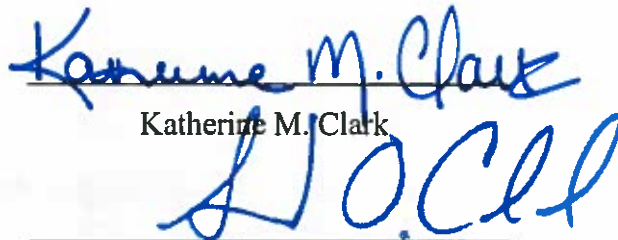
Henry C. "Hank" Johnson



David Scott



Sheila Jackson Lee



Katherine M. Clark



Salud O. Carbajal



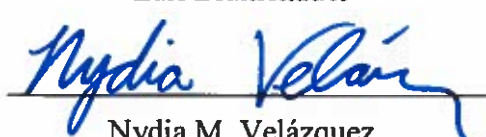
Michelle Lujan Grisham



Al Green



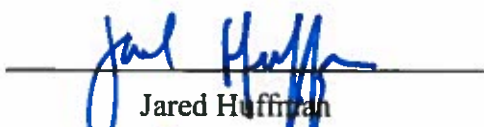
Earl Blumenauer



Nydia M. Velázquez




Pramila Jayapal



Jared Huffman



Steve Cohen



David N. Cicilline



Mike Quigley



Barbara Lee



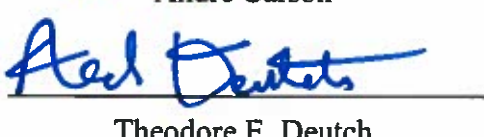
Yvette D. Clarke



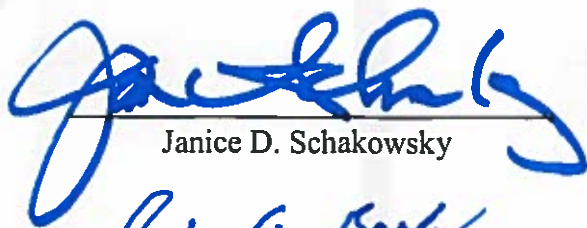
Lisa Blunt Rochester



André Carson



Theodore E. Deutch



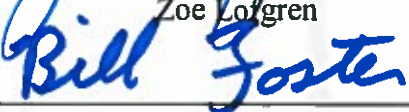
Janice D. Schakowsky



Robert A. Brady



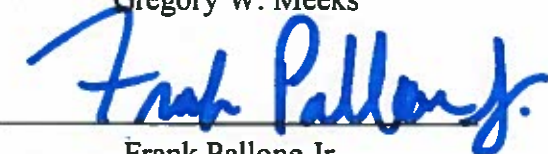
Zoe Lofgren



Bill Foster



Gregory W. Meeks



Frank Pallone Jr.



Debbie Wasserman Schultz



Scott Peters



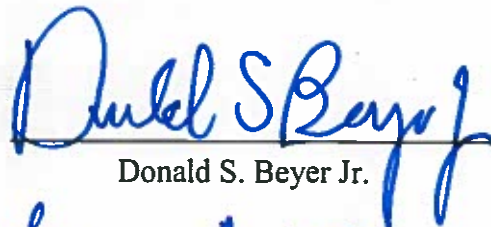
Robert C. "Bobby" Scott



Colleen Hanabusa



Jamie Raskin



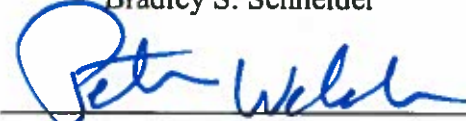
Donald S. Beyer Jr.



Frederica Wilson



Bradley S. Schneider



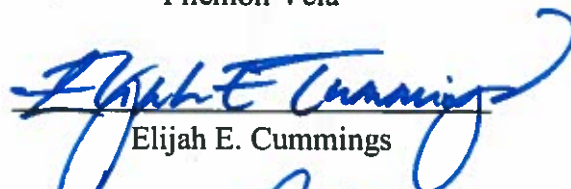
Peter Welch



Eleanor Holmes Norton



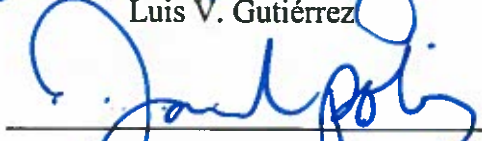
Filemon Vela



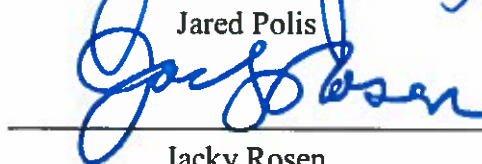
Elijah E. Cummings



Luis V. Gutiérrez



Jared Polis



Jacky Rosen