

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 24, 2020

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Chairman
Senate Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Vice Chairman
Senate Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Shelley Moore Capito
Chairman
Subcommittee on Homeland Security
Senate Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Jon Tester
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Homeland Security
Senate Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Jerry Moran
Chairman
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice
Science and Related Agencies
Senate Committee on Appropriations

The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice
Science and Related Agencies
Senate Committee on Appropriations

Dear Chairman Shelby, Vice Chairman Leahy, Chairman Capito, Chairman Moran, Ranking Member Tester, and Ranking Member Shaheen:

We urge you to explicitly prohibit personnel, programs, and activities from conducting or supporting actions that infringe upon Americans' First Amendment right to peaceably assemble, in any appropriations legislation concerning the Department of Justice (DOJ) and Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

Americans have watched the events of the past week in horror as the Trump administration deployed DOJ and DHS personnel to Portland, Oregon, uninvited and under the flimsy pretext of defending federal property from so-called "violent anarchists." Never mind that crime in Portland was below average in the weeks before this occupation, or that the violence to which they referred appears to center around undesired graffiti. Since then, a U.S. Marshal shot and injured a protester in the face with an impact munition, and DHS agents have been patrolling the streets without identifying insignia, have beaten and injured numerous protesters, including a Navy veteran, and have used unmarked vehicles to snatch and detain citizens nowhere near federal property, apparently without probable cause.

These disturbing actions are usually reserved for authoritarian governments, not democracies. And anybody who thinks this will be confined to Oregon isn't paying attention to either what is going on or what the President has promised. Donald Trump has already stated that he and his administration are treating Portland as a test case and plan to carry out similar actions in other American cities and states.

Congress must act swiftly to end these abuses of power and begin restricting, reforming, and restructuring DOJ and DHS. We urge you in the strongest terms to be part of that process by


including provisions in any appropriations bill that would clearly prohibit DOJ and DHS personnel, programs, and activities from conducting or supporting any action that infringes upon the constitutional right to free assembly and peaceful protest. Doing so would represent a first step toward reversing the politicization of DOJ and DHS under Donald Trump.

We thank you for your careful consideration of this vital request.

Sincerely,



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator

/s/ Cory A. Booker
Cory A. Booker
United States Senator

/s/ Chris Van Hollen
Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator

/s/ Richard Blumenthal
Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator

/s/ Edward J. Markey
Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

/s/ Maria Cantwell
Maria Cantwell
United States Senator

/s/ Christopher S. Murphy
Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator

/s/ Kamala D. Harris
Kamala D. Harris
United States Senator

/s/ Patty Murray
Patty Murray
United States Senator