

An Open Letter Opposing White House Retaliatory Investigations

We write with grave concern about the two presidential memoranda dated April 9, 2025, targeting Chris Krebs and Miles Taylor, respectively — two former national security officials who served the people of the United States. These executive actions represent a dangerous escalation in the abuse of presidential power: weaponizing federal agencies to carry out personalized retribution against named individuals.

Presidents of both parties have long respected the independence of federal law enforcement and refrained from using the power at their disposal to punish perceived enemies. Indeed, presidents have gone out of their way to avoid even the appearance of impropriety or influence. President Trump's statements are a profoundly unconstitutional break with this tradition. He is explicitly targeting two Americans because they exercised their First Amendment rights and criticized him. That is a miscarriage of justice which these individuals, and other people and institutions vindictively singled out by him, will be unfairly forced to endure. The president of the United States must not direct federal authorities to investigate people with whom he disagrees.

This is not democratic governance. It is baseless retaliation — and it has no place in the United States of America. Across our history, there have been dark chapters where state power has been weaponized and dissent suppressed, including the crackdown during and after World War I, the Red Scare of the 1950s, and President Richard Nixon's "enemies list." These episodes are now seen as shameful deviations from the fundamental American principles of free expression and impartial justice. The April 9 presidential memoranda are an appalling rejection of those bedrock democratic values.

Indeed, the President's actions not only evoke some of the worst moments in our history; they go even further. For a president to personally and publicly direct the levers of the federal government against publicly named citizens for political reasons sets a new and perilous precedent in our republic. It brings to mind the abuses of power that characterize authoritarian nations, not the United States. No matter one's party or politics, every American should reject the notion that the awesome power of the presidency can be used to pursue individual vendettas. Behavior of this kind is more to be expected from a royal despot than the elected leader of a constitutional republic. This is the path of autocracy, not democracy.

For these reasons, we urge that the President immediately rescind these memoranda and that agency heads repudiate any order that undermines their oaths, politicizes their missions, or betrays the constitutional principles they are sworn to uphold.

These actions, if carried out, will leave a permanent stain on our institutions and erode our democracy. History will not forget who stood silent. We will not stand silent.

List of Signatories:

Amb. Norman Eisen (ret.), Executive Chair, State Democracy Defenders Fund

Christine Todd Whitman, Governor of New Jersey from 1994 to 2001 (R); Administrator of the Environmental Protection Agency in the George W. Bush Administration from 2001 to 2003

Jeffrey Amestoy, Chief Justice (ret.) Vermont

Caroline Anderson

Alex Aronson

Les AuCoin, Representative of the 1st Congressional District of Oregon from 1975 to 1993 (D)

Chiraag Bains, Former Deputy Assistant to the President, Domestic Policy Council

Brian Baird, Representative of the 3rd Congressional District of Washington from 1999 to 2011 (D)

Marge Baker

Daniel Barkhuff, MD

Lavora Barnes

Ian Bassin, Executive Director and Co-Founder, Protect Democracy

Joseph Bean

Paul E. Begala, Counselor to the President from 1997 to 1999

Mark Begich, U.S. Senator for the State of Alaska from 2009 to 2015 (D)

Michael L. Belitzky, Alliance for American Leadership

Nate Bell, Representative of the 20th Arkansas House District from 2013 to 2017 (I)

John B. Bellinger III, Former Senior Associate Counsel to the President and Legal Adviser to the National Security Council

Matt Bennett, Co-Founder, Third Way

James Blanchard, Governor of Michigan from 1983 to 1991, Representative of the 18th Congressional District of Michigan from 1975 to 1983 (D)

Sidney Blumenthal

Reverend Glynden Bode

Roger Bolton, Formal Reagan and George H. W. Bush Administration Official

John Bonifaz, President, Free Speech For People

Kathy Boockvar, President, Athena Strategies; Former Pennsylvania Secretary of State

Noah Bookbinder, President, Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW)

Spencer P. Boyer, Former Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for European and NATO Policy

Barbara Boxer, U.S. Senator for the State of California from 1993 to 2017 (D)

Shellie Bressler, Senior Professional Staff Member for Global Health, Senate Foreign Relations Committee from 2007 to 2013; House Foreign Affairs Committee from 2015 to 2019

William Brodhead, Representative of the 17th Congressional District of Michigan from 1975 to 1983 (D)

Rosa Brooks, Scott K. Ginsburg Professor of Law, Georgetown University; Former Counselor to the Under Secretary of Defense

Steve Bullock, Former Governor of Montana (D)

Steve Bunnell, Former General Counsel, U.S. Department of Homeland Security

Lucy Caldwell, Political Strategist

Arne Carlson, Former Governor of Minnesota (R)

Davy Carter

Rod Chandler, Representative of the 8th Congressional District of Washington from 1983 to 1993 (R)

Linda Chavez

Jeff Chester, Executive Director, Center for Digital Democracy

Ty Cobb, Special Counsel to the President in the Trump Administration from 2017 to 2018;
Former Assistant U.S. Attorney for the District of Maryland from 1981 to 1986

Barbara Comstock, Representative of the 10th Congressional District of Virginia from 2015 to 2019 (R)

George Conway, Board President, Society for the Rule of Law

Sam Coppersmith, Representative of the 1st Congressional District of Arizona from 1993 to 1995 (D)

Susan Corke, Executive Director, State Democracy Defenders Fund

Geoffrey Cowan

Eugene Craig III, Former Vice-Chair, Maryland Republican Party

Tom Daschle, Senator from South Dakota from 1987-2005 (D), Senate Majority and Minority Leader

Glyn Davies, U.S. Ambassador (ret.)

Mark de la Iglesia

Charles W. Dent, Representative of the 15th Congressional District of Pennsylvania from 2005 to 2018 (R)

Laura Dickinson, Lyle T. Alverson Professor of Law, The George Washington University

Murray Dickman, Primary Assistant to U.S. Attorney General from 1988 to 1991

Renee DiResta

Charles K. Djou, Representative of the 1st Congressional District of Hawaii from 2010 to 2011 (R)

Donna F. Edwards, Representative of the 4th Congressional District of Maryland from 2008 to 2017 (D)

Mickey Edwards, Representative of the 5th Congressional District of Oklahoma from 1977 to 1993 (R)

Marc Elias

Uriel Epshtein

Janice Feather

Praveen Fernandes, Vice President, Constitutional Accountability Center

Claire Finkelstein, Algernon Biddle Professor of Law and Professor of Philosophy, University of Pennsylvania

Don Fox, Former General Counsel and Acting Director of the U.S. Office of Government Ethics
Emil H. Frankel, Assistant Secretary of the U.S. Department of Transportation, 2002-2005
Hannah Fried, Executive Director, All Voting is Local
Brian Frosh, Former Attorney General of Maryland
Mark Gallagher
Hon. Tim Gallaudet, Ph.D., Rear Admiral, U.S. Navy (ret.)
David Gee
Jennifer Gee, Elder, Presbyterian Church (USA)
Richard Gephardt, Former Democratic Leader, U.S. House of Representatives
Stuart Gerson
Hon. Nancy Gertner (ret.)
Lisa Gilbert, Co-President, Public Citizen
John Giruado, Attorney Advisor, Office of Legal Counsel, Associate Deputy Secretary in the Reagan Administration
Michelle Glogovac, Founder & CEO, The MLG Collective®, Podcast Publicist & Author
Jerry Goldfeder, Director of Fordham Law School Voting Rights & Democracy Project
Brianne J. Gorod, Chief Counsel, Constitutional Accountability Center
Hon. Joshua Gotman, Former Assistant Secretary of Defense & Treasury
James Greenwood, Representative from the 8th Congressional District of Pennsylvania from 1993 to 2005 (R)
Lauren Groh-Wargo, CEO, Fair Fight Action
Ânne Gruner
Vanita Gupta, Former U.S. Department of Justice Official
Bill Hafker
Kathleen Hamill, Attorney
Kenneth Harbaugh, President, VALOR Media Network
Mark Harvey, Former Special Assistant to the President, National Security Council Staff
Jeff Hauser, Executive Director, Revolving Door Project
Michael Hayden, Former Director of the Central Intelligence Agency
Jeremy M. Helfgot, Principal, J.M. Helfgot Communications; Co-founder, West Coast Women Forward; Co-founder, Blazing Desert Indivisible
Paul Hodes, Representative of the 2nd Congressional District of New Hampshire from 2007 to 2011 (D)
Joe Hoeffel, Representative of the 13th Congressional District of Pennsylvania from 1995 to 2005 (D)
Kate Helfrich
Jerry Huckaby, Representative of the 5th District of Louisiana from 1977 to 1993 (D)
Daniel Hunter, Choose Democracy
Joe Hunter, Former Congressional Chief of Staff

Bob Inglis, Representative of the 4th Congressional District of South Carolina from 1993 to 1999 and again from 2005 to 2011 (R)

Steve Israel, Representative of the 2nd and 3rd Congressional Districts of New York from 2001 to 2013 and 2013 to 2017 (D)

David Jolly, Representative of the 13th Congressional District of Florida from 2014 to 2017 (R)

Virginia Kase Solomón, President & CEO, Common Cause

Gary Kasparov

Peter Keisler, Acting Attorney General in the George W. Bush Administration in 2007

James Kelly, Deputy Assistant Secretary, International Trade Administration, 1984-1988

Bob Kerrey, Governor of Nebraska from 1983 to 1987 and Senator from 1989 to 2001 (D)

John Kingston, Former U.S. Senate Candidate; Candidate and Coalitions Chair, Forward Party

Rabbi Sharon Kleinbaum

Peter H. Kostmayer, Representative of the 8th Congressional District of Pennsylvania from 1977 to 1981 and 1983 to 1993 (D)

William Kristol, Chief of Staff to the Vice President in the George H.W. Bush Administration from 1989 to 1993

James R. Kunder, Former Deputy Administrator, U.S. Agency for International Development

Philip Lacovara, Counsel to the Special Prosecutor, Watergate Special Prosecutor's Office in the Nixon Administration from 1973 to 1974

Leonard Lance, Representative of the 7th Congressional District of New Jersey from 2009 to 2019 (R)

David Lapan, Former Spokesman for the Departments of Defense and Homeland Security

John LeBoutiller, Representative of the 6th Congressional District of New York from 1981 to 1983 (R)

James M. LeMunyon, Member, Virginia House of Delegates, 2010-2018

Marty Linsky, Former Assistant Republican Floor Leader, Massachusetts House of Representatives

Harry Litman, Former U.S. Attorney and Deputy Assistant Attorney General

Mike Lofgren

Sheree Lopez

Linda Lorelle, Co-Founder, Civil Dialogues

Charles D. Luckey

Sally Lyall

Joanna Lydgate, CEO, States United

R.J. Lyman, Citizen of the United States and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Mairin Macaluso, Senior Advisor, Leadership Now Project

Tom Malinowski, Representative of the 7th Congressional District of New Jersey from 2019 to 2023 (D)

Debrianna Mansini, Activist

Marjorie Margolies, Representative of the 13th Congressional District of Pennsylvania from 1993 to 1995 (D)

Rabbi Bonnie Margulis

Andrew G. McCabe, Former Deputy Director, FBI

Mary B. McCord, Former Acting Assistant Attorney General for National Security

John McCormick

Maria McFarland Sanchez-Moreno, CEO, RepresentUs

Lt. Col. Amy McGrath, United States Marine Corps (ret.)

John McKay, U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Washington appointed by George W. Bush from 2001 to 2007

Brian P. McKeon, Former Deputy Secretary of State for Management and Resources

Hon. Donna McLean

Barbara McQuade, United States Attorney, Eastern District of Michigan, 2010-2017

John M. Mitnick, Former Associate Counsel to the President

Jeff Modisett, Former Indiana Attorney General; Former Assistant U.S. Attorney

Toby Moffett, Representative of the 6th Congressional District of Connecticut from 1975 to 1983 (D)

Larry Moore, Substack Creator, Democracy Forge

Mike Moore, Former Attorney General of Mississippi

Alberto Mora, Former General Counsel, Department of the Navy

Seth Moulton, Representative of the 6th Congressional District of Massachusetts from 2015 to present (D)

Virginia A. Mulberger, Former National Security Council Senior Director and Special Assistant to President George H. W. Bush

Tiffany Muller, President, End Citizens United

Lissa Muscatine, Presidential Speechwriter, Clinton Administration; Director of Speechwriting for the Secretary of State, Obama Administration

Elizabeth Neumann, Former DHS Assistant Secretary of Counterterrorism

Mario Nicolais, General Counsel, The Lincoln Project

Cheryl Niro, Past President, Illinois State Bar Association

Joseph Nye, Former Assistant Secretary of Defense

Sean O'Keefe, Professor, Syracuse University

Ted O'Meara, Former Chair, Maine Republican Party

Robert F. Orr, Former Justice, North Carolina Supreme Court (ret.)

Jan Peter Ozga

Richard Painter, Former Associate Counsel to the President and Chief White House Ethics Lawyer for President George W. Bush

Deval Patrick, Governor of Massachusetts from 2007 to 2015 (D)

Jed Pauker, Co-Founding Board Member, Venice Resistance

Tony Payne, Former Executive Director, Maine GOP

Valerie Plame

John D. Podesta, Former White House Chief of Staff and Former Senior Advisor to the President

Michael Podhorzer

Jen Porter

Trevor Potter, Chairman and Commissioner of the Federal Election Commission from 1991 to 1995; General Counsel to John McCain's Presidential Campaign from 2000 to 2008

Edward A Powell, Former Assistant Secretary for Management and Deputy Secretary (Acting) at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs; CEO, USO World HQ; Defense Business Board

Kristopher Purcell, Former White House Aide in the George W. Bush Administration

Marc Racicot

Alan Charles Raul, Associate Counsel to the President in the Reagan Administration from 1986 to 1988

Reid Ribble, Representative of the 8th Congressional District of Wisconsin from 2015 to 2017 (R)

Kathleen Rice, Representative of the 4th Congressional District of New York from 2015 to 2023 (D)

