

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

August 12, 2024

The Honorable Merrick B. Garland
Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20530

The Honorable Lisa Monaco
Deputy Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20530

Dear Attorney General Garland and Deputy Attorney General Monaco:

We write to express serious concern about ongoing and persistent threats against election workers and to call on the Department of Justice to take additional steps to protect election officials, workers, and volunteers as we approach the election in November, because violence has no place in our democracy.

In recent years, we have seen an ongoing barrage of threats and abusive conduct targeting election workers, and, as noted in the Department’s Election Threats Task Force briefing in May, these threats to our public servants “endanger our democracy itself.”¹ According to a survey released earlier this year, more than one in three election officials have experienced threats, harassment, or abuse, and a survey last year found that more than half who received threats have been threatened in person.² Last November, more than a dozen threatening letters—some containing fentanyl—were sent to election offices in at least six states, resulting in evacuations and delays in ballot counting.³ Earlier this year, a New Mexico man was convicted for his role in a series of shootings targeting local election officials.⁴ And as Deputy Attorney General Monaco has noted, these threats are being supercharged by new technologies like artificial intelligence that can expand the reach and further conceal the identities of those seeking to do harm.⁵

¹ Office of Public Affairs, U.S. Department of Justice, *Attorney General Merrick B. Garland Delivers Remarks at the Election Threats Task Force Meeting*, speech, (May 13, 2024), <https://www.justice.gov/opa/speech/attorney-general-merrick-b-garland-delivers-remarks-election-threats-task-force-meeting>.

² Brennan Center for Justice, *Local Election Officials Survey* (May 1, 2024) (online at <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/local-election-officials-survey-may-2024>); Brennan Center for Justice, *Local Election Officials Survey*, (Apr. 25, 2023) (online at <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/local-election-officials-survey-april-2023>).

³ Gene Johnson and Ed Komenda, *Fentanyl-laced letters are being sent to election offices, so officials are stocking up on naloxone*, Associated Press (Nov. 18, 2023), <https://apnews.com/article/narcan-naloxone-elections-fentanyl-letters>.

⁴ Office of Public Affairs, U.S. Department of Justice, *Man Pleads Guilty to Shooting Spree Targeting Elected Officials*, press release, (February 2, 2024), <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/man-pleads-guilty-shooting-spree-targeting-elected-officials>.

Our election officials and workers are public servants working on the frontlines of our democracy to make sure that every vote is counted. Election officials from both parties have testified before the Senate Rules and Judiciary Committees about threats that have been made against their lives and their families. Many election workers are leaving their jobs, impacting the ability of state and local governments to administer future elections. For example, in the past four years, 80 percent of Arizona’s counties have lost their chief local election official, and, during the same time period, close to 70 senior local election officials in Pennsylvania have resigned.⁶ The continued threat to election worker safety is happening as the number of election official resignations and retirements is growing, resulting in a significant loss of institutional knowledge.⁷

We appreciate the steps that the Department has taken to address these concerning threats, including establishing the Election Threats Task Force and working to raise awareness of federal resources, but more must be done to counter these persistent threats and ensure that election workers can do their jobs in light of the Department’s acknowledgment that the law enforcement response to threats in 2020 was “inadequate.”⁸ It is for these reasons that we urge the Department to continue to prioritize the investigation and prosecution of threats against election workers, including by allocating sufficient resources to meet these threats head on.

We respectfully request an update on the Department’s efforts and plans to combat these threats as this year’s election approaches, in addition to providing the following information:

1. The number of threats against election workers, officials, volunteers, or their families that have been identified by the Department’s Election Threats Task Force, by state.
2. The number of completed and ongoing investigations and prosecutions based on those identified threats and actions taken to prioritize investigations and prosecutions.
3. A summary of the Department’s efforts to conduct outreach to election officials and workers to make them aware of the process for reporting threats and resources provided by the Task Force.
4. Actions taken by the Department to address the use of new technologies—including artificial intelligence—to target election workers.
5. Actions taken by the Department to inform local law enforcement agencies and election workers about the Department’s National Extreme Risk Protection Order Resource Center.
6. A summary of any new plans the Department has for the 2024 election cycle, including staff increases or new training for existing staff members.

⁵ U.S. Department of Justice, *Deputy Attorney General Lisa Monaco Delivers Remarks at the Election Threats Task Force Meeting* (May 2024), <https://www.justice.gov/opa/speech/deputy-attorney-general-lisa-monaco-remarks>.

⁶ *The High Cost of High Turnover*, Issue One (Sep 2023), <http://issueone.org/articles/the-high-cost-of-high-turnover>; *Schmidt calls turnover among county election officials in Pennsylvania ‘a real concern’*, *Pennsylvania Capital-Star* (Feb. 24, 2024), <https://penncapital-star.com/voting/schmidt-calls-turnover-among-pennsylvania-voting-elections-a-real-concern/>.

⁷ Issue One, *supra* note 6.

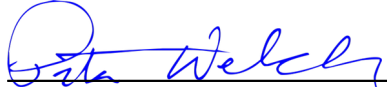
⁸ Linda So and Jason Szep, *U.S. election workers get little help from law enforcement as terror threats mount*, *Reuters* (Sept. 8, 2021) (online at <https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/usa-election-threats-law-enforcement/>).

Thank you for your efforts to protect our election workers who administer our free and fair elections.

Sincerely,



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



Peter Welch
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Mark R. Warner
United States Senator



Alex Padilla
United States Senator



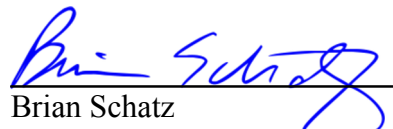
Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator



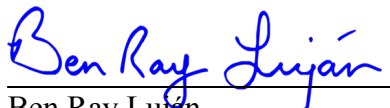
Raphael G. Butler
United States Senator




Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



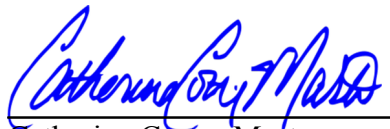
Brian Schatz
United States Senator



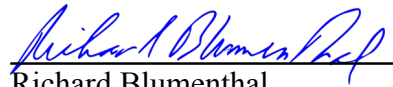
Ben Ray Lujan
United States Senator



Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator



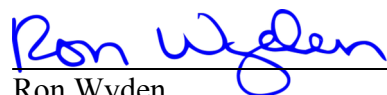
Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator



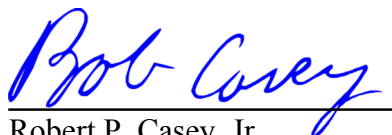
Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator



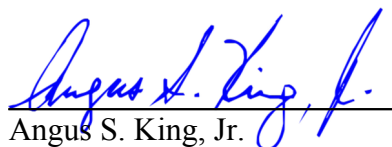
Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator



Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator



Raphael Warnock
United States Senator



Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator