

**Opening Statement: Hearing Entitled “Oversight of the U.S. Secret Service and the
Attempted Assassination of President Donald J. Trump”
Committee on Oversight & Accountability
Monday, July 22, 10:00 a.m.
2154 Rayburn**

Today’s hearing has been called to examine the troubling details surrounding the attempted assassination of a former U.S. President and to safeguard the well-being of all our nation’s leaders. On Saturday, July 13, an attempt was made on the life of former President Donald J. Trump. This reprehensible act led to a tragic loss of life—Corey Comperatore, a father, husband, and first responder, was killed in the attack, and two other bystanders were injured in this senseless act of violence.

Political violence is never justified. I have lived through the assassinations of John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King, Jr., Robert F. Kennedy, the shootings of George Wallace and Ronald Reagan, and the attempted shooting of Gerald R. Ford. The recent attempt on the former President’s life is a stark reminder that we are again living in a time of increased political violence in this country. I have direct personal experience with the effects of this trend towards political violence. Last year, an individual entered my District Office armed with a metal baseball bat. This individual asked for me before attacking two of my staff members, severely injuring one of them. This violence is part of a broader trend, with an alarming increase in attacks and threats against Members of Congress. In 2022, as many of you are aware, former Speaker Pelosi’s husband was assaulted in their home in California. U.S. Capitol Police reports more than 8,000 threat investigations in 2023—up from 902 in 2016.¹ We must take action to reverse this trend; political decisions in the U.S. should be made at the ballot box, not at the end of a gun.

I am deeply concerned about the normalization of political violence in this country, a trend I attribute to multiple factors. First, we have become accustomed to violent political rhetoric, fostering a climate of rising intolerance and potential violence. We cannot ignore the statement that there were “very fine people” on both sides of the violence perpetrated by white supremacists in Charlottesville in 2017, nor the support many of my colleagues have shown for the idea that the violent insurrectionists involved in the January 6th attack on the U.S. Capitol are “political prisoners.” Endorsing immunity for those who engage in political violence only encourages more political violence.

We must also address both the ubiquity of guns in the hands of dangerous or at-risk people in America. Today, there are more guns than people in this country. In the recent attack against the former President, police reported that the 20-year-old shooter gained access to the weapon from his father. We must ensure better safeguards are in place to prevent guns getting into the hands of people who should not have them. Mental health also plays a significant role in this disturbing trend, as evidenced by the attack on my office last year in which the perpetrator was suffering from a mental health crisis. These issues will continue to fuel the increased prevalence of political violence in the United States if not addressed.

¹ [USCP Threat Assessment Cases for 2023 | United States Capitol Police](#)

In this time of heightened political violence, we want to ensure the Secret Service is doing everything in its power to keep Presidential candidates and their families safe. This is a matter we take seriously, and this is not the first time the Committee has asked to hear from the Secret Service. In 2014, following several troubling security lapses during the Obama administration, the Committee called on the Director of the Secret Service to appear for sworn testimony to ensure the agency was doing everything in its power to protect the President and his family. At today's hearing, we want to obtain a better understanding of the attempt made on the former President's life, specifically, how the shooter was able to obtain access to a rooftop in proximity to the former President, what the process was for securing and setting a perimeter, and what measures will be taken for the remainder of the year to ensure candidates and their families will be kept safe.

Unacceptable incidents like this one highlight the fact that we are an increasingly polarized nation experiencing heightened political tensions. I look forward to hearing from the Secret Service today about what they plan to do to prevent future attacks like the attempted assassination of the former President. However, we must bring down the temperature of the political climate in this country and prevent future political violence. That starts with ensuring we engage in respectful, thoughtful debate about the future of this country. I hope this incident gives each of us pause and a reason to reflect on how to address the epidemic of political violence plaguing our nation.