

Statement of NRLCA President Ronnie Stutts on the January 6 Attack on the U.S. Capitol

Rural letter carriers come from various walks of life, diverse backgrounds, and different places. We are a union of working men and women with different politics and beliefs. But we also share many things in common—among them a pride in serving the people of the United States every day and a love of our country and democracy. Many of us, too, have served in uniform or have family who have, and while we expect to see our men and women in uniform defend us from foreign enemies, the sight of them having to defend against a violent mob of American citizens is devastating.

That is why I feel compelled to address—and to denounce—Wednesday’s attack on the U.S. Capitol—a sacred building, which sits just across the Potomac River from our national office. While political extremists have committed isolated acts of violence in these hallowed halls before, not since the War of 1812 have we seen such devastation. Our Capitol was defiled, property was destroyed, offices were ransacked, and more than 50 law enforcement officers were injured. One Capitol Police Officer, Brian Sicknick, was killed in the line of duty after physically engaging with rioters. We mourn his death and pray for the injured.

Washington D.C. has been the sight of a diverse array of historic and recent protests from the women’s suffrage rallies in the early 20th century, to civil rights and anti-war protests in the 60’s and 70’s, to more recent demonstrations addressing all manner (and sides) of various social and political issues. But until now, Americans have almost universally shown respect for one another and respect for the sanctity of our democratic government, institutions, and monuments. They have expressed varying viewpoints zealously, but honorably. And that is why I was so saddened to see the violent, reckless and disrespectful attack on the Capitol, its law enforcement officers, and the lawmakers, staffers, and other workers within. I strongly condemn these acts.

Condemning such behavior has nothing to do with politics. Our membership’s feelings about the recent presidential election run the full spectrum of viewpoints. But this is about whether we truly stand up for the democratic ideals this country was founded upon—ideals that only work if we accept and defend the democratic process and the results of that process whether we like them or not.

Our country faces many challenges at this moment. We need our elected leaders to openly discuss and debate and ultimately decide how we are going to address them. But they cannot do their jobs when they have to don gas masks and barricade themselves in their offices because a small but violent group of individuals has them under siege.

Thankfully, order has been restored in our capital city and we are certain additional precautions will be put into place to protect our government and those who serve it. But if we truly cherish this imperfect democracy, we must strongly condemn acts that threaten it and restore our trust and faith in it.

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