

**Statement by the Carl Levin Center for Oversight and Democracy on the Political Violence
that Occurred in Minnesota on June 14, 2025**

Detroit, MI June 17, 2025:

The Levin Center strongly condemns the politically motivated assassination of Minnesota's former House Speaker Melissa Hortman and her husband, Mark, and the attempted assassination of State Senator John Hoffman and his wife, Yvette, on June 14. These and other acts of political violence, including the attempts on the life of President Trump in 2024, represent a grave threat to democratic governance and the principles of civil discourse.

We must honor the victims and support their families, friends, and colleagues who are suffering in the wake of this senseless attack. But this latest episode of hate-fueled violence must not pass without a full and public examination of what is driving the rise of politically motivated attacks and what can be done to reduce their frequency.

Political violence is not new in this country, but recent reports indicate that these incidents are increasing to levels not seen since the 1970s and that perpetrators have shifted their focus from destroying property to violently attacking people with whom they disagree. Violence of this kind is incompatible with democracy because its purveyors aim to substitute brute force and fear for respectful debate and coalition building that underpin democratic rule.

Violent words beget violent action. All Americans, but especially elected officials and those with prominent voices in the media, must consider whether the words and images we use contribute to a climate that dehumanizes those whose politics we don't share. Calling your political adversaries "scum," for example, is an invitation to view some in the community as less human because of their political beliefs and thus easier to attack. We must hold accountable leaders who tolerate, encourage, and even reward people who engage in political violence.

But more than this is required. Last Saturday's attack targeted lawmakers who are entrusted with coming together to represent the people and solve public problems. This work cannot and must not be done in an environment suffused with fear. Instead, the public should insist that lawmakers in every capital and in Washington, D.C. turn down the heat of their rhetoric and commit to working on addressing this problem in a fact-based and bipartisan fashion. The survival of our democracy depends on reversing the rise of political violence. Lawmakers and the people they represent should respond accordingly.

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