



One Hundred Sixteenth Congress
Committee on Homeland Security
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

March 4, 2020

The Honorable Chad F. Wolf
Acting Secretary
Department of Homeland
Security
Washington, DC 20528

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
H-209, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
S-230, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20500

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
Minority Leader
U.S. House of Representatives
H-204, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
S-221, The Capitol
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Acting Secretary Wolf and Members of the Candidate Protection Advisory Committee:

As the process for nominating the Democratic candidate for President of the United States continues to advance, Americans deserve to know that the major candidates for President are protected from all threats to their safety. I write to urge you to immediately undertake the consultation process necessary to determine whether any Democratic candidates for President should be afforded protection by the United States Secret Service (USSS).

As you know, the Secretary of Homeland Security has the statutory authority to determine which major Presidential and Vice-Presidential candidates should receive USSS protection, after consulting with an advisory committee made up of Congressional leaders.¹ Guidelines to authorize such protection, which were issued in January 2017, set forth a process for briefing and consulting with advisory committee members and making a determination.²

The Guidelines further set forth a number of discretionary factors that may be considered when deciding whether to authorize USSS protection for a major candidate, reflecting the scale and seriousness of the candidate's campaign.³ Former Vice President Joseph R. Biden, Jr. and Senator Bernard Sanders appear to satisfy several of these criteria.

¹ 18 U.S.C. §3056(a)(7).

² *Guidelines for Authorizing Secret Service Protection to U.S. Presidential Candidates*, transmitted on January 19, 2017, from Francis X. Taylor, Under Secretary for Intelligence and Analysis at the Department of Homeland Security, to Congressional leaders.

³ *Id.*

While the Guidelines indicate that a candidate must request protection from the Secretary and the USSS Director in order to begin the consultation and authorization process, the Guidelines also indicate that the absence of a request would not prevent the authorization of protection when warranted: “Nothing in these Guidelines shall preclude the Secretary, after consultation with the Committee, from authorizing ... protection for a candidate on a case-by-case basis, depending upon circumstances, provided it is within the Secretary’s statutory authority to act.”⁴

Taking into consideration the remaining candidates’ large campaign operations, high polling averages,⁵ as well as physical threats to their safety⁶—all factors contemplated by the Guidelines—I urge you to immediately initiate the consultation process to determine whether to provide USSS protection to certain major Democratic presidential candidates.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,


BENNIE G. THOMPSON
Chairman
Committee on Homeland Security

CC: James M. Murray, Director, United States Secret Service

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ *2020 Democratic Presidential Nomination*, REALCLEARPOLITICS, https://www.realclearpolitics.com/epolls/2020/president/us/2020_democratic_presidential_nomination-6730.html.

⁶ *See, e.g.,* Rebecca Klar, *Protesters rush stage during Biden’s Super Tuesday rally*, THE HILL, Mar. 3, 2020, <https://thehill.com/homenews/campaign/485857-protesters-rush-stage-during-biden-super-tuesday-rally>.