

October 27, 2020

To:

3rd Legislative District Senator & Representatives
4th Legislative District Senator & Representatives
6th Legislative District Senator & Representatives
7th Legislative District Senator & Representatives
9th Legislative District Senator & Representatives
City of Spokane Mayor and City Council
City of Spokane Valley Mayor and City Council
City of Airway Heights Mayor and City Council
City of Liberty Lake Mayor and City Council
Spokane County Commissioners
Spokane County Sheriff
Spokane County Auditor Vicky Dalton
Spokane School District Board of Directors
Superior Court Presiding Judge
District Court Presiding Judge
City of Spokane Municipal Court Presiding Judge
County Prosecutor Haskell
City of Millwood Mayor and City Council
City of Cheney Mayor and City Council
City of Deer Park Mayor and City Council
City of Medical Lake Mayor and City Council
East Valley School District Board of Directors
Central Valley School District Board of Directors
West Valley School District Board of Directors

CC:

Spokane City Prosecutor Bingham
Spokane Police Chief Meidl
NEWESD 101 Superintendent

We, the undersigned organizations, are coming together to prepare for a post-election response to keep our community safe and make sure everyone's rights are respected, voices are heard, and votes are counted. We urge you to join us so that together we can make sure our region is a place that includes everyone, and protects the right of every person to live, love, work, and worship free from fear and bigotry.

In this moment of extreme division leading up to and after the election, speaking clearly and collectively about our values is incredibly important. We value human rights, human dignity, and human life, and those values are more important than our ideology.

We the people are powerful. No matter our color, how little is in our wallet, or whether we live on a city block or a country road, we want our families to be safe, our voices to be

heard, and our rights to be respected. Whether we are Black or white, Latino or Asian, Indigenous or newcomer, we want our families to be healthy and whole.

Certain politicians have empowered white nationalists, who now threaten vigilante violence. White nationalism, fueled by antisemitism and Islamophobia, blames Black people, new immigrants, religious minorities, and anyone who opposes their agenda of hate. Paramilitary activity poses a challenge to our values of inclusive democracy. These groups use threats, intimidation, and even violence to chill democratic practice, threaten community safety, and undermine civil society. But we won't be intimidated.

We refuse their attempts to divide us. We pull through by pulling together. We reject white nationalism. Black lives matter! We know for democracy to work for all of us, it must include us all. We know a better future is possible.

Thank you to those who have already taken action to “*oppose the presence of armed vigilantes roaming the streets of our city.*” We are very concerned about the risk of violence, threats of violence, and escalated presence by white nationalists in our region, whatever the election results may be. We call on you to take action in advance of the election to keep communities of color and other targeted communities safe and let white nationalists know that they are not welcome here.

We call on you to urge law enforcement to take a strong stance against anyone threatening our right to freedom of speech and our freedom to protect our democracy. We call on you to ensure that law enforcement uphold Washington laws and intervene to stop unlawful private paramilitary units from operating in our community.

It is critical to recognize that the Washington Constitution forbids private military units from operating outside state authority, providing that “[t]he military shall be in strict subordination to the civil power.” Wash. Const. art. I, § 18. - [Georgetown Law factsheet](#)

Washington law makes it illegal for groups of people to organize as private militias without permission from the state. It is a misdemeanor for any “*organized body other than the recognized militia organizations of this state, armed forces of the United States,*” military schools, and veterans organizations to “*associate themselves together as a military company or organize or parade in public with firearms.*” Wash. Rev. Code § 38.40.120. - [Georgetown Law factsheet](#)

Law enforcement response to protests must be demilitarized and based on de-escalation. We lift up the principle expressed in the Platform for Change created by Spokane Community Against Racism (SCAR):

Our city is not a warzone, and weapons of war should not be used on our streets. This includes tear gas—a chemical weapon which is banned by the Geneva convention—and all repurposed military surplus equipment. Military uniforms, vehicles, and weaponry communicate to the residents of Spokane that the police view them as enemy combatants. Furthermore, militarized uniforms encourage a “warrior” mindset in police, which emphasizes readiness for violent conflict over the relationship-based

work of building community trust. Spokane does not need street warriors, Spokane needs public servants we can trust; from their uniforms to their equipment, police should be equipped for the job that is needed.

We also call on you to stand with our election officials and build confidence in our elections process by publicly committing that no voter intimidation will be tolerated, that all votes must be counted, and election results must be respected.

We ask that you make a public commitment to speak out with other elected officials to protect the integrity of our democracy:

- 1. Reject white nationalism, white supremacy, and vigilante patrols.**
- 2. Keep communities of color and other targeted communities safe: work with communities of color, LGBTQ+ community, and religious minorities to ensure urgent response and support in the case of hate incidents and threats.**
- 3. Support confidence in our election system and stand with election officials who are working hard to ensure everyone's ballot is submitted without intimidation and counted accurately, and election results are respected.**
- 4. Call on city and county law enforcement to take action against violations of state law by armed paramilitary militias seeking to intimidate our community.**
- 5. Call on city and county law enforcement to keep our community safe by using demilitarized de-escalation to respond to protests and protect people of color and others calling for election integrity.**

Sincerely,

American Civil Liberties Union of Washington State
Asian Pacific Islander Coalition - Spokane Chapter
Baraka Interfaith Spiritual Group
Bethany Presbyterian Church
Bridges Not Walls
Carl Maxey Center
Disability Rights Washington
Dorothy Day Labor Forum
Episcopal Diocese of Spokane
Faith Action Network
Fellow Coworking
Fuse Washington
Futurewise Spokane
Gender, Women's & Sexuality Studies, EWU
Greater Spokane Progress
Health Equity Circle
League of Women Voters of the Spokane Area

MAC Movement
Manito Presbyterian Church
Ministerial Fellowship of Spokane
Muslims for Community, Action and Support
NAACP Spokane #1137
Northwest Fair Housing Alliance
Our Natural Homes
Paradise Billing Services
Peace and Justice Action League of Spokane
Planned Parenthood Of Greater Washington Of North Idaho
Raiz of Planned Parenthood of Greater Washington and North Idaho
RCFRC/I Did The Time
Rza corporation
Salish School of Spokane
SEIU Healthcare 1199 NW
Smart Justice Spokane
Spectrum LGBTQIA2+ Center
Spokane Alliance
Spokane Area Tenants United
Spokane Center for Independent Living
Spokane Community Against Racism
Spokane County Human Rights Task Force
Spokane Democratic Socialists of America - Executive Committee
Spokane Immigrant Rights Coalition
Spokane Veterans For Peace
Tenants Union of Washington State
Terrain Programs
The Church of Berachah
The Lands Council
Transitions
Unitarian Universalist Church of Spokane
United Nations Association, Spokane Chapter
Washington Tools for Change
Western States Center
Westminster Congregational United Church of Christ