

Dear students,

Yesterday, I was in the middle of writing to you to welcome you back for the Spring semester and to remind you that our first week of classes would be all remote while we complete COVID testing. My message was interrupted by the events in our nation's capital where we witnessed an unprecedented attack on our democracy.

Yesterday, we watched with horror as a violent mob, incited by our President, attacked the United States Capitol in an attempt to impede our democratic ideal of a peaceful transition of Presidential power. Regardless of our political affiliations or views, we must stand together to condemn this assault. Peaceful protests play an important role in our democracy but violent attacks on our government do not. In a democracy, we resolve disagreements not by violence, but in accordance with legal process. Indeed, over the past few months, the countless disputes over this election were addressed by numerous election officials of both parties, many state and federal courts and ultimately in the middle of last night, by Congress.

While the guardrails of democracy held and Congress completed its Constitutional duty to certify Joe Biden as our next President, the past 24 hours have demonstrated that we cannot take our democracy for granted – it is fragile. As lawyers and future lawyers, we have a special obligation to protect the rule of law. While there is much work to do in the days and years ahead and these events have exposed flaws in our system that must be addressed, I have hope for the future because of you – our students and future lawyers. Come back next week ready to go to work!

Very best,

Jennifer J. Johnson  
Dean  
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