

Re: NSBA Letter to President Biden on Threats School Boards Members and Public Schools

1 message

Beverly Slough <[REDACTED]> Mon, Oct 11, 2021 at 3:58 PM
To: viola garcia <[REDACTED]>, Frank <[REDACTED]>, Kristi Swett <[REDACTED]>, Charlie - OH Wilson <[REDACTED]>, Janine Bay Teske <[REDACTED]>, Chapman Steven <[REDACTED]>, Pam Doyle <[REDACTED]>, Becky Fle <[REDACTED]>, Kathy Gebhardt <[REDACTED]>, Kathryn Green <[REDACTED]>, "John W. Halkias" <[REDACTED]>, Peter Hoepfner <[REDACTED]>, "Ronald "Ronnie" K. Hopkins" <[REDACTED]>, "Donald R. Hubler" <[REDACTED]>, "Marnie J. Maraldo" <[REDACTED]>, Devin Sheehan <[REDACTED]>, Floyd Simon <[REDACTED]>, Lydia CT Tedone <[REDACTED]>, Lydia - CT Tedone <[REDACTED]>, Steve III Gallon <[REDACTED]>, Devin Del Palacio <[REDACTED]>, Ruben Archuleta <[REDACTED]>, "Michael Jr. Swain" <[REDACTED]>, Kirk Schneidawind <[REDACTED]>, Joy Surratt Baskin <[REDACTED]>

Viola,

I have tickets to Hamilton on Sunday, October 17. I would not be able to attend a board meeting. Is there any other time??

Bev Slough

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From: viola garcia <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Monday, October 11, 2021 3:10:51 PM
To: Frank <[REDACTED]>; Kristi Swett <[REDACTED]>; Charlie OH Wilson <[REDACTED]>; Janine Bay Teske <[REDACTED]>; Chapman Steven <[REDACTED]>; Pam Doyle <[REDACTED]>; Becky Fles <[REDACTED]>; Kathy Gebhardt <[REDACTED]>; Kathryn Green <[REDACTED]>; John W. Halkias <[REDACTED]>; Peter Hoepfner <[REDACTED]>; Ronald "Ronnie" K Hopkins <[REDACTED]>; Donald R. Hubler <[REDACTED]>; Marnie J. Maraldo <[REDACTED]>; Devin Sheehan <[REDACTED]>; Floyd Simon <[REDACTED]>; Beverly Slough <[REDACTED]>; Lydia - CT Tedone <[REDACTED]>; Lydia CT Tedone <[REDACTED]>; Steve III Gallon <[REDACTED]>; Devin Del Palacio <[REDACTED]>; Ruben Archuleta <[REDACTED]>; Michael Jr Swain <[REDACTED]>; Kirk Schneidawind <[REDACTED]>; Joy Surratt Baskin <[REDACTED]>
Subject: Re: NSBA Letter to President Biden on Threats School Boards Members and Public Schools

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NSBA Directors,

As you are aware the Executive Committee met last night to discuss the serious and complex issues before the NSBA Board of Directors. We are aware that NSBA's recent letter to the President of the United States, which was well publicized and widely reported on, has created significant controversy. We have received feedback from state EDs and NSBA directors questioning both the letter's content and the manner in which it was distributed. We take this feedback seriously and are implementing a number of steps to understand the chain of events which led to this issue and to consider initiatives which are critical going forward. We also understand the fluid nature of the situation and changes in circumstances and/or positions and suggestions made during the last two weeks over this concern. The sense of urgency is also of utmost consideration.

The Executive Committee knows that the Board of Directors will ultimately make final decisions related to these issues. We agreed that it is critical for the board to work through a reflective, methodical, informed process. Given the diversity of opinions around the issue, the Executive Committee agreed that a comprehensive process and review of all feedback sources is important for the board to have to make the best decisions for NSBA. In addition, it was agreed that a decision or decisions made by the board should be coordinated in tandem with the assistance of crisis management communication support. The Executive Committee approved investigating and securing such support. In addition, NSBA's outside counsel, Tom McCally, is prepared to provide guidance to the Executive Committee and/or to the Board as needed.

