

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 3, 2022

The Honorable Gene L. Dodaro
Comptroller General of the United States
Government Accountability Office
441 G Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20548

Dear Mr. Dodaro:

We are deeply concerned about the financing of domestic violent extremist activities in the US and so we write to request that the Government Accountability Office (GAO) conduct a literature survey and general review of this topic and make any recommendations to our committees that GAO concludes may be necessary to address ongoing challenges in this area.

As you may be aware, FBI Director Christopher Wray has noted in recent congressional hearings that domestic terrorism is a persistent and evolving threat, as demonstrated both by the number and scale of open investigations being conducted by the Bureau throughout the country and by other measures. Indeed, federal law enforcement and the intelligence community assess that the greatest terrorism threat to our country is posed by lone actors or small cells who typically radicalize online and look to attack soft targets with easily accessible weapons. We see these threats manifested in both domestic violent extremists (DVEs) and homegrown violent extremists (HVEs), two distinct threats—both of which are based in the United States.

We are aware that the GAO has published several reports over the last few years on domestic terrorism and countering violent extremism, including those following the January 6 insurrection.¹ We have also reviewed the U.S. Department of the Treasury's just-released 2022 National Terrorist Financial Risk Assessment, which details several reasons the movement of DVE funds can be difficult to detect, including prior to a concerning event, as such transactional activity is unlikely to look different from normal behavior.² Still, more information on the funding of domestic terrorism and violent extremism is required to understand how financial data and analytical tools can more effectively be used to combat this problem. Further, we recognize that any assessment of the options for improving tracking of the funding of domestic violent extremist activities must also consider the implications for the First Amendment rights of all Americans.

Given these considerations, we believe the review and report should focus on the following aspects of the financing of domestic violent extremist activity, and include specific findings related to each one.

¹ GAO-21-216; GAO-21-105255; GAO-21-507 and GAO-17-300.

² "[National Money Laundering Risk Assessment](#)"

- What is known about the primary mechanisms that domestic violent extremists and terrorists use to finance their activities, including the extent to which they rely on online social media, livestreaming sites, crowdfunding platforms, digital assets (including virtual currencies), charities, and foreign sources to finance their activities;
- What is known about any funding that domestic violent extremists and terrorists provide to foreign entities for the purposes of coordination, support, or otherwise furthering their activities;
- Any data that selected U.S. agencies collect related to the financing of domestic violent extremists and terrorists, and how such data are used;
- The extent to which select U.S. agencies coordinate and share information among themselves, with foreign partner agencies, and with the private sector to identify and track the sources of funding for domestic violent extremists and terrorists;
- Efforts of financial institutions or other related private-sector entities to identify and report on suspicious financial activity related to the financing of domestic violent extremists and terrorists, and whether sufficient guidance is being provided by U.S. regulators and law enforcement to U.S. financial institutions;
- Any actions U.S. financial regulators have taken to address the risks to financial institutions of the financing of domestic violent extremists and terrorists, including whether sufficient guidance is being provided by U.S. regulators and law enforcement to U.S. financial institutions, and whether efforts to monitor such activity are currently scaled to address the scale of the threat; and
- With respect to the considerations described above, whether the civil rights and civil liberties protections currently in law are sufficient, and whether any new statutory or administrative changes should be made to address the challenges posed by the financing of such domestic violent extremism.

We appreciate your attention to this request and your cooperation as we seek more information on this important matter as a part of the Committees' ongoing work in this area. We would appreciate it if you could provide a briefing for the Chair and Ranking Members of our Committees on priority issues related to the financing of domestic violent extremist activity by July 31, 2022 and complete the assessment by December 31, 2022. Please include in your report any legislative, regulatory or administrative recommendations that you think would be useful to enhance U.S. efforts to combat this problem.

Thank you for your consideration. If you have any questions, please contact Danielle Camner Lindholm on Chairwoman Waters' staff at 202-225-4247 or Colin McGinnis on Chairman Brown's staff at 202-224-2654.

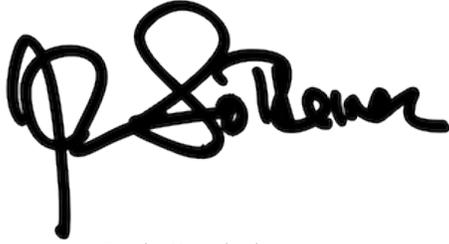
Sincerely,



Maxine Waters
Chairwoman of the House Financial
Services Committee



Sherrod Brown
Chairman of the Senate Banking, Housing,
and Urban Affairs Committee



Josh Gottheimer
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable Patrick McHenry, Ranking Member

cc: The Honorable Patrick Toomey, Ranking Member