

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

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<https://oversight.house.gov>

March 24, 2025

Mr. Thomas E. Austin
Architect of the Capitol
SB-15 U.S. Capitol
U.S. Capitol Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Austin:

On his first day in office, despite warnings from senior Republicans, President Trump issued a blanket pardon to the more than 1,500 people charged in the deadly January 6, 2021, insurrection at the U.S. Capitol.¹ While these sentences can be erased with the stroke of a pen, the damage done that day is not so easily repaired. The Capitol complex withstood nearly millions of dollars in property damage from the insurrectionists who entered the Capitol by force and in their wake “left windows broken, doors splintered, and paintings stained with pepper spray and tear gas.”² The total cost of the insurrection to the taxpayers is estimated to be \$2.7 billion, and that does not account for the lives lost due to the violence that day.³ Thanks to President Trump’s reckless pardons, convicted rioters can not only walk freely, but they also are no longer required to pay their court-ordered restitutions, much of which was owed directly to your office.

The Jan. 6 felons had paid only a fraction of this restitution prior to these pardons. Adding insult to injury for the taxpayers, some rioters who paid even a portion of their restitution have now come forward to demand that they be reimbursed.⁴ We urge you to make clear to American taxpayers how much they are being forced to pay for these damages because of President Trump’s insistence that the debts to society of some of his most violent supporters go unpaid.

¹ *Proud Boys and Oath Keepers Leaders Are Free. Who Are They and What Are Their Groups?* USA Today (Jan. 22, 2025) (online at www.usatoday.com/story/news/investigations/2025/01/22/trump-pardons-proud-boys-oath-keepers-leaders/77861478007/).

² *Capitol Riot Costs Go Up: Government Estimates \$2.73 Million in Property Damage*, Forbes (Apr. 11, 2022) (online at www.forbes.com/sites/zacharysmith/2022/04/08/capitol-riot-costs-go-up-government-estimates-273-million-in-property-damage/).

³ Government Accountability Office, *CAPITOL ATTACK: Federal Agencies Identified Some Threats, but Did Not Fully Process and Share Information Prior to January 6, 2021* (Revised July 21, 2023) (online at www.gao.gov/assets/d23106625.pdf).

⁴ Scott MacFarlane (@MacFarlaneNews), X (Mar. 18, 2025) (online at <https://x.com/MacFarlaneNews/status/1901961782442246647>).

Restitution was “one of the most common sentences handed down” to January 6th insurrectionists, but offenders were slow to repay their obligations, and taxpayers were “far from being made whole.”⁵ A June 2024 *CBS News* investigation found that only a small fraction—\$437,000, which is just 15%—of the nearly \$3 million owed in restitution by Jan. 6 offenders had been repaid in the years since the attack.⁶ *CBS*’s reporting relied on the account of an unnamed Congressional aide, but the official numbers from the Architect of the Capitol remain unknown and must be released.

The \$3 million in property damage to the Capitol just scratches the surface of the financial toll of the insurrection. The Government Accountability Office estimated that the true cost to taxpayers was \$2.7 billion, a figure that included property damage, expenses incurred by the Capitol Police, the District of Columbia, and federal agencies, and costs to improve security.⁷ The bipartisan emergency security funding package that President Biden signed into law in July 2021 accounted for some of these expenses. It allotted \$521 million to reimburse the National Guard; \$70 million to support the Capitol police, including for overtime, retention bonuses, and hazard pay expenses; and \$300 million to secure the Capitol complex, which covered upgrades and replacements to windows and doors as well as the installation of new security cameras, among other investments.⁸

Many of the costs of the January 6th attempted coup cannot be measured in dollars. Five police officers died as a result of the attack and scores more were injured.⁹ There has also been lasting harm to the psyche of the American people and to our democracy. We will never be able to fully comprehend the total cost of that day to our nation, particularly now that those previously convicted of this violent insurrection will never be held fully accountable.

The cost of repairing the Capitol, however, is quantifiable. The American people deserve to know how much they have been forced to pay to fix the damage of the January 6th attack while insurrectionists have been let off scot-free. Releasing these figures is not just a matter of fiscal accountability. With President Trump attempting to whitewash history, the unpaid restitution must serve as a concrete record of the damage inflicted to the people’s Capitol on that terrible day.

⁵ *Id.*; *Jan. 6 Offenders Have Paid Only a Fraction of Restitution Owed for Damage to U.S. Capitol During Riot*, CBS News (June 13, 2024) (online at www.cbsnews.com/news/jan-6-restitution-capitol-damage/).

⁶ *Jan. 6 Offenders Have Paid Only a Fraction of Restitution Owed for Damage to U.S. Capitol During Riot*, CBS News (June 13, 2024) (online at www.cbsnews.com/news/jan-6-restitution-capitol-damage/).

⁷ Government Accountability Office, *CAPITOL ATTACK Federal Agencies Identified Some Threats, but Did Not Fully Process and Share Information Prior to January 6, 2021* (Revised July 21, 2023) (GAO-23-106625) (online at www.gao.gov/assets/d23106625.pdf).

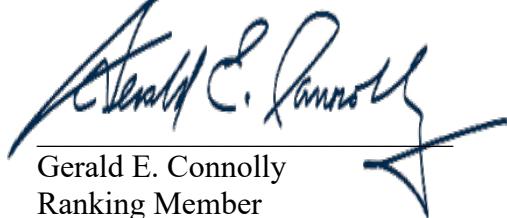
⁸ H.R.3237, 117th Cong. (2021).

⁹ *These Are the People Who Died in Connection with the Capitol Riot*, New York Times (Oct. 13, 2022) (online at www.nytimes.com/2022/01/05/us/politics/jan-6-capitol-deaths.html).

Mr. Thomas E. Austin
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The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform is the principal oversight committee of the House of Representatives, and has broad authority to investigate “any matter” at “any time” under House Rule X. If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact Committee Democratic staff at (202) 225-5051.

Sincerely,



Gerald E. Connolly
Ranking Member

cc: The Honorable James Comer, Chairman