These activities are designed to help us get there:

Wednesday, October 13 The Organization of State Association Executive Directors (OSAED) will meet to further assess the effects on states and provide us feedback.

Friday, October 15 The Executive Committee will review all feedback to provide the board with a comprehensive assessment of the situation.

Sunday, October 17 The Executive Committee, previously scheduled to consider a search firm recommendation, may also review any updates prior to the BOD meeting.

Sunday, October 17 7:00 p.m. ET the NSBA Board of Directors will meet to review the analysis and consider next steps.

Wednesday, October 20 The Executive Committee will meet if needed.

Thursday, October 21 7:00 p.m. ET the NSBA Board of Directors will meet to decide next steps.

Regards, stay well and stay safe,

Viola

On Saturday, October 9, 2021, 09:54:05 PM CDT, viola.garcia [REDACTED] wrote

NSBA Directors,

As I indicated in my last email to you, these are troubling times. There is a great deal occurring in a heightened political environment that we need to address. As I shared previously, email as a mode of communication about these serious matters does not help us work through this together. Therefore, these are the planned next steps:

I have called a meeting of the Executive Committee for tomorrow, October 10, to discuss this and related matters. Given the fluid nature of discussions around this concern, I have also

asked the Executive Committee to reserve October 17 and October 20, should we need additional time to discuss next steps to bring to the board on October 21. You should know that I have contacted NSBA's outside counsel, Tom McCally, to be prepared to provide guidance to the Executive Committee and/or to the Board.

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The officers will conduct in person interviews of finalist search firms on Friday, October 15 and Saturday, Oct. 16 in Alexandria. It is our intent to bring a recommendation to the Executive Committee on October 17 so that the Executive Committee can bring a recommendation to Board at our scheduled virtual meeting on October 21 to review and approve a search firm. Do let me know if you have questions or concerns

Regards, stay well and stay safe,

Viola

On Saturday, October 2, 2021, 06:59:47 AM CDT, viola garcia <[REDACTED]> wrote:

Good morning NSBA Directors,

First of all, I want to thank you for your active engagement and recent responses. These are troubling times NSBA has been engaged with the White House and the Department of Education on these and other issues related to the pandemic for several weeks now. The pandemic and our heightened political environment have created a lot of tension in our society.

School boards have been under the spotlight since the start of the pandemic, but it's risen to a new level over the last few weeks. We felt compelled to say something when we started hearing about the threats, harassment, and acts of intimidation at school board meetings.

What we have witnessed are coordinated efforts, *playbooks*, for creating chaos at school board meetings and in local communities. Letters across states are very similar and these incidents are beyond random acts. What we are now seeing is a pattern of threats and violence occurring across state lines and via online platforms, which is why we need the federal government's assistance.

Disagreements are one thing, even among us, but what we're seeing is rising to a dangerous level in some instances. We also want the public to understand that these disruptions are interfering with school boards' most important business—ensuring the health, safety, and education of our students. These disruptions are interfering with the REAL issues facing school boards ensuring we have enough good teachers for all students; serving students with disabilities; and making sure all kids have access to their internet in their homes. That's what school board members care about. It's why we decided to run for school board. We want to get back to the business of making sure that every student is preparing for a successful future

I know, and we all acknowledge that email as a mode of communication about these serious matters does not optimize our ability to work through this together. I will follow up with the officers and Chip to coordinate next steps for all of us

Regards, stay well and stay safe,

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On Saturday, October 2, 2021, 12:11:18 AM CDT, Steven Chapman <[REDACTED]> wrote:

My hope for a letter like this, or any letter that we are going to send to the President of the United States and push through a press release is at least reviewed by the executive committee.

