



Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the House

June 18, 2020

Ms. Cheryl L. Johnson
Clerk
United States House of Representatives
U.S. Capitol, H-154
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Madam Clerk:

Tomorrow, Americans will mark Juneteenth, a beautiful and proud celebration of freedom for African Americans. Very sadly, this day comes during a moment of extraordinary national anguish, as we grieve for the hundreds of Black Americans killed by racial injustice and police brutality, including George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery and so many others.

To appropriately observe Juneteenth this year, I write today to request the immediate removal of the portraits in the U.S. Capitol of four previous Speakers who served in the Confederacy: Robert Hunter of Virginia (1839-1841), Howell Cobb of Georgia (1849-1851), James Orr of South Carolina (1857-1859), and Charles Crisp of Georgia (1891-1895).

As I have said before, the halls of Congress are the very heart of our democracy. There is no room in the hallowed halls of Congress or in any place of honor for memorializing men who embody the violent bigotry and grotesque racism of the Confederacy. We cannot honor men such as James Orr, who swore on the House Floor to “preserve and perpetuate” slavery in order to “enjoy our property in peace, quiet and security,” or Robert Hunter, who served at nearly every level of the Confederacy, including in the Confederate Provincial Congress, as Confederate Secretary of State, in the Confederate Senate and in the Confederate Army. The portraits of these men are symbols that set back our nation’s work to confront and combat bigotry.

Our Congressional community has the sacred opportunity and obligation to make meaningful change to ensure that the halls of Congress reflect our highest ideals as Americans. Let us lead by example.

Thank you for your immediate attention to this request.

best regards,


NANCY PELOSI
Speaker of the House

CC: The Honorable Zoe Lofgren, Committee on House Administration