

United States Senate

SELECT COMMITTEE ON ETHICS

October 17, 2025

Dear Colleague:

The Select Committee on Ethics (the Committee) regularly receives requests for advice from Members regarding restrictions on public statements under Senate Rules and related standards of conduct. This issue has not been addressed expressly in any prior Committee guidance and, in light of recent events regarding incidents of tragic political violence, we believe that such guidance would be of assistance to the Senate Community. This letter is intended to provide broad guidance on Member public statements, including remarks offered at in-person events, through press releases, and on social media in official, campaign, and personal capacities. While primarily focused on Member public statements, this guidance applies equally to Senate Members, officers, and employees.

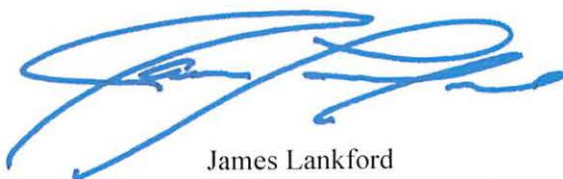
Pursuant to the Committee's authorizing resolution, Senate Resolution 338 (1964), the Committee is charged with investigating all reports or complaints of "improper conduct that may reflect upon the Senate." Accordingly, the Committee recognizes that it is generally held that political violence of any kind should be condemned unequivocally. Statements from Senators that seem to incite or excuse political violence discredit the institution of the Senate as a whole. The reputation of the Senate is put at risk when a Senator's improper statements on political violence are determined to be intentional, repeated, or without remorse or recognition of the potential consequences of such statements.

Senate Rule XIX governs decorum in debate and prohibits disorderly language imputing to another Senator "any conduct or motive unworthy or unbecoming a Senator" or referring "offensively to any State of the Union." While Senate Rule XIX allows for impassioned speech in debate, its restrictions recognize that the U.S. Senate relies on a respectful exchange of ideas to remain a great deliberative body and a model of civil discourse. The expectation that Senators display decorum in their public statements is beyond mere polite tradition or etiquette. As Senators exercise national level responsibilities, the requirement to maintain respectful discourse extends beyond debate on the Senate floor.

Obviously, each Member is free to speak, to share their own opinions, and to share the opinions of their constituents as they choose. However, the Committee is charged with the difficult and subjective task of ensuring that all Senators uphold the institutional standards of the U.S. Senate, a responsibility that is both broader than and distinct from mere enforcement of express prohibitions codified in federal law and the Senate Rules.

If you have questions not addressed in this letter regarding any standards of conduct, please do not hesitate to contact the Committee at (202) 224-2981.

Sincerely,



James Lankford
Chairman



Christopher A. Coons
Vice Chairman