That being said, in Arizona earlier this year a governing board was forced to leave their boardroom due to security issues with those in attendance. After the board and staff left the room, those in the audience decided that it would be alright for them to stage their own board meeting, elect new board members, and vote on their own items. A month or so ago, we had an individual film himself with a parent and that parent's student on their way to a school site with a pair of zip tie handcuffs to arrest a principal for enforcing a quarantine policy that was approved by the county and state. And these are just a few of several examples just in my state. These are not acts of concerned parents, nor should they be dismissed as just one off situations.

I agree that if a board meeting remains civil, and the community is at the microphone during public comment criticizing board/district decisions, threatening to recall or vote them out, that it is fair game whether we agree on their rationale or not. But when it becomes more, it needs to be taken seriously. We have seen what happens when it is not taken seriously.

We need to be mindful of the political ramifications of any action or inaction we take, but we also cannot shy away from every controversial issue. No elected official or public servant should be in physical danger because of the work they do.

Steven Chapman
Board of Directors, Pacific Region | NSBA
Immediate Past President | ASBA
Immediate Past Chair | NSBA Pacific Region
Past President, Board Member | Tolleson UHSD



On Fri, Oct 1, 2021 at 7:54 PM Beverly Slough <[REDACTED]> wrote:

Thank you, John. Very thoughtful analysis of our current situation. I agree - we must do better.

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From: John Halkias <[REDACTED]>
Sent: Friday, October 1, 2021 10:50:52 PM
To: Chip Slaven <[REDACTED]>
Cc: 2021-2022 Board of Directors <[REDACTED]>; Elena Kukanova – Carpenter <[REDACTED]>; Francisco Negron <[REDACTED]>; Jane Mellow <[REDACTED]>; Renee Joe <[REDACTED]>; Kimberly Muse <[REDACTED]>; Patricia Boyd-King <[REDACTED]>
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After a challenging week and seeing the responses of some of my fellow board members to this issue, I wanted to think through this more deeply and share my thoughts.

I have no doubt that this was done with the best of intentions and in an attempt to support our members and our schools during this difficult time for us. Many of us have faced challenges these last two years that we have never faced in our history as school board members. It has indeed been difficult, but we have faced them and persevered. We do want the understanding and support of our association for our membership.

However, while I believe the intent was good, unfortunately, instead of helping our members and working to decrease the tensions and hostility that many of us are facing, we seem to have fanned those flames of hostility and division. Rather than helping our cause and calming the waters, this letter has re-awakened hostilities that were just beginning to finally calm down as the things many of us put in place were having a positive effect on student safety, learning, and attendance.

I agree with many of my colleagues that the Board of Directors should have been consulted before a letter like this was sent out publicly, and no less to the President of the United States and the National Press. I also agree that the letter took a stance that went beyond what many of us would consider to be reasonable and used terms that were extreme, and asked for action by the Federal Government that many of us would not request. In fact in a recent press conference, the White House Press Secretary stated that when these incidents occur, it is a matter for local law enforcement and local authorities, and NOT the Federal government. Local control has been a stalwart of our principles, and we do not want to abandon that concept now.

Many of us have been put in a position now of explaining or defending this action of our association as we are asked by members of our community if we consider them domestic terrorists for showing up to our meetings and expressing their opinions. As a Member of this Board, I can defend the intent, but not the approach or much of the tone or content. And it makes me chagrined to have to say that. I have learned in my own state of Ohio that is filled with diverse views that it does me no good to ignore the views of my neighbors and not try to find common ground rather than sow division.

This letter has created a new and renewed firestorm. We have given our loudest critics more ammunition to criticize us. I believe this letter was created unfortunately in the same kind of vacuum that has fueled the recent criticism of this Board and our Association.

We can, and should do better, but we can only do that if we work together and collaborate for our common good rather than acting without our full consent and counsel. We owe that to our association and our membership if we are to continue and succeed.

