

ONE HUNDRED EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

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September 19, 2024

The Honorable Merrick Garland
Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20530

Dear Attorney General Garland:

I write to request that the Department of Justice Civil Rights Division investigate disturbing reports that an Ohio sheriff is collecting the addresses of individuals who display campaign material for Democratic presidential nominee Kamala Harris in order to target those individuals at a later date. This clear attempt by an elected Republican official to intimidate Democratic voters in his jurisdiction demands the Department's immediate attention.

In public Facebook posts on both his personal and campaign accounts on September 13, 2024, the sheriff of Portage County, Ohio, Bruce Zuchowski, posted photos of Fox News television stories about "Kamala's open borders" and wrote:

When people ask me...What's gonna happen if the Flip - Flopping, Laughing Hyena Wins??

I say...write down all the addresses of the people who had her signs in their yards! Sooo...when the Illegal human "Locust" (which she supports!) Need places to live...We'll already have the addresses of the their New families...who supported their arrival!¹

Sheriff Zuchowski's intimidation efforts appear to have been successful: after his post, some residents began following his instructions and posted in Facebook comments the addresses of residents with yard signs supporting Vice President Harris.²

¹ Sheriff Bruce D. Zuchowski, FACEBOOK (Sep. 13, 2024, 8:42 PM), <https://www.facebook.com/sheriffzuchowski/posts/534645348946059>; Bruce Zuchowski, FACEBOOK (Sept. 13, 2024, 8:03 PM),

<https://www.facebook.com/bruce.zuchowski.3/posts/pfbid0sLqCMpBwWps8NZbDri3CiyMdipohqHjNiMaXyd1vGd2PSvux3e6ztWBWX2eH3wDJI>.

² *Id.*; Amanda Garrett, *Free speech or voter intimidation? Portage residents file complaints over sheriff's post*, AKRON BEACON JOURNAL (Sept. 17, 2024),

Portage County residents have reacted with alarm. Some residents have already filed complaints with the Department, as well as local authorities and Members of Congress, with one writing in his complaint to your office, “That sort of doxxing, sanctioned by a gun-toting man with a badge, is downright scary.”³ Another resident stated, “I have a sign in my yard. Our sheriff is asking MAGA to write down our addresses. This is not normal and it is scary.”⁴ A separate individual expressed concern for her parents, telling local journalists, “My parents are elderly and have been very politically active Democrats. I am afraid for them now. I don’t want to scare them or suggest they take down their signs, but I am sick to my stomach with worry.”⁵ Another resident said of the sheriff: “He’s a top law enforcement official in Portage County. He’s supposed to be upholding the law ... What that statement was on Facebook was intended for oppression, intimidation, and suppression of freedom of speech. I would like to turn to law enforcement but what happens when law enforcement is the one making those threats.”⁶

Local public officials in Portage County have also expressed concern. Portage County Commissioner Tony Badalamenti criticized Sheriff Zuchowski’s post and announced his resignation from the county’s Republican Central Committee, stating, “[Zuchowski] posted that we should all copy down the addresses of the people that display political signs which are different from our beliefs ... It scares people. It’s called bullying, from the highest law enforcement official in Portage County.”⁷

Sheriff Zuchowski has had a long history in law enforcement before being elected Sheriff in 2020.⁸ According to the Portage County Sheriff’s Office, “Bruce served the public for almost thirty years: twenty six years with the Ohio State Patrol (14 years as Assistant Post Commander) and two and a half years as a part-time and special deputy in the Portage County Sheriff’s

<https://www.beaconjournal.com/story/news/politics/elections/2024/09/17/portage-county-residents-file-voter-intimidation-complaints-against-sheriff-bruce-zuchowski/75249361007/>.

³ Amanda Garrett, *Free speech or voter intimidation? Portage residents file complaints over sheriff’s post*, AKRON BEACON JOURNAL (Sept. 17, 2024).

<https://www.beaconjournal.com/story/news/politics/elections/2024/09/17/portage-county-residents-file-voter-intimidation-complaints-against-sheriff-bruce-zuchowski/75249361007/>; Ben Wolford, *Residents express fear after sheriff says ‘write down all the addresses’ of Harris supporters*, PORTAGER (Sept. 16, 2024)

<https://theportager.com/residents-express-fear-after-sheriff-says-write-down-all-the-addresses-of-harris-supporters/>.

⁴ Ben Wolford, *Residents express fear after sheriff says ‘write down all the addresses’ of Harris supporters*, PORTAGER (Sept. 16, 2024), <https://theportager.com/residents-express-fear-after-sheriff-says-write-down-all-the-addresses-of-harris-supporters/>.

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ Amanda Garrett, *Free speech or voter intimidation? Portage residents file complaints over sheriff’s post*, AKRON BEACON JOURNAL (Sept. 17, 2024),

<https://www.beaconjournal.com/story/news/politics/elections/2024/09/17/portage-county-residents-file-voter-intimidation-complaints-against-sheriff-bruce-zuchowski/75249361007/>.

⁷ Ben Wolford, *Residents express fear after sheriff says ‘write down all the addresses’ of Harris supporters*, PORTAGER (Sept. 16, 2024), <https://theportager.com/residents-express-fear-after-sheriff-says-write-down-all-the-addresses-of-harris-supporters/>.

⁸ *Who is Portage County Sheriff Bruce D. Zuchowski? Republican embroiled in controversy*, AKRON BEACON JOURNAL (Sept. 16, 2024), <https://www.beaconjournal.com/story/news/2024/09/16/portage-county-sheriff-bruce-d-zuchowski-cleveland-guardians-name-change-kamala-harris-supporters/75253787007/>; *Meet the Sheriff*, PORTAGE CNTY. SHERIFF’S OFF. (2024), <https://portagesheriff.com/sheriff/>.

Office.”⁹ It is especially concerning that an individual who has held law enforcement authority over the people of Ohio for three decades would so blatantly attempt to intimidate the voters he has been elected to serve.

With just three weeks until voting begins in Ohio, the Sheriff’s post constitutes clear voter intimidation and encourages vigilante behavior.

Accordingly, I ask that you examine Sheriff Zuchowski’s clear attempts at voter intimidation in Portage County, Ohio, as well as any safety risks his behavior has caused for Americans exercising their First Amendment right by displaying political campaign material. It is vital that Americans who support the rule of law remain vigilant against voter intimidation and suppression.

Sincerely,



Jerrold Nadler
Ranking Member
House Committee on the Judiciary



Mary Gay Scanlon
Ranking Member
House Judiciary Subcommittee on the
Constitution and Limited Government

cc: The Honorable Jim Jordan, Chairman, House Committee on the Judiciary
The Honorable Chip Roy, Chairman, House Judiciary Subcommittee on the Constitution and Limited Government

⁹ *Meet the Sheriff*, PORTAGE CNTY. SHERIFF’S OFF. (2024), <https://portagesheriff.com/sheriff>.