

NICK LALOTA  
New York's First District  
122 CANNON HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-3201  
(202) 225-3826  
515 ROUTE 111, SUITE 3B  
HAUPPAUGE, NY 11788  
(631) 289-1097

Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515-3201

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL SERVICES AND  
GENERAL GOVERNMENT – VICE CHAIRMAN  
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AND INFRASTRUCTURE PROTECTION  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT,  
INVESTIGATIONS, AND ACCOUNTABILITY

May 1, 2026

Dear Ms. Smith,

I am writing to share my thoughts following the recent shooting at the White House Correspondents' Dinner and the broader issue of political violence in America.

First and foremost, I am grateful to the Secret Service and law enforcement for their swift and courageous response. Because of their professionalism, the President, Cabinet, Members of Congress, and members of the press are safe. Regardless of party or politics, political violence has no place in America. We must do better, and we must stand united against it.

But the reality is, there is a pattern here.

The three attempts on President Donald Trump's life have all been preceded by hyperbolic and dangerous rhetoric that an imbalanced person can see as a call to action. Repeated claims that he is an existential threat to democracy, comparisons to history's worst dictators, and assertions that normal constitutional processes are insufficient to stop him risk elevating political disagreement into a perceived emergency. When leaders or commentators frame a political opponent as uniquely evil or beyond the reach of elections and the rule of law, they can unintentionally create an environment where unstable individuals feel justified in taking matters into their own hands. We can and should debate policy vigorously, but we also have a shared responsibility to reject dehumanizing language and reaffirm that change in America must come through the ballot box and the Constitution, not violence.

And it is not just President Trump who has been the target of egregious political violence. From the tragic killing of Melissa Hortman and her husband, to the assassination of Charlie Kirk, to the shooting of John Hoffman and his wife, to the attack on Steve Scalise, the near-fatal shooting of Gabby Giffords, the assault on the husband of Nancy Pelosi, the targeting of Josh Shapiro's residence, the pattern is undeniable and deeply troubling.

Sadly, political violence is no longer theoretical. It is happening in real time, and it should alarm every American. The attack at the White House Correspondents' Dinner, where gunfire forced the evacuation of a room full of public servants, journalists, and their families, is the latest and most chilling example.

In this environment, words carry more weight. Comments that hint at harm, even indirectly, do not land as humor. They contribute to a culture that risks normalizing political violence rather than rejecting it outright. That is why remarks like those from Jimmy Kimmel, suggesting the First Lady has "the glow of an expectant widow," miss the mark so badly—because at a moment when threats are real and recent, that kind of rhetoric is not satire, it is reckless. We can do

better, and we must.

It would be a mistake to reference this as a Republican issue or a Democrat issue. Rather, it is an American issue.

And right now, the temperature in our politics is too high. That is not rhetoric, that is reality. We are seeing the consequences play out in real time. We have to turn it down. Because look at how we talk to each other now. Phrases like “our democracy is at stake” or warnings that the country will be “destroyed” if the other side wins have become so common that we barely think twice about them. Both sides use this language. It has become part of the everyday tone of our politics.

But words like that carry weight. They create fear, urgency, and anxiety. Over time, they can create an environment in which some individuals come to believe that extreme actions are justified.

They never are. Not a little. Not when it is convenient. Not only when it targets one side.

If we only call out dangerous rhetoric when it is directed at our side, we are part of the problem. That double standard fuels the cycle. This country has been through far worse than political disagreements. We have faced wars, economic crises, and defining moments that tested the very fabric of our nation, and we came through them together.

We can do that again.

We can disagree, even strongly, without wishing harm on one another. And when you look at the challenges facing the world today, it is clear that many of our disagreements here at home, while important, do not compare to the threats and instability beyond our borders. That perspective matters.

We are stronger when we stand together, not when we tear each other apart.

It is an honor to serve Suffolk County and to deliver real, tangible results for hardworking Long Islanders. My staff and I take our duty to be accountable to you seriously. If you require help with a federal issue such as your passport or a VA claim, please feel free to contact my office at 631-289-1097. To receive email updates on this important issue and more, please subscribe to my e-newsletter at [LaLota.House.Gov](http://LaLota.House.Gov).

In Service,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Nick LaLota". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Nick LaLota**  
**Member of Congress**