Sorry for the length of this, but what happened with this letter and the backlash I am seeing has made me reflect on my service on this board to this point, and how we have gone about our business that goes beyond this letter, and has caused me concern. If we don't do better, the very survival and relevance of NSBA is at stake.

John W. Halkias
Director, Central Region NSBA

Sent from my iPad

On Sep 29, 2021, at 8:18 PM, Chip Slaven <[REDACTED]> wrote:

Good evening,

Attached is a letter President Garcia asked that I share with the board. It was sent to President Biden concerning threats to public schools and school board members. We co-signed the letter which lays out the current issues local school board members are facing and asks for federal cooperation with state and local law enforcement as well as public schools to address these serious issues. It also asks for threat assessments regarding the current situation. Additionally, in talks over the last several weeks with White House staff, they requested additional information on some of the specific threats, so the letter also details many of the incidents that have been occurring.

As you are probably aware, the level of threats and actual violence have increased the last few weeks and there are now some groups recognized for violence showing up at schools and school board meetings. The level of concern is rising. It is hoped the letter will also call out the bad behavior occurring and promote calmer thinking when people are debating these important issues. This letter is embargoed

until tomorrow morning when it will be shared publicly. The letter will also be shared this evening with the state association executive directors.

Thank you for all your leadership on your local school board.

Take care,

Chip

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Those meeting days/times work for me.

I look forward to the updates and conversation.

Steven Chapman
Board Member, Pacific Region | NSBA
Immediate Past President | ASBA
Immediate Pa t Chair | NSBA Pacific Region
Past President, Board Member | Tolleson UHSD
Arizona School Boards Association
o: [REDACTED] | [REDACTED] | c: [REDACTED]

"The Best Schools In Every Arizona Community"

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I have fall conference as well.

Pam Doyle

On Mon, Oct 11, 2021, 4:11 PM John Halkias <[REDACTED]> wrote:

Viola,

I will be in Denver on Sunday the 17th, and I will be at a work conference with e ion from 1 3 ET, and unfortunately also 6:30-9:00 ET.

My frustration is that meetings get scheduled without seeking any comment or doing a poll on availability. I will not be able to make the meeting of the Board on the 17th

John

John W Halkia
Plain Local Schools
Board Member
NSBA Central Region Director
2019 OSBA Pa t Pre ident
Term 2018-2021
Home Phone: [REDACTED]
Cell [REDACTED]

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Regards, stay well and stay safe,

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Thank you, John. Very thoughtful analysis of our current situation. I agree - we must do better.

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From: John Halkias <[REDACTED]>

Sent: Friday, October 1, 2021 10:50:52 PM

To: Chip Slaven <[REDACTED]>

Cc: 2021-2022 Board of Directors <[REDACTED]>; Elena Kukanova – Carpenter <[REDACTED]>; Francisco Negron <[REDACTED]>; Jane Mellow <[REDACTED]>; Renee Joe <[REDACTED]>; Kimberly Muse <[REDACTED]>; Patricia Boyd-King <[REDACTED]>

Subject: Re: NSBA Letter to President Biden on Threats School Boards Members and Public Schools

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I have no doubt that this was done with the best of intentions and in an attempt to support our members and our schools during this difficult time for us. Many of us have faced challenges these last two years that we have never faced in our history as school board members. It has indeed been difficult, but we have faced them and persevered. We do want the understanding and support of our association for our membership.

However, while I believe the intent was good, unfortunately, instead of helping our members and working to decrease the tensions and hostility that many of us are facing, we seem to have fanned those flames of hostility and division. Rather than helping our cause and calming the waters, this letter has re-awakened hostilities that were just beginning to finally calm down as the things many of us put in place were having a positive effect on student safety, learning, and attendance.

