

Durbin Condemns Political Violence As Poll Workers, Government Officials Face Increased Threats Ahead Of The 2024 Presidential Election

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WASHINGTON – In a speech on the Senate floor today, U.S. Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin (D-IL), Chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee, condemned political violence as the United States continues to see a surge in violent threats against public officials and government workers, particularly as we approach the 2024 presidential election. The political violence ranges from death threats to bomb threats at places of

work, and some violent threats have escalated into violent acts. During his speech, Durbin noted that the recent spike is due to one source: the grievances of former President Trump.

Durbin said, “Just over three years after then-President Trump called his supporters to Washington, D.C., and directed them to this Senate Chamber and Capitol building, where they staged a violent insurrection, his calls for retribution against his perceived enemies continue on an almost daily basis. Recent victims have included the Secretary of State in the state of Maine, the former Speaker of the Arizona House of Representatives, and employees of the Georgia Secretary of State’s office, all of whom were the targets of swatting and violent threats. These individuals were targeted for their roles in upholding the lawful result of the 2020 presidential election, or for their involvement in the upcoming election. Many election workers at lower levels have also been threatened, especially women and people of color.”

During his speech, Durbin also noted that judges, jurors, and officers of the court have also faced threats. Just last week, Justice Arthur Engoron, the New York state judge presiding over the former President’s civil fraud trial, had his home swarmed by police after someone called in a fake bomb threat. This occurred hours after Trump took to his now-favored social media platform, Truth Social, and called Engoron a “Trump hating judge.” Trump also attacked Special Counsel Jack Smith and Judge Tanya Chutkan—the special prosecutor pursuing criminal charges against the former President for election interference, and the judge overseeing the case.

“The justices of the state supreme courts of Colorado and Wisconsin, along with staff, jurors, and prosecutors, have also faced threats due to their involvement in the former President’s legal cases. All of these individuals have been targeted simply because they continue to fulfill their duties to uphold the law. All the while, former President Trump has refused to condemn the actions of his supporters and, at times, he clearly encourages them,” Durbin said. “And yet, we rarely hear any of our Republican colleagues criticize their de facto leader for his public threats of violence or his encouragement of his most extreme supporters.”

Durbin then called on his colleagues to join him in condemning political violence, and encouraged them to stand up for a democracy in which we pride ourselves on the rights to vote, speak freely, and peaceably assemble.

“In the United States, these kinds of political activities are not merely tolerated—they are encouraged, and they are protected by the Constitution and the force of law. But we cannot as a nation tolerate—let alone encourage—threats of political violence by anyone, including the former President of the United States,” Durbin said.

Durbin concluded his speech by reflecting on Robert F. Kennedy's words the day after Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated. Kennedy spoke about the mindless menace of violence in America, and he quoted Abraham Lincoln, who more than a century before wrote that, "among free men, there can be no successful appeal from the ballot to the bullet; and they who take such appeal are sure to lose their case, and pay the cost."

Durbin concluded, "Today, I'm calling on my colleagues in both political parties to publicly condemn the state of violence which is dominating in this country. We have come to accept it as commonplace... If this true democracy is to succeed, we all have to speak out against violence on both sides of the equation. We must stand together in opposing violence and threats of violence. Our democracy is strong, but it is only as strong as the people who participate in it, protect it, and who serve it."

Video of Durbin's remarks on the Senate floor is available [here](#).

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Last year, Durbin and Senator Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) reintroduced legislation to address threats to election workers. The *Election Worker Protection Act* would provide states with the resources to recruit and train election workers and ensure these workers' safety, while also instituting federal safeguards to shield election workers from intimidation and threats. The bill includes provisions that were developed with input from election officials, as well as provisions from the *Freedom to Vote Act*, voting rights legislation supported by all Democratic Senators.