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United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510 - 3505

August 22, 2017

Jefferson Sessions
Attorney General of the United States
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20530

Dear Attorney General Sessions,

I write to request information on domestic terror organizations and hate groups known by the Department of Justice (DOJ) to be present or operating in the state of Ohio.

As you are aware, DOJ is investigating the August 12th attack in Charlottesville, Virginia as a potential hate crime and act of domestic terrorism. The individual arrested and charged in connection with the attack, James Alex Fields Jr., is from the state that I have the honor of representing in the United States Senate — the state of Ohio.

The current investigation will soon determine whether the defendant had any contact or associations with known domestic terror organizations or hate groups, specifically in Ohio, prior to his involvement in the events in Charlottesville. However, the fact that an individual from Ohio is alleged to have traveled to Virginia and committed such an act while attending a white supremacist rally has caused many in my home state, including myself, to question the degree to which domestic terror organizations and hate groups are present and operate in the state of Ohio.

I view the presence of domestic terror organizations and hate groups in Ohio as a threat to both public safety and national security. And I firmly believe that every Ohioan, and every American, has a right to know whether domestic terror organizations or hate groups are known or suspected by law enforcement to have a presence in their community. This information is absolutely necessary for people to be able to make informed decisions about their everyday lives — such as where to live, where to work, or where to send their children to school.

According to the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), there are currently thirty-five known hate groups with a presence in Ohio, placing the state among the top ten states for the number of active hate groups. SPLC relies, in part, on public law enforcement data and reports in determining that a hate group is present and active in a particular area. However, as the law enforcement arm of the federal government, DOJ is well suited to provide more comprehensive data and information on the presence of domestic terror organizations and hate groups in the state of Ohio.

I therefore respectfully submit the following questions and requests for production:

1. Please provide a list of all domestic terrorist organizations or hate groups known or believed by DOJ to have been present or operated in the state of Ohio at any time since January 2015. Please include in the response the city, town, or county in which each organization or group is known or suspected to have been present or operated.
2. Please provide a detailed description of any closed domestic terrorism or hate crime investigations conducted by DOJ in Ohio since January 2015. Please include the date, location, number of victims, injuries, and/or damage of the alleged incident(s) that was/were investigated.
3. Please provide a list of all individuals charged with a federal crime in Ohio in a case in which it was determined by DOJ during its investigation that the charged individual was connected to or associated with a domestic terror organization or hate group. Please identify in your response those cases that resulted in a conviction.
4. Does DOJ have a policy of notifying state and local law enforcement agencies if the DOJ determines during an investigation or prosecution that a domestic terror organization or hate group is present or operating in a particular city or state? If yes, please explain such policy.
5. Has DOJ, since January 2015, provided any information to any Ohio state or local law enforcement agency regarding domestic terror organizations or hate groups known or suspected by the DOJ to be present or operating in Ohio? Please provide the approximate date that such information was shared, the agency with which it was shared, and the information that was shared.
6. Please provide a full list of all individuals that have been convicted in Ohio of a federal hate crime since January 2012. Please provide a brief description of each case, including the date, location, number of victims, injuries, and/or damage.
7. Does DOJ maintain a comprehensive list or database of active domestic terror organizations and hate groups?
8. Has DOJ, since January 2015, issued any guidance, directives, requests or orders to its law enforcement agencies or prosecutors with respect to investigating domestic terror organizations or hate groups?

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Sherrod Brown". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Sherrod Brown
United States Senator

cc: Kenneth Blanco, Acting Assistant Attorney General, Criminal Division
John Gore, Acting Assistant Attorney General, Civil Rights Division
Dana Boente, Acting Assistant Attorney General, National Security Division