I agree with many of my colleagues that the Board of Directors should have been consulted before a letter like this was sent out publicly, and no less to the President of the United States and the National Press. I also agree that the letter took a stance that went beyond what many of us would consider to be reasonable and used terms that were extreme, and asked for action by the Federal Government that many of us would not request. In fact in a recent press conference, the White House Press Secretary stated that when these incidents occur, it is a matter for local law enforcement and local authorities, and NOT the Federal government. Local control has been a stalwart of our principles, and we do not want to abandon that concept now.

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This letter has created a new and renewed firestorm. We have given our loudest critics more ammunition to criticize us. I believe this letter was created unfortunately in the same kind of vacuum that has fueled the recent criticism of this Board and our Association.

We can, and should do better, but we can only do that if we work together and collaborate for our common good rather than acting without our full consent and counsel. We owe that to our association and our membership if we are to continue and succeed.

Sorry for the length of this, but what happened with this letter and the backlash I am seeing has made me reflect on my service on this board to this point, and how we have gone about our business that goes beyond this letter, and has caused me concern. If we don't do better, the very survival and relevance of NSBA is at stake.

John W. Halkias
Director, Central Region NSBA

Sent from my iPad

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As you are probably aware, the level of threats and actual violence have increased the last few weeks and there are now some groups recognized for violence showing up at school and school board meeting. The level of concern is rising. It is hoped the letter will also call out the bad behavior occurring and promote calmer thinking when people are debating these important issues. This letter is embargoed until tomorrow morning when it will be shared publicly. The letter will also be shared this evening with the state association executive director.

Thank you for all your leadership on your local school board.

Take care,

Chip



Ruben Archuleta <[redacted]>

Re: NSBA Letter to President Biden on Threats School Boards Members and Public Schools

1 message

John Halkias <[redacted]> Mon, Oct 11, 2021 at 3:11 PM
 To: viola garcia <[redacted]>
 Cc: Frank Henderson <[redacted]>, Kristi Swett <[redacted]>, Charlie - OH Wilson <[redacted]>, Janine Bay Te ke <[redacted]>, Chapman Steven <[redacted]>, Pam Doyle <[redacted]>, Becky Fles <[redacted]>, Kathy Gebhardt <[redacted]>, Kathryn Green <[redacted]>, Peter Hoepfner <[redacted]>, "Ronald "Ronnie" K. Hopkins" <[redacted]>, Donald Hubler <[redacted]>, "Marnie J. Maraldo" <[redacted]>, Devin Sheehan <[redacted]>, Floyd Simon <[redacted]>, Beverly <[redacted]>, Lydia - CT Tedone <[redacted]>, Lydia - CT Tedone <[redacted]>, "Dr. Steven Gallon" <[redacted]>, Devin Del Palacio <[redacted]>, Ruben Archuleta <[redacted]>, "Michael Jr. Swain" <[redacted]>, Kirk Schneidawind <[redacted]>, Joy Surratt Ba kin <[redacted]>

Viola,

I will be in Denver on Sunday the 17th, and I will be at a work conference with sessions from 1-3 ET, and unfortunately al o 6 30 9 00 ET

My frustration is that meetings get scheduled without seeking any comment or doing a poll on availability. I will not be able to make the meeting of the Board on the 17th.

John

John W. Halkias
 Plain Local School
 Board Member
 NSBA Central Region Director
 2019 OSBA Past President
 Term 2018 2021
 Home Phone: [redacted]

On Oct 11, 2021, at 3:10 PM, viola garcia <[redacted]> wrote:

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The Executive Committee knows that the Board of Directors will ultimately make final decisions related to these issues We agreed that it is critical for the board to work through a reflective, methodical, informed process. Given the diversity of opinions around the issue,

the Executive Committee agreed that a comprehensive process and review of all feedback sources is important for the board to have to make the best decisions for NSBA. In addition, it was agreed that a decision or decisions made by the board should be coordinated in tandem with the assistance of crisis management communication support. The Executive Committee approved investigating and securing such support. In addition, NSBA's outside counsel, Tom McCally, is prepared to provide guidance to the Executive Committee and/or to the Board as needed.

