

Chair Holvey, and members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.

My name is Maria Faria, and I live in Corvallis. I am writing in support of HR 3, which would expel Mr Mike Nearman from the House of Representatives.

In 2020, Oregon's legislative session started, not unlike the whole country, with people working from home, out of concern for public health. Legislators and staff met on virtual platforms, and after a period of adaptation, the work continued with minimal disruption. Some legislators, however, chose to use a rhetoric that appeased science deniers and conspiracy theories, stating that the Capitol was closed to prevent public participation in the decision-making process to the benefit a progressive agenda. They made frequent inflammatory statements and unfounded accusations. Mr. Nearman was one of them.

In December, with the then President defeated by the public vote, but claiming electoral fraud, the political climate was tense throughout the country. Supporters of conspiracy theories were encouraged by legislators to raise and "defend the country". It was not different in Oregon. And Mr. Nearman was one of the legislators spreading inflammatory words, and saying that covid and the public safety concerns were nothing but a plot to keep conservatives and supporters of the defeated President from participating in the democratic process. Extremist groups, embolden by him and a handful of his peers, amplified the discourse, made threats on social media, and gathered at protests. Nearman supported their views and actions.

On Dec 21st, armed rightwing extremists gathered in Salem, demanding access to the Capitol building. Some demonstrators physically attacked journalists who were reporting on the event and tried to gain entrance to the Capitol, where lawmakers were present for an in-person special session.

While state troopers prevented entrance through a window broken by the rioters, Mr. Nearman opened a side door allowing the extremists (many armed), into the building putting every person in the Capitol in serious danger. His actions were recorded on video, and are undeniable. In consequence, Mr. Nearman was charged with official misconduct and criminal trespassing. But instead of admitting wrong doing, assuming the consequences of his actions, and resigning, Mr. Nearman defiantly refuses to do it. We cannot afford legislators who don't take responsibility for their actions.

We cannot afford legislators who enable extremists. We cannot risk violence against our communities and those who represent us. With his actions, Mr. Nearman proved that he is willing to risk the safety of his own peers, compromise the democratic process and our institutions, to appease a violent minority. His actions prove that he condones violence as valid means to influence the political process.

Legislators are elected to make decisions on behalf of all Oregonians. Many decisions are difficult and surrounded by controversy. Different opinions are expected, and this is part of a healthy democratic process. What is not expected, what is unhealthy, is to be betrayed by one of their own who strays from the normal process to use violence as argument. Mr. Nearman did exactly that, and showed that he is unfit to be a member of Oregon's House of Representatives.

As we walk towards a normal life after covid, and the Capitol building starts welcoming back staff and constituents, Mr. Nearman remains an imminent threat to all. Everyone deserves to live and work without intimidation and fear, and that does not exclude the State Capitol.

For his past actions, Mr. Nearman must be punished. For respect of a healthy democracy he must be removed. For the safety of those returning to the Oregon Capitol, he must be expelled from office immediately.

Please expel Mr. Nearman from the House of Representatives.

Thank you for your consideration