

ROBERT P. CASEY, JR.
PENNSYLVANIA

COMMITTEES:
AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION,
AND FORESTRY
FINANCE
HEALTH, EDUCATION,
LABOR, AND PENSIONS
SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON AGING
JOINT ECONOMIC

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 14, 2016

The Honorable Jeh Johnson
Secretary
Department of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Johnson:

As the Administration pursues a multi-part strategy to degrade and defeat the terrorist group ISIS in Iraq and Syria, I write to urge the acceleration of efforts to counter ISIS-inspired attacks on the homeland. Our law enforcement professionals are increasingly on the front lines of protecting our homeland from such threats, and we must ensure they have the necessary resources and support from the federal government. I also write to invite you to Philadelphia to meet with local authorities and community leaders about ways we can address the problem of violent extremism together.

According to a recent report issued by the Foreign Policy Initiative, seventy-one individuals have been charged with ISIS-related activities since March 2014. The profiles of these individuals and their motivations differ dramatically. We have experienced at least two such cases in Pennsylvania in the last two months.

In December, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, working with state and local law enforcement, arrested a 19-year-old Harrisburg man accused of supporting ISIS. The complaint alleged that this man had “conspired with others and attempted to facilitate the travel of other ISIL supporters to Syria” and stated the FBI’s belief that the man “may be preparing to conduct or assist others in conducting an attack in the United States.”

Last week, an armed man attacked Philadelphia Police Officer Jesse Hartnett, firing a number of times and shooting Hartnett in the arm three times before fleeing. Hartnett bravely pursued his attacker, who was ultimately apprehended. The perpetrator allegedly claimed allegiance to ISIS when interviewed after his arrest.

I support your decision to create an Office of Community Partnerships (OCP), charged with supporting state and local entities in their efforts to counter violent extremism. I am a cosponsor of S. 2369, the Community Partnerships Act of 2015, which would provide OCP with legislative authorization and create a grant program to support state and local entities conducting programs to counter violent extremism. Further, I support the decision to establish a joint Department of Homeland Security – Department of Justice Task Force on Countering Violent Extremism (CVE).

In the near term, I urge that these recently-developed entities communicate directly with law enforcement and community organizations to improve counter-radicalization efforts. Specifically, I encourage the development and dissemination of a comprehensive list of currently available federal grant programs and informational resources that may be useful to local law enforcement and community organizations in implementing effective CVE strategies while Congress considers legislative options. Looking toward the future, we must gain a better understanding of the radicalization process and develop strategies to intervene and prevent violence while also respecting First Amendment rights.

Your participation in a meeting on this topic with local authorities and community leaders would bring tremendous value to all the participants, which is why I hope that you will join me in Philadelphia. This meeting would provide an opportunity to engage with the Philadelphia community and to discuss ways in which we can work together to counter violent extremism. If my office can provide any additional information, please contact Caitlin Gearen Frazer (Caitlin_Frazer@casey.senate.gov) on my staff. I look forward to continue working with you on this critical homeland security issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bob Casey Jr." in a cursive style.

Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator