

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

January 28, 2021

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker, U.S. House of Representatives  
H232 Capitol Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
House Republican Leader  
H-204 Capitol Building  
Washington, DC 20515

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

The Honorable Rodney Davis  
Ranking Member  
Committee on House Administration  
1309 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader McCarthy, Chairperson Lofgren and Ranking Member Davis:

The horrific attack on the United States Capitol reminds us of the grim reality that Members of Congress are high-profile public officials, and therefore, face ongoing security threats from the same domestic terror groups that attacked the Capitol just in the last month. Unfortunately, in recent years, there has been a surge of threats and attacks on Members of Congress, including the 2017 baseball game practice shooting that wounded Republican Whip Steve Scalise. The bottom line: Members now regularly face threats in Washington D.C. and in their Districts.

While the U.S. Capitol is protected by the United States Capitol Police with the support of strong security measures, including vehicle barriers and metal detectors, most Members spend the majority of their time in their Congressional Districts where security is often sparse. Protecting Members in their District is much harder because local law enforcement agencies are stretched and limited, and often don't have sufficient staffing or money to provide regular protection to Members. Except for Leadership, Members do not have security details protecting them. The structure of the Capitol Police and the laws against threatening Members of Congress were first crafted in a much different time when the threat environment was significantly lower.

Reflecting the tense and troubling times we live in, Members of Congress have reported receiving a significant uptick in threats of violence and even death. In the Summer of 2019, then Capitol Police Chief Steven Sund testified that there were 4,894 cases of threats against Members in FY2018 and that FY2019 was on track to see an increase in the number of cases. This is compared to 902 investigated threats against Members in 2016. The increased level of threats has overwhelmed the Capitol Police Threat Assessment Section.

Today, with the expansion of the web and social media sites, so much information about Members is accessible in the public sphere, making them easier targets, including home addresses, photos, personal details about Members' families, and real-time information on Member attendance at events. Current legal statutes make it extremely difficult to prosecute most threats made against Members of Congress.

The increased number of threats, unfortunately, matches societal trends. FBI Director Christopher Wray testified before Congress that 2019 was the deadliest year for domestic terrorism since 1995, the year of the Oklahoma City bombing. According to the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), anti-Semitic incidents and overall hate and biased incidents were at an all-time high in 2019 — an increase of 12 percent — with a disturbing 56 percent increase in assaults over 2018.

The men and women of the United States Capitol Police admirably risk their lives every day to protect Members of Congress, and the House Sergeant at Arms Office works assiduously to protect Members and their staff. We also appreciate that the Member Representational Allowance (MRA) currently allows for the reimbursement of security equipment such as bulletproof vests, other non-capital purchases for security needs at District Offices, and the use of funds for security at local public events.

However, most rules around what the MRA can be utilized for regarding security are constrictive and anachronistic, set in a time before the current Member threat level and online environment. It is time to rethink these rules. We request the following measures:

- 1) Greater flexibility for the use of MRA funds for security purposes, especially in Members' Districts. These steps could include allowing MRA funds to directly reimburse additional capital security upgrades at District Offices; the hiring of local law enforcement or other security while Members are in their Districts; and the purchase of security items that would protect members in soft target locations, including their homes.
- 2) Concerted efforts to keep Members' personal information, such as their home addresses, private and off of publicly accessible websites and databases; Members should have legal recourse available if their personal address is published without permission.
- 3) Regular, bipartisan security briefings for Members on the actions that U.S. Capitol Police and the House Sergeant at Arms are taking to keep Members, their families, and staff safe at the Capitol and in their Districts.
- 4) Conduct a full outside, independent review with recommendations of security protocols for Members both at the Capitol and in their Districts; provide more specific guidelines on the best security practices Members should take to ensure the safety of themselves, their families, and staff members.
- 5) Provide designated supplemental funds to this year's MRA to address additional security needs, given the increased threat level.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this important matter. We look forward to working closely with you to address this urgent situation.

Sincerely,



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Josh Gottheimer  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS



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Dean Phillips  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Fred Upton  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Carolyn Bourdeaux  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

André Carson  
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David N. Cicilline  
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