

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

February 15, 2024

The Honorable Mike Johnson
Speaker
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Reverend Dr. Margaret Grun Kibben
Chaplain
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Johnson and Chaplain Kibben:

The undersigned members write to express our concerns about Speaker Johnson's sponsorship of Pastor Jack Hibbs as the Guest Chaplain of the House of Representatives. Pastor Hibbs is a radical Christian Nationalist who helped fuel the January 6th insurrection and has a long record of spewing hateful vitriol toward non-Christians, immigrants, and members of the LGBTQ community. He should never have been granted the right to deliver the House's opening prayer on January 30, 2024.

In the days leading up to the attack on the Capitol, Hibbs [echoed](#) Donald Trump's election fraud lies and inflamed his followers by preaching that January 6th would go down in history alongside the War of Independence and the War of 1812. By preaching that God had [anointed](#) the Trump administration and could still intercede to [save](#) Trump's presidency on January 6th, Hibbs advanced a religious permission structure that [led](#) to violence by those who believed any means were justified to carry out what they viewed as God's plan. On January 6th, Hibbs [attended](#) the MAGA rally at the Ellipse that preceded the attack. Immediately after the sacking of the Capitol, he went on Tony Perkins' "Washington Watch" program to tacitly [justify](#) what had just happened by repeating the lie that the election was "manipulated" and claiming: "This is what you get when you eject God from the courts and from the schools" and teach children they are "evolutionary byproducts."

As if spreading election lies and providing religious support and cover for the January 6th insurrection was not enough to disqualify Hibbs from being a Guest Chaplain, Hibbs also has a hateful and divisive public record on civil and human rights. When his [opening prayer](#) invoked "holy fear" and "repentance" for "national sins," these were allusions to the militant and fanatical agenda he preaches about the LGBTQ+ community, Jews, Muslims, and anyone who conflicts with his "biblical worldview."

Among other things, he has [called](#) transgender people a "sexually perverted cult" who are in "violation of the word and will of God" and part of an "anti-God, anti-Christ plan of none other than Satan himself." He launched a [nationwide campaign](#) to require schools to out transgender students in order to defeat "demonic and dark satanic powers." He claims that same-sex marriage has "[crucified God's word](#)" and that [homosexuality](#) and acceptance of LGBTQ+ people is evidence that humanity is living in the "[last days.](#)" He champions discredited "conversion therapy" and has rallied opposition to a California law to reduce anti-LGBTQ+ bullying in schools.

Hibbs' intolerance non-Christians is also breathtaking. He preaches that Christians are at "war" against the "[death cult](#)" of Islam, which he calls a "[vehicle](#)" for Satan in the Last Days. He [criticizes](#) Christians who seek interfaith dialogue with Muslims based on the common Abrahamic origins of the two religions as falling for "a demonic doctrine being propagated by heretics."

At a time of rising antisemitism, Hibbs also [disparages](#) Jews as being in a "stupor" and a "God-given blindness," unlike the "true Jews" who worship Jesus because "they didn't get bogged down in Judaism, which...cannot save you." He also recently argued that the Israel-Hamas war is another sign of the [End Times](#) and that Jewish people must [save](#) themselves by turning to Jesus; if they do, he [urges](#) Christians to "look past the sins of Israel and the sins of the Jew and give them the hope of Jesus."

Hibbs also embraces the false and exclusionary Christian nationalist [narrative](#) that the United States was established as a "Christian nation," and he has [repeatedly flouted](#) separation of church and state by working to institutionalize Christian prayer and bible readings at local school board meetings, among other things.

In addition to all of these reasons why Hibbs should never have led Congress in prayer, the decision to allow him to be a Guest Chaplain makes a mockery of the [basic Guest Chaplain Instructions for Member Offices](#). Hibbs is not from the district of Speaker Johnson (i.e. the sponsoring member), Speaker Johnson did not deliver a welcoming speech, the prayer was not delivered on the last legislative day of the week, and Hibbs was Speaker Johnson's second sponsored Guest Chaplain in the span of just a couple months, even though Members are limited to one request per Congress. Moreover, in light of Hibbs' radical and divisive record, no reasonable person could view his invocation's sectarian references to "holy fear," "repentance" and "national sins" as meeting the Chaplain's stated expectations for a prayer that is "mindful of diversity," "transcends petty differences," and "expresses a common aspiration to a just and peaceful society."

These facts suggest a breathtaking lack of consideration for the religious diversity of our Congress and pluralistic nation. It appears that Speaker Johnson – with the tacit approval of the House Chaplain – decided to flout the Chaplaincy guidelines and use the platform of the Guest Chaplain to lend the imprimatur of Congress to an ill-qualified hate preacher who shares the Speaker's Christian nationalist agenda and his overriding antipathy toward church-state separation.

The decision by the Speaker and House Chaplain to welcome Pastor Hibbs is especially galling in light of the Chaplaincy's refusal to allow some signers of this letter to sponsor Guest Chaplains who meet all the stated expectations of the program. We should all be able to agree that the Guest Chaplain program should not be used as a political tool, nor should it be implemented in a way that favors one religion over others or applies inappropriate religious tests.

For all these reasons, we request a complete explanation of the process by which Pastor Hibbs was recommended, vetted, and approved, including the reason(s) why the Chaplain waived basic requirements of the Guest Chaplain program for Hibbs, of all people. Please also describe the steps you will take in the future to prevent someone with a hateful and divisive record from

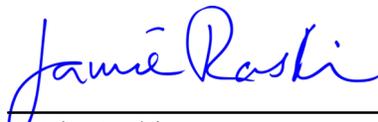
delivering the opening prayer and to ensure that people of all faiths and values are equitably represented as Guest Chaplains. Finally, please explain why the Chaplaincy has continued to prevent Members from sponsoring certain fully qualified Guest Chaplains such as Representative Mark Pocan's constituent, Nontheistic Chaplain Dan Barker.

We hope to work with you in the spirit of upholding constitutional protections for religious freedom and pluralism and to ensure that the House reflects and respects our country's essential constitutional values and increasingly diverse faith perspectives. Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

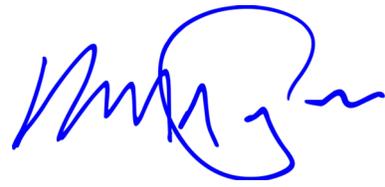
Sincerely,



Jared Huffman
Member of Congress



Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress



Mark Pocan
Member of Congress



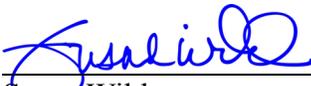
Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress



Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress



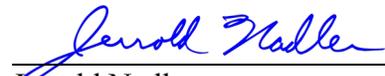
Sean Casten
Member of Congress



Susan Wild
Member of Congress



Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress



Terrold Nadler
Member of Congress



Mark Takano
Member of Congress



Robert Garcia
Member of Congress



Dan Goldman
Member of Congress



Becca Balint
Member of Congress



Delia C. Ramirez
Member of Congress



Katie Porter
Member of Congress



Kevin Mullin
Member of Congress



John Garamendi
Member of Congress



Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



Ilhan Omar
Member of Congress



Raul Ruiz, M.D.
Member of Congress



Barbara Lee
Member of Congress



James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



Rosa L. DeLauro
Member of Congress



Julia Brownley
Member of Congress



Summer Lee
Member of Congress



Gerald E. Connolly
Member of Congress