



July 17, 2025

The Honorable Jeff Van Drew
Chair
House Judiciary Committee
Subcommittee on Oversight
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Jasmine Crockett
Ranking Member
House Judiciary Committee
Subcommittee on Oversight
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chair Van Drew and Ranking Member Crockett:

On behalf of the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), we write to correct false and misleading statements made about the SPLC during this week's hearing entitled "How Leftist Nonprofit Networks Exploit Federal Tax Dollars to Advance a Radical Agenda." During the hearing, exchanges between Judiciary Committee Chair Jordan and witness Tyler O'Neil mischaracterized our work, falsely suggesting that the SPLC labels Catholics as extremists. Another exchange falsely asserted that the SPLC has received federal funds for our work. We ask that this letter be included as part of the formal record for the July 15 hearing.

Founded in 1971 in Montgomery, Alabama, the SPLC is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization committed to carrying forward the work of the Civil Rights Movement and turning its promise into a lived reality for people across the Deep South and beyond. For more than fifty years, we have worked to build an America where everyone – especially Black and Brown communities – can thrive. Through litigation, advocacy, education, and organizing, we advance policies that protect civil and human rights, expand access to opportunity, combat hate and extremism, and challenge the entrenched inequities that still rob too many Americans of the basic fairness, freedom, and dignity they deserve.

During Rep. Jordan's questioning of Mr. O'Neil, he referred to a leaked January 2023 Richmond FBI Field Office Memo.¹

Rep. Jordan: ... you may remember this, this memorandum put out by the Richmond FBI Field Office? You remember this, Mr. O'Neil?

¹ Federal Bureau of Investigation, Richmond Field Office, *Interest of Racially or Ethnically Motivated Violent Extremists in Radical-Traditionalist Catholic Ideology Almost Certainly Presents New Mitigation Opportunities*, January 23, 2023, <https://judiciary.house.gov/sites/evo-subsites/republicans-judiciary.house.gov/files/evo-media-document/fbi-anti-catholic-memo.pdf>



Mr. O’Neil: Oh yes.

Rep. Jordan: And do you know when they talked about traditional Catholics were extremists, do you know who they cited in the footnote in this. I got the actual FBI memorandum. Do you know who they cited in that memorandum?

Mr. O’Neil: The Southern Poverty Law Center.

Rep. Jordan: The Southern Poverty Law Center. Go figure.

This exchange was apparently designed to give the false impression that the FBI Richmond Field Office memo’s analysis was provided by or made in collaboration with the SPLC. It was not. The SPLC did not provide any information or communicate with any FBI personnel involved in preparing this Richmond Field Office memo.

In December, 2023, the House Judiciary Select Subcommittee on the Weaponization of the Federal Government prepared a report on this memo and its preparation.² And in April 2024, the Department of Justice Office of the Inspector General issued a congressionally-required review of “Creation and Content of the FBI Internal Intelligence Product on Purported Link between Racially or Ethnically Motivated Violent Extremists and ‘Radical Traditionalist Catholic’ Ideology.”³ Neither report mentions the SPLC as having been involved or consulted in the preparation of this memo in any way.

In fact, the SPLC has never labeled, designated, or considered the Catholic Church as a hate group. The SPLC *does* identify breakoff Radical Traditionalist Catholic groups as hate groups – because they are deeply antisemitic and subscribe to an ideological view rejected by the Vatican and 70 million mainstream Catholics in the United States. The SPLC background on this breakaway, fringe Catholic group is readily available on our website: <https://www.splcenter.org/fighting-hate/extremist-files/ideology/radical-traditional-catholicism>.

The SPLC defines a hate group as “an organization or collection of individuals that – based on its official statements or principles, the statements of its leaders, or its activities – has beliefs or practices that attack or malign an entire class of people, typically for their immutable

² Committee on the Judiciary and the Select Subcommittee on the Weaponization of the Federal Government, U.S. House of Representatives Interim Staff Report, *THE FBI’S BREACH OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM: THE WEAPONIZATION OF LAW ENFORCEMENT AGAINST CATHOLIC AMERICANS*, December 4, 2023, <https://judiciary.house.gov/sites/evo-subsites/republicans-judiciary.house.gov/files/evo-media-document/2023-12-04-the-fbis-breach-of-religious-freedom-the-weaponization-of-law-enforcement-against-catholic-americans.pdf>

³ Department of Justice, Office of the Inspector General, *Creation and Content of the FBI Internal Intelligence Product on Purported Link between Racially or Ethnically Motivated Violent Extremists and ‘Radical Traditionalist Catholic’ Ideology*, April 18, 2024, <https://oig.justice.gov/sites/default/files/2024-04/4-18-2024-letter.pdf>



characteristics. An organization does not need to have engaged in criminal conduct or have followed their speech with actual unlawful action to be labeled a hate group.”⁴

Hate groups vilify others because of their race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or gender identity – prejudices that strike at the heart of our democratic values and fracture society along its most fragile fault lines. The FBI uses similar criteria in defining the bias motivation of a hate crime.⁵

In addition, we want to correct the false suggestion that the SPLC receives federal grants to fund our work. We do not.⁶

During another exchange between Rep. Jordan and Mr. O’Neil, both tried to suggest that taking money from an organization that had received federal funds is tantamount to receiving federal funds. That is false and misleading.

Rep. Jordan: The Tides Foundation gets a boatload of taxpayer money. People I get the privilege of representing from the Fourth District of Ohio, some of their money is going to the Tides Foundation, then is then going to the Southern Poverty Law Center where they can label moms as terrorists and say that, if you’re a Catholic, you’re an extremist. That all happens with American tax dollars. Is that right?

Mr. O’Neil: We don’t have concrete proof of the fact that the Tides Center receiving money that they then gave to the Southern Poverty Law Center.

Rep. Jordan: Money is fungible. We’re not ... we’re not ...

Mr. O’Neil: So, your overall point is 100%.

The Tides Foundation is an organization that supports social justice causes through a variety of means, including acting as a clearinghouse for social justice philanthropy and a fiscal sponsor for other organizations, and acting as a strategic advisor to many nonprofit organizations. The SPLC has received some funding – representing a tiny fraction of our overall budget – through the Tides Foundation over the years. The SPLC has never received funds directed to the Tides Foundation under any federal contract.

⁴ Southern Poverty Law Center, *Frequently asked questions about hate and antigovernment groups*, May 22, 2025, <https://www.splcenter.org/resources/reports/frequently-asked-questions-about-hate-and-antigovernment-groups/>

⁵ Federal Bureau of Investigation, *What We Investigate: Hate Crime*, <https://www.fbi.gov/investigate/civil-rights/hate-crimes>.

⁶ The State Department paid speaker honoraria and travel expenses for Lecia Brooks, then an SPLC officer, to participate in State Department events during 2021.



We appreciate the opportunity to provide clarity and to correct the record on these two issues. If you have questions about this matter, or need more information, please contact Michael Lieberman, Senior Policy Counsel, Hate and Extremism michael.lieberman@splcenter.org.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading 'Lathawn G. Warren', is positioned above the name and title of the Chief Policy Officer.

Chief Policy Officer
Southern Poverty Law Center

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Sakina Cook', is positioned above the name and title of the Director, Federal Policy.

Director, Federal Policy
Southern Poverty Law Center