

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

December 21, 2016

Mr. Donald J. Trump
President-Elect
Trump Tower
725 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York 10022

Dear President-Elect Trump:

As you prepare to be sworn in as the 45th President of the United States, we know that one of your top priorities is developing a cohesive national security agenda. This will be particularly impactful when it comes to prevention of domestic terrorism, which has implications for public safety as well as civil rights and civil liberties. We write to encourage you to forgo broad suspicion and surveillance in favor of policies that foster trusting, mutually beneficial relationships with communities impacted by terrorism. As Members of Congress representing a diverse electorate, we strongly believe that this is a non-partisan issue and we stand ready to work with you to foster the relationships necessary to protect our nation from terrorism, both domestically and around the world.

The threat of homegrown violent extremism is substantial and growing, from those inspired or recruited by the Islamic State and al Qaeda to right wing, anarchist, religious, racial, and eco-extremists. Over the last several years, various sides of this debate have attempted to paint one side or the other as more dangerous or warranting greater attention and resources. As the attacks in Orlando and Charleston make clear, the pathways Americans follow to become radicalized and turn to violence are far from simple. Any attempts to lay blame on one community or ideology are misguided and risk allowing serious internal threats to go unaddressed. As a starting point for your Administration, we ask that you publicly acknowledge the diversity of internal threats our nation faces and, starting with the Fiscal Year 2018 budget, commit to allocating an appropriate level of resources to address all of them equitably.

After a number of high profile attacks across our country, traditional intelligence and law enforcement activities dominate efforts to prevent future attacks. Despite some successes, this alone is not sufficient. We need a comprehensive approach, in which our agencies work to build non-adversarial relationships with communities coping with radicalization. This involves proactive outreach and resiliency training to help communities recognize and protect themselves against recruitment narratives that promote hate and violence. They need the tools to recognize and support those that have become alienated or disaffected, without inviting surveillance, arrest and prosecution. Whether these programs are referred to as Countering Violent Extremism, Community Partnership or any other name, it is critical that you continue working to build trust and cooperation between federal, state, and local authorities and communities in need of support.

We encourage you to review the 2011 White House *Strategy for Empowering Local Partners to Prevent Violent Extremism in the United States* and its 2016 implementation plan and to discuss the merits of existing programs with practitioners and advocates.

While we strongly support continuation of community outreach and partnership, we want to warn against combining these programs with traditional intelligence collection or counterterrorism operations. Despite constitutional protections, many Americans already fear that interactions with federal authorities will result in violations of their rights. Decisions to merge outreach with intelligence collection risk reinforcing this perception, violating civil liberties, and irreparably damaging relationships that may help to stem threats in the future. As you assess how to structure engagement programs, we urge you to restrict the use of limited intelligence resources to specific credible threats to the homeland, not to baseless accusations against whole groups of law abiding Americans or other forms of profiling.

Building relationships with any community requires mutual respect and trust. Unfortunately, Muslim Americans and other ethnic and religious communities have been targeted by programs that seem to single them out as dangerous or worthy of suspicion. Whether or not these concerns are reflected in government policy, any level of distrust is sure to make programming less effective. Our intelligence community is capable of synthesizing large volumes of information and providing nuanced analysis. There is no national security benefit to wide-ranging suspicion or surveillance, particularly knowing that it risks closing off critical avenues for security cooperation. While no community is broadly knowledgeable about or responsible for threats, it is certain that strategic partners will be less reliable partners if they feel they are under suspicion or otherwise regarded as un-American. As Members of Congress with deep roots in the national security community, we know defending civil rights and liberties is a critical part of keeping our country safe.

While it is critical that your national security efforts focus on narrowly tailored threats rather than broad classifications, we believe it is important for you to make a special effort to overcome the inflammatory and divisive rhetoric leveled at the Muslim community during the campaign. Our country has been home to generations of Muslims who have been deeply rooted in our society since America's founding. They are patriotic Americans who care about our country's heritage and values, which directly align with peaceful tenets of Islam. This is illustrated by the thousands of Muslims currently serving in our government. In the early days of your Administration, we hope that you will take time to get to know the myriad of Muslims currently working across our federal agencies to strengthen our security. Many of these dedicated men and women will continue their work in your Administration and their contributions will be a vital part of your decision making process. Muslim Americans, both natural born and naturalized, have held positions of influence and authority in both Democratic and Republican administrations. They bring unique perspectives, countless years of combined experience, and an intimate knowledge of our intelligence activities. Simply put, they have and will continue to save lives here in the United States and around the world. Every effort should be made to make them feel welcome and respected as they continue to fight for our freedoms.

We strongly believe that national security must be non-partisan and we stand ready to work with your Administration on any improvement to existing policies that will protect the American

people. We strongly believe that this means developing a strategy that is inclusive of all threats, that is cognizant of and respects the full range of civil rights and civil liberties, and that looks to partner with rather than disparage the communities of law abiding Americans.


Sincerely,



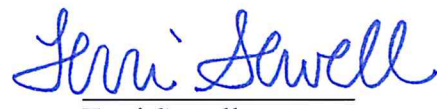
André Carson
Member of Congress



Adam Schiff
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Terri Sewell
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Mike Quigley
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