



An Offensive Painting is Removed

Missouri Congressman, Lacy Clay, sparked a controversy when he decided to hang an obviously offensive painting from a local art contest on the walls of the United States Congress. The colorful depiction of an updated urban scene insults law enforcement officers everywhere in the country by posing police officers as gun-toting pigs standing in the way of justice.

There are many good reasons to be offended by the painting that hung in the Capitol. In the past year alone, 140 law enforcement officers died violently in the line of duty. The stories have become familiar... dedicated men and women being ambushed for the sole reason that they are wearing a uniform and a badge. The gutless attacks tear at the soul of our society and leave us bereft.

Our officers do not operate in a vacuum. We respond to millions of front-line calls every year and are not blinded or deaf to the controversies that exist in our communities. Law enforcement owns the fact that we must continue to do everything possible to work closely with every demographic toward bringing calm to our troubled neighborhoods.

PORAC has faithfully attended the meetings that bring community stakeholders together. PORAC strongly believes that law enforcement must subscribe to three basic principles in the performance of public safety responsibilities; transparency in the course and scope of how we serve the public; accountability to ensure that no one is above the law, including those who enforce it; and accessibility of the public to question public safety protocols in a manner that engenders public trust.

We are working with policymakers in a collaborative fashion to enhance community outreach, provide better education and training, employ every means to increase diversity in the ranks and explore constructive ways to de-escalate tense situations. Congressman Clay's placing of the painting in the Congress of the United States is the kind of political grandstanding that hinders the process.

Congressman Clay has every right to have an uncensored art contest among his constituents. His constituents deserve every protection to express their artistic vision.

However, for the Congressman to inaccurately suggest that every symbol or image placed in the U.S. Capitol is sacrosanct is a weak excuse for displaying a hateful painting that distorts the everyday tasks of law enforcement. The painting he is defending as belonging in our Capitol is no more acceptable than the swastika, the lynch man's rope, images that embrace oppression or a writing that avows a war against men and women sworn to do the toughest job in America. He only needs to look at his own views on the placement of the confederate flag.

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There are areas in Mr. Clay's own district where a ravenous appetite for violence has earned the streets the appellation of the most dangerous place in America. Mr. Clay's pandering will not make those streets, which he has done nothing to make safer, more inhabitable.

The painting was taken down today by Congressman Duncan Hunter of California. We spoke with his office to express our support for the painting being removed from public display at the Capitol.

The following statement by President Mike Durant was released to the press:

The Peace Officers Research Association of California (PORAC), representing more than 69,000 California law enforcement personnel throughout the state, is pleased that an offensive piece of artwork that depicts police officers as gun-toting pigs has been removed from the U.S. Capitol. PORAC members have been working closely with community members and policymakers in a collaborative fashion to enhance neighborhood outreach and provide greater transparency and accountability as we work together to engender public trust. The best way to address problems that persist between law enforcement and those we serve is through constructive dialogue and not a cheap political stunt. The decision by Congressman Duncan Hunter (R-CA) to remove the painting from our congressional building was courageous and overdue.
