

PROTECTING WE THE PEOPLE: POST-ATTACK MESSAGING

Adapted from materials provided by the Voting Rights Lab and ASO Communications

Document purpose

Guidance for sermons, social media, press conferences, op-eds, interviews and conversations. You may use this word-for-word or as a framework for your own message.

The Big Picture

Directly incited by President Trump, white nationalists stormed the Capitol while Congress was certifying the will of we the people in the 2020 election. This attempted coup did not succeed -- election certification was completed after security was restored.

But the damage to our nation is deep. This was an attack on all of us. Many police stood down in the face of a direct white nationalist attack on the seat of our elected government, in stark contrast to violent police repression of protests for racial justice. While several Members of Congress renounced their previous dishonest support for overturning the election results, 147 Republican Members still voted to not certify the election. The vast majority of participants in the attack remain at large.

As people of faith, we must lead. Our congregations need our leadership in order to deal with fear and misinformation. Our communities need our help building solidarity. And we must build overwhelming demand for the removal of President Trump and all who are complicit in his attempted coup. **The president must resign or be removed by impeachment or the 25th amendment of the Constitution. Members of Congress who are complicit in his scheme must resign or be expelled. Those who attacked the Capitol and the will of the people must be investigated and prosecuted.**

Messaging essentials

- Keep “we the people” in the frame.
- The core demand is “remove or resign.”
- Frame this as an attack on all of us, in order to make the impact immediate and personal.
- Point out the racial double standard in law enforcement’s response.
- Make clear that more people than just Trump are at fault. Republican leaders who furthered his lies about the election also bear responsibility.
- Make clear that this attack was the work of white supremacists, rather than merely a mob or protesters. (If speaking to audiences that are familiar with Christian nationalism, it is appropriate to mention that the idolatry of Christian Nationalism was on display.)

Short core message

If you only have a short window of opportunity, say this

“I’m praying today for the safety of our people and our nation, and for justice. We the people demand that everyone who bears responsibility for this attack be immediately held accountable. This was a white supremacist attack on our country incited by a president who refuses to accept that we the people voted by overwhelming margins to elect Joe Biden. This is what treason looks like: an angry mob of armed white militants attacking our Capitol and our government. Republican leaders who lied about the election to cling to power also bear responsibility for this attack. They have sown the wind and reaped the whirlwind. Every politician who fueled these attacks, from the president to Members of Congress to state legislators, must resign or be removed.”

Important notes on language

Strong, effective words	Words that are less effective
Attack	Insurrection, protest, or riot
White supremacists/militants	Fascists
Attack on our people, attack on our country	Attack on democracy
Attempted coup or failed coup	Coup