

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

October 6, 2023

President Joseph Biden  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Ave, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden:

We are writing to you regarding the nearly five-decade imprisonment of Leonard Peltier. Now, more than ever, bedrock principles of justice warrant your consideration of a grant of executive clemency or support of compassionate release at the Federal Bureau of Prisons.

Leonard Peltier, a Native American activist and citizen of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians (ND), is now in his 48th year of incarceration. He is 79 years old and in failing health. Mr. Peltier is serving two life sentences in a maximum-security federal prison for aiding and abetting in a case where his co-defendants were found not guilty on the grounds of self-defense.

Over the course of his incarceration, particularly in recent years, key figures involved in Mr. Peltier's prosecution have stepped forward to underscore the constitutional violations and prosecutorial misconduct that took place during the investigation and trial that led to his conviction. Gerald Heaney, the judge who presided over Mr. Peltier's 1986 appeal in the Eighth Circuit, called for his release in 1991 and again in 2000<sup>1</sup>, and former United States Attorney James Reynolds, whose office handled the prosecution and appeal of Peltier's case, has called for a commute of the remainder of his sentence and observed that "his conviction and continued incarceration is a testament to a time and a system of justice that no longer has a place in our society."<sup>2</sup> In addition, the United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention specifically noted the anti-Indigenous bias surrounding Peltier's detention, stating simply that he "*continues to be detained because he is Native American.*"<sup>3</sup>

Retired FBI Special Agent Coleen Rowley, in her letter addressed to you on December 3, 2022, raised how the "long-standing horribly wrongful oppressive treatment of Indians in the U.S." played into Peltier's case and, critically, the "FBI Family vendetta" behind the agency's opposition to clemency.<sup>4</sup> We recognize the grief and loss that took place in both the FBI and Tribal community on that day but also recognize this opportunity for all to move forward.

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<sup>1</sup> Gerald H. Heaney, U.S. Senior Cir. Judge, 8th Cir., *Letter to Senator Daniel K. Inouye, Chairman, U.S. Senate Select Comm. on Indian Affairs* (Apr. 18, 1991), <http://www.whoisleonardpeltier.info/download/Heaney.pdf>.

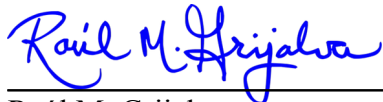
<sup>2</sup> James Reynolds, Former U.S. Attorney, *Letter to President Joseph R. Biden* (Jul. 9, 2021), <https://www.amnestyusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/From-US-Attorney-James-Reynolds.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> United Nations Working Group on Arbitrary Detention, *Opinion No. 7/2022 concerning Leonard Peltier (United States of America)* (Jun. 7, 2022), <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/A-HRC-WGAD-7-2022-USA-AEV.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> Coleen Rowley, Retired FBI Special Agent, *Letter to President Joseph R. Biden* (Dec. 3, 2022), <https://www.amnestyusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/From-Retired-FBI-Special-Agent-Coleen-Rowley.pdf>

As Members of Congress, we sign this letter with a deep commitment to the crucial role we play in upholding justice for all Americans - and to also hold our government accountable when we see a case of *injustice*, as demonstrated by the long incarceration of Leonard Peltier. We stand with the Tribal Nations of the United States, Indigenous voices worldwide, and leading voices on human rights and criminal justice around the globe in support of Mr. Peltier's release. We applaud your commitment to criminal justice reform and your administration's work to address inequities in the criminal justice system and rectify the past wrongs of our government's treatment of Native Americans. We urge you to take the next step by granting Mr. Peltier executive clemency or compassionate release.

Sincerely,



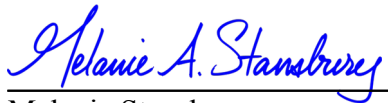
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Raúl M. Grijalva  
Member of Congress



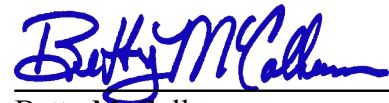
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Rashida Tlaib  
Member of Congress



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Melanie Stansbury  
Member of Congress



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Betty McCollum  
Member of Congress



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Jared Huffman  
Member of Congress



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Teresa Leger Fernández  
Member of Congress



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Barbara Lee  
Member of Congress



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Ted W. Lieu  
Member of Congress



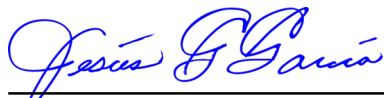
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Katie Porter  
Member of Congress



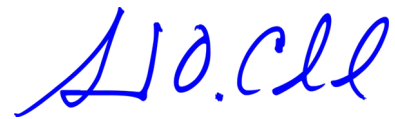
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Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Member of Congress



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Jesús G. "Chuy" García  
Member of Congress



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Salud Carbajal  
Member of Congress



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James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress



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Pramila Jayapal  
Member of Congress



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Jamaal Bowman, Ed.D.  
Member of Congress

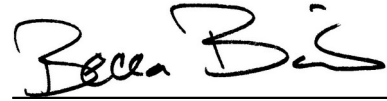


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Member of Congress



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Member of Congress



Becca Balint  
Member of Congress



Mark Pocan  
Member of Congress



Tim Burchett  
Member of Congress



Frank Pallone, Jr.  
Member of Congress



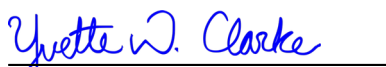
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Yvette D. Clarke  
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Ilhan Omar  
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Sheila Jackson Lee  
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Emanuel Cleaver, II  
Member of Congress



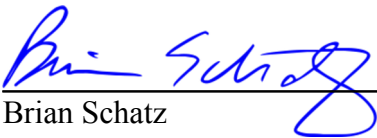
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Joaquin Castro  
Member of Congress



Bernard Sanders  
United States Senator



Brian Schatz  
United States Senator



Tina Smith  
United States Senator