

UNITED STATES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

August 1, 2023

Bryan Steil
Chairman
House Committee on Administration
1309 Longworth HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Steil,

I am writing to you regarding recent reports that on the evening of July 26, 2023, Representative Derrick Van Orden (WI-03) verbally accosted a group of high school-age Senate pages in the Capitol Rotunda and behaved in a physically aggressive manner toward the teenagers. As Chairman of the House Committee on Administration, you have jurisdiction over matters of Capitol security. Therefore, I call on you to immediately release the security footage from inside the Capitol Rotunda on the evening of July 26 and early morning hours of July 27, 2023 to ensure greater transparency into this incident.

As you are no doubt aware, initial reports of the incident stated that the group of Senate pages were in the Rotunda that evening to take pictures during their last week at the Capitol, and while there, some of the teenagers positioned themselves and their camera on the floor in order to capture a photo of the interior of the historic Capitol dome. The vast reporting states that when Representative Van Orden came across the teenagers, who spent their summer providing vital support to daily operations at the Capitol, he “became enraged” and swore at the pages, calling them “lazy s----” and telling them to “get the f--- up” off the floor.¹ When given the opportunity to apologize, Representative Van Orden refused and claimed the pages were “defiling” the Capitol, an interesting choice of words for a man who stood shoulder to shoulder with insurrectionists outside the Capitol on January 6, 2021.²

Further, more recent reporting reveals that a witness to the incident has described Van Orden’s demeanor as “physically aggressive” toward the teenagers and that he was “screaming inches from the pages’ faces.”³ This is a deeply disturbing account of the incident, and if these allegations are accurate, would indicate that Representative Van Orden engaged in potentially abusive behavior, including verbal harassment and physical intimidation, against a group of minors on Capitol grounds.

If the widely shared reports are accurate, Representative Van Orden’s behavior toward the pages on July 26 was completely unacceptable and further calls into question his fitness for office. It is

¹ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2023/07/27/van-orden-cursed-senate-pages/>

² <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2022/11/15/derrick-van-orden-jan-6-congress/>

³ <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/congress/gop-lawmaker-screamed-curse-words-inches-senate-pages-faces-source-say-rcna97157>

critical that members of the public, including his constituents in Wisconsin's Third Congressional District, know the truth of what happened that evening. As the Chairman of the House Committee on Administration, you have already provided security footage to members of the public, including the media. In fact, in February of this year you provided over 44,000 hours of Capitol surveillance footage from the insurrection on January 6, 2021 to then-Fox News host Tucker Carlson, and stated at the time that the move was made in an effort to be transparent and that "this majority is focused on accountability, transparency and restoring the People's trust."⁴

Representative Van Orden's constituents deserve to know the truth about the man elected to serve them and releasing this footage would provide much-needed transparency into this potentially very disturbing incident. Therefore, given your past demonstrated support for transparency and the serious nature of the allegations surrounding Representative Van Orden's threatening behavior toward a group of minors, I call on you to immediately release the security footage from inside the Capitol Rotunda on the evening of July 26 and early morning hours of July 27, 2023.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Mark Pocan
Member of Congress

⁴ <https://www.jsonline.com/story/news/politics/2023/02/24/steil-defends-mccarthy-for-giving-jan-6-footage-to-tucker-carlson/69931785007/>