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of Teachers, AFL-CIO

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August 17, 2017

The Honorable Brad Schimel  
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Dear Attorney General Brad Schimel:

The recent racially charged violence in Charlottesville exposed a dark turning point in America. It was a sobering reminder, and a moral awakening for many, of the racism, anti-Semitism and homophobia that still plagues our nation, and it was also a call to stand up to the forces of hate and division in this country that feel emboldened today. This moment requires a new level of action by state attorneys general, law enforcement officials and leaders to combat hatred, bigotry and the white supremacist groups leveling this terror on communities. And it requires additional efforts to ensure that all Americans, but especially African-American, Jewish, queer and other marginalized communities, have the peace of mind that laws will be enforced to protect them and that law enforcement officials will do everything in their power to ensure our communities are safe and secure. As heinous as we believe these groups are, we honor the right to protest and associate embedded in the First Amendment. That makes your job more important and tougher, since it is critical to ensure the safety of those whom these white supremacist groups intend to terrorize.

The frightening reality of Charlottesville is that the evil forces of hate, led by the Ku Klux Klan, neo-Nazis and other white supremacist groups, feel more empowered than ever to inflict terror on our communities. This cannot be tolerated. Violence and intimidation motivated by what someone looks like, how they worship or whom they love run contrary to the principles and laws of our country. Moreover, people are terrified. While many of our nation's leaders in law enforcement have denounced the vitriol that was on display in Charlottesville, this country needs more.

We call on you, as the attorney general of Wisconsin, to implement a clear plan of action that will ensure bias-motivated violence and harassment is prosecuted swiftly and aggressively. In order to protect the residents of Wisconsin, every law at your disposal must be fully actualized and implemented through your investigatory

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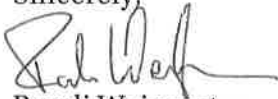
The **American Federation of Teachers** is a union of professionals that champions fairness; democracy; economic opportunity; and high-quality public education, healthcare and public services for our students, their families and our communities. We are committed to advancing these principles through community engagement, organizing, collective bargaining and political activism, and especially through the work our members do.

and prosecutorial powers. We expect that you will ensure the enforcement of not only any state criminal laws addressing crimes motivated by bias, and prosecution of all underlying offenses, including but not limited to harassment, vandalism, trespass, assault, battery and homicide, but also misdemeanor offenses inspired by hate and bigotry against public peace and welfare, such as rioting and unlawful assembly. Please remember that hateful speech is not harmless speech and that a swastika on a headstone, a racial slur on the door of a home or other similar defacements are precisely the kind of hateful acts that preceded the horrors of World War II. If these kinds of acts had been addressed promptly back then, even greater acts of terrorism might have been discouraged. Moreover, additional available civil remedies, including injunctive relief and compensatory and punitive damages, should be pursued as well. Enhanced penalties, whenever statutorily provided, should always be sought in cases of bias-motivated crimes as a means to deter future acts. People in Wisconsin need to know that you are there for them and that laws will be enforced to protect them against such domestic terrorism. More important, hatemongers must be made aware that your office will enforce a zero-tolerance policy against those who violate the laws of this nation.

These are unprecedented times. More than ever, we need assurances from state law enforcement that the laws of this country will be enforced and justice will be done in every state and for all Americans. This commitment on the state's part not only protects the people of Wisconsin but would also contribute to a patchwork nationwide cloak of protection created by individual states to safeguard the civil liberties of the American people.

As this state's chief law enforcement officer, we rely on your leadership and vigilance during this harrowing turning point for our country. We trust that you are committed to protecting the basic civil liberties and safety of American families.

Sincerely,



Randi Weingarten  
President

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cc: Governor Scott Walker