Stephen Richer, Maricopa County Recorder from 2021 to 2025 (R)

Hon. Denver Rigglesman, Representative of the 5th Congressional District of Virginia from 2019 to 2021 (R)

Robert Riley

Amb. John Ritch, Former U.S. Representative to the International Atomic Energy Agency

Bill Ritter, Governor of Colorado from 2007 to 2011 (D)

Miriam Rocah, Former Federal Prosecutor SDNY 2001-2017

Anthony Romero, Executive Director, American Civil Liberties Union

Theodore Roosevelt IV

Paul Rosenzweig, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy, Department of Homeland Security in the George W. Bush Administration from 2005 to 2009

Steve Russell, Representative of the 5th Congressional District of Oklahoma from 2015 to 2019 (R)

Mark Sanford, Governor of South Carolina from 2003 to 2011; Representative of the 1st Congressional District of South Carolina from 1995 to 2001 and again from 2013 to 2019 (R)

Anthony Scaramucci

Steven M. Schneebaum

Claudine Schneider, Representative of the 2nd Congressional District of Rhode Island from 1981-1991 (R)

Nancy Schulte

Kathleen Sebelius, Governor of Kansas from 2003 to 2009 (D)

Ricki Seidman, Former Senior Counselor to the Secretary of the Department of Homeland Security

James M. Seif

Joe Sestak, Former Vice Admiral, U.S. Navy and U.S. Congressman (PA-07)

Tara Setmayer, Co-Founder, The Seneca Project

Rina Shah, Geopolitical Adviser & Former RNC Delegate

Robert B. Shanks, Deputy Assistant Attorney General, Office of Legal Counsel, 1981-1985

Hon. Phil Sharp, Representative of the 10th and 2nd District of Indiana from 1975-1983 and 1983-1995 (D)

Kate Shaw

Christopher Shays, Representative of the 4th Congressional District of Connecticut from 1987 to 2009 (R)

Donald Sherman, Executive Director and Chief Counsel, Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW)

Steve Silverman

David Skaggs, Representative of the 2nd Congressional District of Colorado from 1987 to 1999 (D)

Anne-Marie Slaughter, Professor Emerita, Princeton University

Fern Smith, Judge of the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California appointed by President Reagan from 1988 to 2005

Mary Smith, Immediate past President of the American Bar Association, Former Associate White House Counsel for Clinton Administration

Hon. Peter Smith

Craig Snyder, Former Chief of Staff to U.S. Senator Arlen Specter

Ilya Somin, Law Professor at George Mason University

Julia Spiegel, Founder and CEO of Governors Action Alliance

Richard Stengel, Former Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy

Stuart Stevens

Robin Tallon, Representative of the 6th District of South Carolina from 1983 to 1993 (D)

Neera Tanden, President and CEO, Center for American Progress

Michael Teter, Attorney & Managing Director, The 65 Project

Jennifer Thomas & Emma Addams, Co-Executive Directors, Mormon Women for Ethical Government

James Tierney, Former Attorney General of Maine

Jeff Timmer, The Lincoln Project

Ann Toback, CEO, The Workers Circle

Carmen Torres

Laurence H. Tribe, Carl M. Loeb University Professor of Constitutional Law Emeritus at Harvard University

David Trott, Representative of the 11th Congressional District of Michigan from 2015 to 2019 (R)

Olivia Troye, Special Advisor, Homeland Security and Counterterrorism to Vice President Mike Pence, 2018-2020

F. Andrew Turley, Major General, USAF (ret.)

Susan W. Turnbull

Chris Vance, Former Chairman, Washington State Republican Party

Josh Venable, Former Chief of Staff, U.S. Department of Education

Alexander S. Vindman, Lt. Col., U.S. Army (ret.)

Michael Waldman, President, Brennan Center for Justice

Liz Wally

Joe Walsh

Matt Walton, 2015 Republican Nominee, 74th District of the Virginia House of Delegates

Austin Weatherford

Judge William H. Webster

Randi Weingarten

Ellen L. Weintraub, Commissioner, Federal Election Commission, 2002-2025

Wendy Weiser, Vice President for Democracy, Brennan Center for Justice

Robert Weissman, Co-President, Public Citizen

Lawrence B. Wilkerson, Colonel, USA (ret.)

Gregory P. Wilson, Deputy Assistant Secretary, U.S. Department of the Treasury, 1986-1989

Rick Wilson, The Lincoln Project

Jonathan M Winer, Former U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State and Special Envoy for Libya

Timothy Wirth, U.S. Senator for the State of Colorado from 1987 to 1993; Representative of the 8th Congressional District of Colorado from 1975 to 1987 (D)

Ann S. Womble

John Yarmuth, Former Chairman of the House Budget Committee, 3rd District of Kentucky from 2007-2023 (D)