

February 15, 2021

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
United States House of Representatives

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Majority Leader
United States Senate

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Republican Leader
United States House of Representatives

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Republican Leader
United States Senate

RE: Keep Congress Open to the People

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Senate Majority Leader Schumer, House Republican Leader McCarthy, and Senate Republican Leader McConnell:

We write in firm opposition to the proposed enclosure of the U.S. Capitol with permanent security fencing. The Capitol and surrounding buildings must remain open to all engaged in the business of our democracy. Congress should be the shining city on the hill, welcoming to all, and a beacon to the world.

For every complex problem there is an answer that is clear, simple, and wrong. The insurrection of January 6, 2021, and the attendant failure to protect Congress, were not caused by the absence of permanent security fencing. They were the result of failures by those responsible for managing security for the U.S. Capitol. That should be the focus of efforts to protect Congress and those who serve therein.

There may be times when it is necessary to erect *temporary* security fencing, as in the recent inauguration, but that decision must be driven by a meaningful strategy to address an exigent threat that is part of a thoughtful, coordinated plan developed by a competent security authority. We must first do the hard work of understanding what went wrong and why, especially when proposed solutions come at the expense of our values.

Militarizing our Capitol is a sign of weakness and a hallmark of authoritarian countries. It is an overreaction based upon a miscalculation of how to address the dangers we face. We must do better.

We appreciate your attention and would welcome the opportunity to discuss the matter further. Please contact Daniel Schuman, policy director, Demand Progress Education Fund at daniel@demandprogress.org or Zach Graves, head of policy, Lincoln Network at zach.graves@joinlincoln.org.

Sincerely yours,

American Family Voices
Arab American Institute
Center for International Policy
Council on American-Islamic Relations
Courage California
Defending Rights & Dissent
Demand Progress Education Fund
Due Process Institute
Engage Action
Environmentalists Against War
Fight for the Future
FreedomWorks
GovTrack.us
Issue One
Lincoln Network
Our Revolution
Project on Government Oversight
Public Citizen
R Street Institute
X-Lab

Kevin Kosar, AEI*

Lorelei Kelly, Beeck Center for Social Impact + Innovation at Georgetown*

Gar Smith, Environmentalists Against War*

Robert Musil, Rachel Carson Council*

* Affiliations listed for identification purposes only.

Cc: Representative Zoe Lofgren, Chair of the House Administration Committee
Representative Rodney Davis, Ranking Member of the House Administration Committee
Senator Amy Klobuchar, Chair of the Committee on Rules and Administration
Senator Roy Blunt, Vice Chair of the Committee on Rules and Administration