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Sent: Friday, October 1, 2021 10:50:52 PM
To: Chip Slaven <[REDACTED]>
Cc: 2021-2022 Board of Directors <[REDACTED]>; Elena Kukanova – Carpenter <[REDACTED]>; Francisco Negrón <[REDACTED]>; Jane Mellow <[REDACTED]>; Renee Joe <[REDACTED]>; Kimberly Muse <[REDACTED]>; Patricia Boyd-King <[REDACTED]>
Subject: Re: NSBA Letter to President Biden on Threats School Boards Members and Public Schools

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After a challenging week and seeing the responses of some of my fellow board members to this issue, I wanted to think through this more deeply and share my thoughts.

I have no doubt that this was done with the best of intentions and in an attempt to support our members and our schools during this difficult time for us. Many of us have faced challenges these last two years that we have never faced in our history as school board members. It has indeed been difficult, but we have faced them and persevered. We do want the understanding and support of our association for our membership.

However, while I believe the intent was good, unfortunately, instead of helping our members and working to decrease the tensions and hostility that many of us are facing, we seem to have fanned those flames of hostility and division. Rather than helping our cause and calming the waters, this letter has re-awakened hostilities that were just beginning to finally calm down as the things many of us put in place were having a positive effect on student safety, learning, and attendance.

I agree with many of my colleagues that the Board of Directors should have been consulted before a letter like this was sent out publicly, and no less to the President of the United States and the National Press. I also agree that the letter took a stance that went beyond what many of us would consider to be reasonable and used terms that were extreme, and asked for action by the Federal Government that many of us would not request. In fact in a recent press conference, the White House Press Secretary stated that when these incidents occur, it is a matter for local law enforcement and local authorities, and NOT the Federal government. Local control has been a stalwart of our principles, and we do not want to abandon that concept now.

Many of us have been put in a position now of explaining or defending this action of our association as we are asked by members of our community if we consider them domestic terrorists for showing up to our meetings and expressing their opinions. As a Member of this Board, I can defend the intent, but not the approach or much of the tone or content. And it makes me chagrined to have to say that. I have learned in my own state of Ohio that is filled with diverse views that it does me no good to ignore the views of my neighbors and not try to find common ground rather than sow division.

This letter has created a new and renewed firestorm. We have given our loudest critics more ammunition to criticize us. I believe this letter was created unfortunately in the same kind of vacuum that has fueled the recent criticism of this Board and our Association.

We can, and should do better, but we can only do that if we work together and collaborate for our common good rather than acting without our full consent and counsel. We owe that to our association and our membership if we are to continue and succeed.

Sorry for the length of this, but what happened with this letter and the backlash I am seeing has made me reflect on my service on this board to this point, and how we have gone about our business that goes beyond this letter, and has caused me concern. If we don't do better, the very survival and relevance of NSBA is at stake.

John W. Halkias
Director, Central Region NSBA

Sent from my iPad

On Sep 29, 2021, at 8:18 PM, Chip Slaven <[REDACTED]> wrote:

Good evening,

Attached is a letter President Garcia asked that I share with the board. It was sent to President Biden concerning threats to public schools and school board members. We co-signed the letter which lays out the current issues local school board members are facing and asks for federal cooperation with state and local law enforcement as well as public schools to address these serious issues. It also asks for threat assessments regarding the current situation. Additionally, in talks over the last several weeks with White House staff, they requested additional information on some of the specific threats, so the letter also details many of the incidents that have been occurring.

As you are probably aware, the level of threats and actual violence have increased the last few weeks and there are now some groups recognized for violence showing up at schools and school board meetings. The level of concern is rising. It is hoped the letter will also call out the bad behavior occurring and promote calmer thinking when people are debating these important issues. This letter is embargoed until tomorrow morning when it will be shared publicly. The letter will also be shared this evening with the state association executive directors.

Thank you for all your leadership on your local school board.

Take care,

Chip