

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

November 24, 2025

The Honorable Admiral Kevin E. Lunday
Acting Commandant
United States Coast Guard
2703 Martin Luther King Jr. Avenue SE
Washington, D.C., 20593

Dear Acting Commandant Kevin E. Lunday,

We write to condemn to the highest degree the U.S. Coast Guard's (USCG) policy¹ that was set to take effect on December 15, 2025, classifying swastikas, nooses, and the Confederate flag as “potentially divisive” instead of as the clear antisemitic and racial hate symbols they are.

We appreciate that on Thursday, November 20, 2025, that USCG announced an updated policy which reflects that “a noose, a swastika, or any symbols or flags co-opted or adopted by hate-based groups as representations of supremacy, racial or religious intolerance, anti-semitism, or any other improper bias” are hate symbols and prohibited. However, we remain seriously concerned that USCG ever took steps to reclassify these emblems as merely “potentially divisive.” You were right to fix it so quickly when it was publicly reported,² but it should never have happened in the first place. Swastikas, nooses, and the Confederate flag are hate symbols. Full stop.

According to the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), in 2024 alone, 9,354 antisemitic incidents occurred across the United States, representing a 5% increase from the previous year, and a 344% increase over the last 5 years. Incidents occurred in all 50 states.³ These numbers are staggering. The swastika is not a “potentially divisive” symbol, but a clear and direct reference to the murderous legacy of the Nazi regime and the Holocaust.

Furthermore, racially motivated violence has increased dramatically in the United States in recent years and continues to rise, with Black Americans being disproportionately targeted. More hate crimes took place in 2024 than in any other year but one since the FBI began tracking this data.⁴ Even consideration of classifying these emblems as anything other than hate symbols disrespects and disregards the safety of Black Americans and Jewish Americans who are serving their nation at a time when hatred and extremism are reaching crisis levels.

¹ https://media.defense.gov/2025/Nov/14/2003820615/-1/-1/0/CI_5350_6A.PDF

² <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2025/11/20/coast-guard-swastika-noose/>

³ <https://www.adl.org/resources/report/audit-antisemitic-incidents-2024>

⁴ <https://cde.ucr.cjis.gov/LATEST/webapp/#/pages/explorer/crime/hate-crime>

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We are additionally concerned about the 45-day deadline this policy implements for members of the service to report an incident. While USCG's previous policy did not include a deadline to report an incident, the new policy creates a cutoff that may have a clear chilling effect on members of the USCG who in many instances are deployed for periods longer than 45 days. Members of the USCG should not fear for their safety or how they will be treated by their fellow Coasties during deployments, nor should they have such a strict time limit on when they are able to report incidents of hate and harassment. Your updated memo of November 20, 2025,⁵ did not mention this deadline or clarify that it is no longer in effect. We urge you to clearly rescind this arbitrary deadline.

Consideration alone of no longer classifying these symbols – including known emblems linked to the German Nazi Party and the murder of millions of Jews, white supremacy, and slavery – as hate symbols is reprehensible. In a time of rising antisemitism and racial violence across the nation, we must forcefully take a stand against emblems which incite hate and violence.

We request you report to Congress responding to the following no later than December 5, 2025:

- Please describe the series of events within the USCG that created this level of uncertainty about hate symbol policy.
- If a new, weaker policy regarding these symbols was never intended to be implemented, what necessitated the publication of the new USCG lawful order and policy you referred to in your statement, rather than a reiteration of existing policy?
- Please share any updates or follow ups to “COMDTINST 5350.6A” that contained these changes.
- Does the updated policy include an arbitrary deadline of 45 days to report an incident?
- How does the USCG intend to rebuild trust with Black and Jewish Coast Guard members following this series of events?

We agree there should be no tolerance for the display or use of this hateful imagery in our Coast Guard or any part of our government. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Chris Pappas
Member of Congress

⁵ <https://media.defense.gov/2025/Nov/20/2003827588/-1/-1/0/GENERAL%20ORDER%20MEMO%20SIGNED.PDF>

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Member of Congress



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Member of Congress



Andre Carson
Member of Congress



Dina Titus
Member of Congress



Jared Huffman
Member of Congress



Frederica S. Wilson
Member of Congress



Mark DeSaulnier
Member of Congress



Val Hoyle
Member of Congress



Robert Garcia
Member of Congress



Nellie Pou
Member of Congress



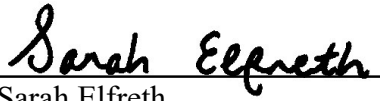
Maggie Goodlander
Member of Congress



Mike Thompson
Member of Congress

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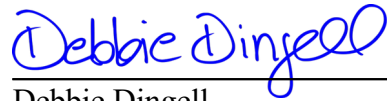
Sarah Elfreth
Member of Congress



Ritchie Torres
Member of Congress



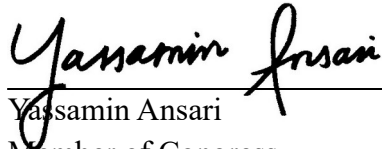
Kim Schrier, M.D.
Member of Congress



Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress



Ami Bera, M.D.
Member of Congress



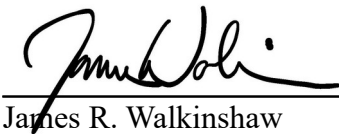
Yassamin Ansari
Member of Congress



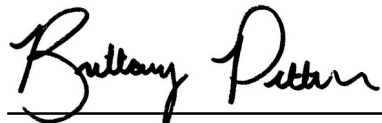
Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress



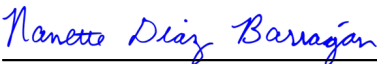
Maxine Dexter
Member of Congress



James R. Walkinshaw
Member of Congress



Brittany Pettersen
Member of Congress



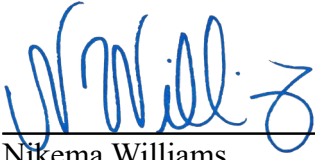
Nanette Diaz Barragán
Member of Congress



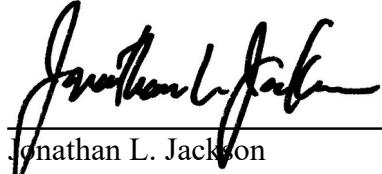
Wesley Bell
Member of Congress

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Nikema Williams
Member of Congress



Jonathan L. Jackson
Member of Congress



Jahana Hayes
Member of Congress



Terri A. Sewell
Member of Congress



Gabe Amo
Member of Congress

Cc: Mr. Sean Plankey, Special Advisor to the Secretary for the Coast Guard