

Dear Larry,

There is a lot going on in the world and at Harvard and I hope you are well despite it all.

I am writing to share my thoughts on how Harvard should respond to the insurrection at the US Capitol on January 6. I am sure that we all agree that Harvard should and will do its part as an academic institution to promote research, teaching, and conversation that examines the complex issues underlying these events. But I am also writing to urge that Harvard examine any current or future associations with lawmakers and other people who aided in this attempted overthrow of our democracy.

As I have told you in past conversations, I do believe that we need more politically conservative voices on campus. I still believe this. I am also a firm believer in academic freedom, and I will not compromise on that stance. However, we must have minimum standards to which we hold those associated with Harvard. Those standards surely include supporting free elections and not encouraging violence. If we do not insist that those at Harvard do not try to overturn the free and fair votes of other citizens or that they would not encourage the violent overthrow of our own government, then we have no standards at all.

I say as a citizen and a scholar of politics that America may be a crossroad. A crossroad between a country with the social and political infrastructure to maintain our cherished institutions or a country that loses its ability to maintain such institutions. The greatness of our universities and other civic institutions is intertwined with and inseparable from free and stable government. It is hard to imagine institutions like Harvard existing for the next generation if we do not change the dangerous course of politics in this country.

In many respects, America's greatest asset and what is also currently holding the insurrectionists accountable is not our government, but our civil society, including our leading institutions. Corporations have done the right thing by announcing that they will no longer donate to politicians involved in the insurrection and the social media companies have done the right thing by removing them from their platforms. Given Harvard's role in the academy, our society, and in educating future leaders, we must also be a leader in righting the ship of our democracy. Already, members of the Harvard community are asking about the relationship between the Institute of Politics and Members of Congress who sought to overturn the election. We also have emeritus faculty who are vocally defending the leaders who unleashed the insurrectionist mob. And, of course, the public is now asking whether Trump administration officials will find a home at HKS or elsewhere at Harvard in the future.

Harvard must have answers to these questions and justification for whatever decision is made. Despite my concerns with academic freedom and ideological diversity on campus, I strongly believe nobody who aided a violent insurrection should be welcome at our university. I realize that the step of barring or removing people from our university community is a drastic one and so it is not a decision that should be made lightly; however, I do urge that Harvard make a public decision shortly because we must be a leader on this issue. Unless politicians are pressured by civic institutions to change their ways, they will not repent and the horrible events at the Capitol on Wednesday may just be the beginning. I offer my services to you in this matter in whatever way I can be helpful.

Respectfully,

Ryan

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