

July 12, 2016

To:

Senator Harry Reid (D-NV)  
Senator Barbara Boxer (D-CA)  
Senator Richard Durbin (D-IL)  
Senator Jack Reed (D-RI)  
Senator Chuck Schumer (D-NY)  
Senator Ben Cardin (D-MD)  
Senator Sheldon Whitehouse  
(D-RI)  
Senator Tom Udall (D-NM)  
Senator Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH)  
Senator Jeff Merkley (D-OR)

Senator Al Franken (D-MN)  
Senator Chris Coons (D-DE)  
Senator Richard Blumenthal (D-CT)  
Senator Brian Schatz (D-HI)  
Senator Martin Heinrich (D-NM)  
Senator Tim Kaine (D-VA)  
Senator Elizabeth Warren (D-MA)  
Senator Edward Markey (D-MA)  
Senator Gary Peters (D-MI)

Dear Senators:

We, the undersigned, have long since known that you have a list—an enemies list of intellectual foes you wish to isolate. But our policy differences are not why we write. We write today with grave concern over political leadership in a time of deep national division. We write at a time when free speech and association are more important than ever in our national experiment. How will we, together, solve problems if we cannot speak? How can you lead when you refuse to listen?

You were elected by the people to build consensus and find compromise—to fiercely debate the most pressing issues of our day. Often, these debates are meant to be contentious and without a clear solution because innovation comes from great challenge. Sadly, our democracy and our freedom hangs in the balance as you use your office to bully and single out groups to blame rather than ideas to debate.

Just as you do, our civil society organizations represent many, many millions of Americans and a wide array of perspectives and interests. They deserve and increasingly demand healthy and respectful political dialogue, and well-informed, well-debated public policies. To support the debate our founders intended, all Americans have the right to support causes they believe in without fear of threats from overzealous government officials—threats paraded and perpetrated by you on the Senate floor.

The delicate balance of our democracy is preserved when all groups are free to speak in the public square, and ALL Americans should be concerned when agents of the government use their official offices to marginalize political foes.





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Your enemies list groups together organizations that themselves maintain differing perspectives. While you have singled us out, labeling us as the enemy, we don't even always agree with one another. And that's the point: disagreement breeds solutions.

We hear you. Your threat is clear: There is a heavy and inconvenient cost to disagreeing with you. Calls for debate will be met with political retribution. That's called tyranny. And, we reject it.

At the birth of our nation, patriots asserted their right to speech and broke British law in doing so. King George used the full force of the British crown to suppress the rebellion—to suppress speech. In spite of the tyrant's commands and because they had put their lives on the line to defend their rights, the patriots enshrined free speech in our founding documents; the same documents that gave you your job.

In a country where you should be the patriots leading us into a great future, sadly today you are the tyrants.

Sincerely,

Grover Norquist  
Americans for Tax Reform

Lisa B. Nelson  
American Legislative Exchange  
Council

John A. Charles, Jr.  
Cascade Policy Institute

David Rothbard  
Committee for a Constructive  
Tomorrow

Kent Lassman  
Competitive Enterprise Institute

Nicole Neily  
Franklin Center for Government  
and Policy Integrity

Benita Dodd  
Georgia Public Policy  
Foundation

Bridgett Wagner  
The Heritage Foundation

Fred Birnbaum  
Idaho Freedom Foundation

Joseph Bast  
The Heartland Institute

J. Robert McClure III  
James Madison Institute

Brett Healy  
The John K. Maclver Institute  
for Public Policy

Kory Swanson  
John Locke Foundation

Dave Trabert  
Kansas Policy Institute



Jason Hayes  
Mackinac Center for Public Policy

Kevin Kane  
Pelican Institute for Public Policy



Brent Mead  
Montana Policy Institute

Paul J. Gessing  
Rio Grande Foundation



Sharon J. Rossie  
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Sally Pipes  
Pacific Research Institute

Carol Platt Liebau  
Yankee Institute for Public Policy

