

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kristi Noem
Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
2707 Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue SE
Washington, DC 20528-0525

November 21, 2025

Dear Secretary Noem:

As members of the Congressional Jewish Caucus, we write to you with extreme alarm and concern regarding reporting that the U.S. Coast Guard (USCG), which you directly oversee, had planned to no longer classify the swastika or noose as hate symbols.¹ Both of these symbols are widely recognized as emblems of hate—both arising from some of the darkest periods of human history. Just as significant, both are used by individuals and groups to signify their affinity with specific hateful ideologies and to target and intimidate specific communities.

The language of the Coast Guard’s policy shift is clearly shown in the leaked memo. Your department made an intentional change to downgrade these symbols from being classified as hate symbols to merely “potentially divisive.”²

While we are pleased that the Coast Guard quickly reversed course and reaffirmed that these are hate symbols, we remain deeply troubled that such a change was ever considered in the first place. This kind of reversal, only made after media attention and public outrage, raises urgent questions about how and why this policy was allowed to advance.

The swastika is not just a “potentially divisive” symbol—it represents the systematic murder of six million Jews and is embraced today by neo-Nazi groups and frequently used in graffiti attacks on Jewish homes and institutions. Similarly, the noose is a symbol that invokes the lynching of thousands of Black Americans and is used to intimidate and terrorize Black communities. Refusing to recognize these symbols as emblems of hate is morally indefensible, an insult to history, and a slap in the face to every American who fought the Nazis or marched for civil rights, including many members of our own families.

The Congressional Jewish Caucus has consistently urged this administration to uphold the highest ethical standards. On June 24, 2025, in a letter to the Department of Defense following antisemitic comments made by a spokesperson, we wrote: “We urge the Department to affirm its responsibility to uphold the highest ethical standards. That includes an unambiguous commitment to confronting and unequivocally condemning antisemitism—especially within its own ranks—and ensuring that individuals who promote hate are quickly and appropriately held accountable.”³ The Coast Guard’s attempted policy change only reinforces how essential that vigilance remains.

¹ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2025/11/20/coast-guard-swastika-noose/>

² https://media.defense.gov/2025/nov/14/2003820615/-1/-1/0/CI_5350_6A.pdf

³ <https://friedman.house.gov/sites/evo-subsites/friedman.house.gov/files/evo-media-document/final-cjc-letter-to-hegseth.pdf>

Antisemitic and racially motivated violence is surging across our nation. Lowering America's moral standards will have a terrible effect on our service members and our ability to recruit. Furthermore, it sends a dangerous and unmistakable message that this administration is willing to tolerate, or worse, excuse, the display of symbols rooted in hate. As the Secretary of Homeland Security, you have a responsibility to confront extremism, not enable it.

We urgently request that you respond with a full report of how this policy was initiated. That report must include who authorized it, and which officials at the Department of Homeland Security, the White House, or the Department of Defense discussed and approved the change in policy.

We look forward to quickly receiving your reply and request that your office reply before November 26.

Sincerely,



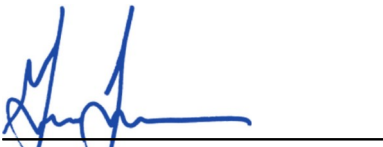
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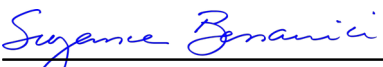
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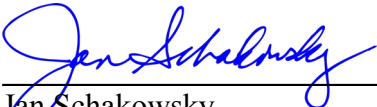
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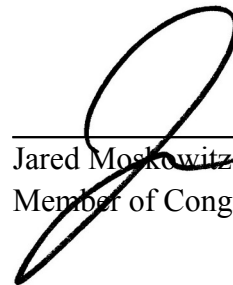
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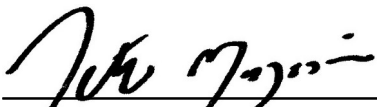
Josh Gottheimer
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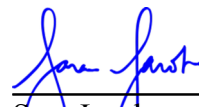
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