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One Hundred Sixteenth Congress  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Committee on Foreign Affairs  
2170 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515  
[www.foreignaffairs.house.gov](http://www.foreignaffairs.house.gov)

November 23, 2020

The Honorable Emily W. Murphy  
Administrator  
U.S. General Services Administration  
Washington, DC 20410

Dear Administrator Murphy:

The first time I stood near the Pile, I was a few feet away from President Bush when he promised that those responsible for the devastation around us would be held to account. He of course meant the terrorists who flew those 767s into the Twin Towers. But even then, standing in a cloud of acrid smoke as the fire smoldered, those of us who represented the dead, the first responders, and their families were already seeking answers about what went wrong that allowed this tragedy to unfold.

It was a mosaic of failures, as the 9/11 Commission told us years later. And as I pack up my office and take stock of my three decades representing New Yorkers and recalling the horror of 9/11 and its aftermath, I feel the dread of history potentially repeating as you continue to block American democracy's path forward.

We learned from the commission that the "dispute over the [2000] election and the 36-day delay cut in half the normal transition period. Given that a presidential election in the United States brings wholesale change in personnel, this loss of time hampered the new administration in identifying, recruiting, clearing, and obtaining Senate confirmation of key appointees."

In other words: the Bush Administration was hobbled out of the gate.

In 2000, a legitimate legal dispute held up our ability to know a winner of the Presidential election. President Trump's claims, however, have been called nothing less than "Frankenstein's monster"—and that by the federal district judge in Pennsylvania who threw out the Trump campaign's frivolous lawsuit "with prejudice." Whatever the spurious claims of President Trump's "legal team," we know that President-elect Biden's win is clear and his six million-vote lead is unassailable. Holding up the transition is political theater. But the lives at stake are real.

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The Trump Administration is pushing ahead with a controversial troop drawdown in Afghanistan. It's been reported that the President is considering a lame-duck strike on Iran. And of course, the United States and the world are preparing to mobilize the distribution of billions of doses of vaccine to combat the Coronavirus pandemic, which continues to overshadow all our lives. As Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee until the end of the 116<sup>th</sup> Congress, I want to know that my successor is kept apprised of those matters and the vast range of other concerns dealing with our country's security. Why would we want anything less for our government-in-waiting?

Put yourself in the shoes of a parent or spouse of a servicemember deployed in a war zone. Wouldn't you want the people about to take the reins of power to have every shred of information available to help ensure the safety of your loved one? Why would you deny that peace of mind to American families?

Ms. Murphy, we've never met, and I don't know why you initially came to Washington, but I would guess, like many of us, the idea of service to your country and fellow citizens had a lot to do with it. I imagine right now you're feeling the weight of history on your shoulders, as you should. You must also know that the President's gambit won't prevail; our republic is too deep and sturdy to yield to his attempt to disenfranchise millions of Americans.

But those who enable his attack on our democracy will share in the responsibility of any damage he inflicts on his way out. You are uniquely positioned to mitigate the potential for such damage. The history of these bizarre days, when the mettle of the American idea is being put to the test, will record those who stood up for that idea and whose actions tarnished it. I hope you will be on the right side of history. Please do your job and ascertain without further delay that Joe Biden is the President-elect and that the transition should go forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Eliot L. Engel". The signature is written in a cursive style with a blue highlight behind the text.

ELIOT L. ENGEL  
Chairman