

## Congresswoman Liz Cheney Nomination for the John F. Kennedy Profile in Courage Award

Submitted by Congressman John B. Larson (CT-01)

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There is no greater principle or ideal in America than the principle put forth by our founding fathers: democracy - a “government of the people, by the people and for the people.” Fighting for democracy in America should not require courage, it should not be controversial. But in 2021, in the face of violence and vitriol, one woman stood fast against the Big Lie and those who attacked the Capitol in order to overturn a free and fair election. She had a lot to lose, and she still might lose her seat in office, but Congresswoman Liz Cheney (R-Wyo.) refused to be bullied or threatened. America was at a tipping point, and it needed a Republican to stand alongside Democrats and declare that the President of the United States, her party’s standard bearer, was a dangerous purveyor of lies and conspiracy theories that threatened the fabric of our country. Liz Cheney didn’t flinch. Her country called. Her party jeered. Still, she persisted.

To understand how remarkable it was that Liz Cheney stood up to the President and his followers, you must understand who she is and what she has at stake. Cheney is the daughter of a former Republican Vice President and was herself a former high-ranking official in the George W. Bush administration, Fox News commentator, and chair of the House Republican Conference, the third-highest position in the House Republican leadership. Liz Cheney was not a rank-and-file member of Congress; she was born to be a scion of the Republican neoconservative movement and had climbed the ranks deftly.

More important than her partisan credentials, Cheney portrayed an American patriotism that should universally cut across party lines, but too often does not. “The Republican Party has to make a choice. We can either be loyal to our Constitution or loyal to Donald Trump, but we cannot be both,” Cheney has said.

As a former Democratic Caucus Chair, I understand the weight and responsibility that Congresswoman Cheney as Chair of the House Republican Conference faced when those in her party gave rise to enmity to our most central beliefs. A party she loves, a party whose tenets she believes in, and a party she hopes to re-build. By putting America and our democratic Republic ahead of her party and ahead of her own personal ambition, Congresswoman Cheney risked her reputation, her career, and her personal safety.

Before the Capitol Insurrection on January 6, 2021, Cheney penned a memo to her colleagues urging them not to be swayed by the anti-democratic wave hoping Congress would overturn the election by refusing to certify the results. On the 6<sup>th</sup>, President Trump singled out Rep. Cheney saying, “we got to get rid of the weak congresspeople, the ones that aren’t any good, the Liz Cheneys of the world,” as he urged the mob to march to the Capitol to overturn the election. Congresswoman Cheney faced bodily harm, not just political fallout, for the crime of standing up on behalf of the will of American voters.

One week later, Cheney held firm to her convictions and led a group of 10 other House Republicans who voted to impeach President Trump in the wake of the events of January 6. She

withstood two subsequent no-confidence votes in her own caucus for that bold act, but only because she still had powerful allies.

Congresswoman Cheney continues to serve on behalf of the sanctity of democracy as the Vice-Chair of the Select Committee to Investigate the January 6<sup>th</sup> Attack on the United States Capitol. As Vice-Chair, Cheney helped lead the committee in publicly presenting newly uncovered evidence, and a year later, is tirelessly pursuing justice in the name of democratic ideals. Says Cheney, "There has never been a greater betrayal by a President of the United States and his office and his oath to the Constitution."

While I can only imagine the threats and name calling Congresswoman Cheney received from her constituents, strangers and possibly, very sadly, her colleagues, Cheney continues to condemn anyone who persists in claiming the 2020 election was stolen, stating that they are "turning their back on the rule of law and poisoning our democratic system."

In May of 2021, Congresswoman Cheney lost her leadership post in the Republican party. She might very well lose her job and she continues to require private security after various credible threats to her safety. After her ouster, fellow Republican Rep. Adam Kinzinger (R-Ill.) said of Cheney, "the only sin (she) committed was being consistent and telling the truth." In her statement ahead of that closed door vote, she refused to apologize or back down from criticizing former President Trump for spreading lies about the election. After she was booed by her Republican colleagues she replied, "If you want leaders who will enable and spread his destructive lies, I'm not your person, you have plenty of others to choose from," Cheney added. "That will be their legacy."

Let Congresswoman Cheney's legacy be that of selfless courage for her country and the democracy it stands for. Let Congresswoman Liz Cheney's legacy be a beacon of light in a time of darkness, as a profile in courage.