

Holding Power Accountable

Common Cause to Congress: Hold Emergency Session to Pass Anti-Violence Law Enforcement Reform and Protect the Rights of Peaceful Protesters

June 3, 2020

Dear Member of Congress:

I was shocked and sickened by the horrific images I saw on the evening of June 1, 2020, as peaceful protesters were hit by flash-bang shells, rubber bullets and tear-gassed by police outside the White House at the direction of the Trump administration. Over the last week, similar news reports have shown continued police brutality against peaceful protesters exercising their First Amendment rights. Americans deserve and need leadership in times of crisis. On behalf of Common Cause's 1.2 million members, we urge Congress to immediately convene to pass reform legislation to address systemic racism frequently embedded in law enforcement institutions.

President Trump threatening to use the military to violently attack Americans peacefully protesting is appalling. His continued violent rhetoric is fueling the extreme brutality that police and other law enforcement officials are using against peaceful protestors and journalists who are just trying to do their jobs. This violence against protesters and journalists must stop, and the constitutional rights of all Americans must be respected.

Although we do not condone vandalism and looting, the vast majority of protesters are peacefully exercising their First Amendment free speech rights. Congress must condemn the directive to have federal law enforcement officials use tear gas and rubber bullets on peaceful protesters and ensure this never happens again. The COVID-19 pandemic has already presented an unprecedented challenge to our democracy and our right to vote. President Trump is further eroding our democracy by using federal police and threatening to use the military to stifle dissent, and Congress must immediately address this challenge. The House and Senate must immediately act to prevent the Trump administration from further ignoring and undermining the rule of law. Any legislation must include three principles: stopping the tragic loss of life caused by law enforcement officials, strengthening accountability, and continuing to reform our criminal justice system.

It was encouraging to see [reports](#) that the House of Representatives may soon reconvene to consider policing reforms to reduce violence. The Senate must do the same. The fact that the Senate [is ignoring](#) not only the coronavirus pandemic, but also this larger structural racism embedded in many of our law enforcement institutions just to continue confirming judges shows how out of touch Senate Republicans are.

Congress's failure to act could lead to potentially catastrophic consequences—millions of Americans, especially from communities of color, living in terror as an increasingly unaccountable militarized police state indiscriminately uses violence against Americans who disagree with this administration. Common Cause's 1.2 million members will continue to call, email, and write your offices, as well as peacefully protest, to demand that you hold this administration accountable. Our democracy, and in many cases millions of American lives, depend on it.

Sincerely,



Karen Hobert Flynn
President
Common Cause

Since 1970, [Common Cause](#) has been working to hold power accountable through lobbying, litigation, and organizing. Our non-partisan, pro-democracy work has helped pass hundreds of reforms at the federal, state, and local levels. We now have 30 state chapters and more than 1.2 million members around the country who are working to strengthen our democracy.

