



10 June 2021

Honorable Chair Holvey and Members of the Committee,

My name is Kelie McWilliams, and I am the Executive Director of the Rural Engagement Project. We are a political action committee working on voter engagement in rural Oregon. We started out in House Districts 20 and 23 because of the rampant political extremism that is nestled into the hearts and minds of many here. We are fortunate to have received bipartisan support, which I am finding more and more rare in today's politically charged climate.

I say all of that to preface what follows with this: we care deeply about democracy. We care about the rule of law, about peace and safety for all, about inclusion in the process of democracy, and in educating the electorate on policies, positions and candidates that best represent the needs of rural Oregonians.

I have spoken with many people over the last few months who are absolutely bewildered by the behavior of Representative Mike Nearman. His actions, that we now know he named "Operation Hall Pass," directly defied lawful orders from the Governor that were upheld by the Courts. His actions constitute treason against the State and against the People he purports to represent. He betrayed the trust of his colleagues, those who work for him, all others who were in the building that day, and the Oregon people.

As you are each aware, legislators take an oath to the federal and state Constitutions. Like each of you, Mr. Nearman swore to faithfully discharge the duties of the office he holds as the state representative for House District 23. He traitorously turned his back on that oath when he conspired with others to give them entrance to a building in violation of the Governor's orders, of the Courts, and of the trust of his colleagues. What's more is that the people who entered the building were armed with chemical irritants and other items that could have been weaponized against those in the building with whom they disagreed. I have no doubt that they intended to create chaos and disorder on a day that was supposed to be dedicated to assisting their fellow countrymen in recovering from COVID-19.

Not only should he be expelled, but there needs to be a deeper public accounting of those involved in his conspiracy. It would be untenable to discover after the fact that his successor was also involved, which would put us all back in the situation we're in now of trying to remove a malefactor from the halls of power.

I am grateful that House Republicans have called on Nearman to resign, but that action does not go far enough. We must also uncover the identities of his co-conspirators so that none of them are permitted to choose Nearman's successor or to be appointed to that seat themselves. Nearman, who is currently serving as the vice chair of the Polk County Republican Party, should also be barred from having any influence over who is nominated or appointed as his successor.

Regarding Nearman and his co-conspirators, the only answer is to put aside our political affiliations. When it comes to treason, there is no left or right, Democrat or Republican. The choice that best demonstrates love for Oregon and allegiance to the United States is to remove Nearman and ensure that his successor was not someone also involved in his plot.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my thoughts with you. On behalf of the Rural Engagement Project and our partners, volunteers, supporters, and board members, I urge you to stand up for Oregonians by dismissing Mr. Nearman from his position as the representative of House District 23. I hope that his expulsion is swift, and that a principled, moral, reasonable Republican can be found to honorably represent the people of this wonderful district.

Sincerely,

Kelie McWilliams
Executive Director

P.O. Box 393 • Independence, Oregon 97351 • 503.862.3518
www.ruralengagementproject.com • contact@ruralengagementproject.com