

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2509

January 25, 2021

The Honorable Sheldon Whitehouse
The Honorable Tina Smith
The Honorable Mazie Hirono
The Honorable Sherrod Brown
The Honorable Ron Wyden
The Honorable Richard Blumenthal
The Honorable Tim Kaine

Dear Senators:

I was astounded to see the outrageous personal and partisan attack you labeled an “ethics complaint.” It is a startling abuse of the ethics process and a direct assault on democratic debate.

The idea that one Senator who disagrees with another Senator can therefore have that Senator punished, sanctioned, censured, or removed is utterly antithetical to our democracy and the very idea of open, lawful debate. This line of thinking is, however, sadly consistent with the new woke-mob mentality that you should cancel anyone who disagrees with your views. Your baseless allegations are in that sense unfortunately typical of today’s leftwing cancel culture, a culture that tramples on the democratic traditions that left and right once defended together.

Your insinuation that Senator Cruz and I, by representing our constituents in debate in a manner you acknowledge is lawful, following the precedent set by Democratic members of Congress over the last three decades, somehow bear responsibility for the criminal rioters at the Capitol is shamefully false. And you know it to be so.

You well know that multiple members of your own party have raised objections to the Electoral College results in 3 elections over the past 25 years, which is to say, every single time a Republican President has been elected. You of course did not call for the expulsion of any of these members, and for one reason: they are in the same political party as you are.

In light of the shameful abuse of the ethics process you have deliberately engaged in, I have considered whether I should call for you to resign or be expelled from the Senate. But I continue to believe in the First Amendment, which the US Supreme Court has repeatedly said protects even “offensive” and malicious speech, such as yours.

The First Amendment does not, however, give you carte blanche to abuse the Senate ethics process. I have today filed a complaint with the ethics committee that details your deliberate and partisan abuse of this process, including your apparent coordination with various dark money groups, and requests that you be appropriately disciplined.

In closing, please understand this: I will not be intimidated by your efforts to silence me, the people of my state will not be intimidated by you, and you should be ashamed to have so grossly abused your office and the Senate.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Josh Hawley". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and a long, sweeping underline.

Josh Hawley
United States Senator