

**JEFF DUNCAN**

3RD DISTRICT, SOUTH CAROLINA

**CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES**

2229 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20515  
PHONE: 202.225.5301

**COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND  
COMMERCE**

SUBCOMMITTEE ON ENERGY

SUBCOMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE  
CHANGE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND  
INVESTIGATIONS

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303 WEST BELTLINE BOULEVARD  
ANDERSON, SC 29625  
(864) 224-7401

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100 PLAZA CIRCLE, SUITE A1  
CLINTON, SC 29325  
(864) 681-1028

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[jeffduncan.house.gov](http://jeffduncan.house.gov)

**DEPUTY REPUBLICAN WHIP**

HOUSE ENERGY ACTION TEAM  
CO-CHAIR

June 19, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker of the House  
H-232, U.S. Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Madam Speaker,

It has come to my attention that on Thursday, June 18<sup>th</sup>, 2020, you wrote to Ms. Cheryl Johnson, Clerk of the House of Representatives, instructing her to remove various portraits of former Speaker's of the House from the mid-1800s from the Capitol Complex. I write you in opposition of this request, specifically the request to remove the portrait of former Speaker of the House James L. Orr of South Carolina. The 3<sup>rd</sup> Congressional District of South Carolina is the modern Congressional district Mr. Orr would have represented when he was a Member of Congress. Mr. Orr was a Congressman from South Carolina for four terms, served as Speaker from 1857-1859, was the last Speaker to preside in the Old House chamber, and one of only two Speakers to hail from South Carolina. As you are very aware, it has been the tradition of the House to have a portrait displayed of the past Speaker after their service.

Since you are not from South Carolina, I thought it would be useful for you to have some background on Speaker Orr. After the end of the Civil War, President Andrew Johnson of Tennessee, a Democrat, appointed Mr. Orr as commissioner to represent the provisional government of South Carolina as they rejoined the Union. He would later become the first Governor of South Carolina during reconstruction and South Carolina's first governor elected by the popular vote. During his tenure as Governor, Mr. Orr reopened all South Carolina universities and colleges, rebuilt the state's infrastructure, and set up a veterans health care system for those dealing with the scars of war. Mr. Orr would later serve our country as the United States Ambassador to Russia, appointed under Republican President Ulysses S. Grant, the former commander of the Union forces during the Civil War. To say the least, Mr. Orr not only served his home state of South Carolina, but our great nation as well in many capacities in different Presidential administrations.

You were elected to be the Speaker for the whole House of Representatives, not just for the people of San Francisco. I am very concerned at the precedent that your action sets and that it will end with removing history. Every leader in our country's history, including ourselves, has flaws and imperfections. Every single portrait or statue in the U.S. Capitol depicts individuals who have made mistakes or questionable statements by modern day standards. Will we next remove statues of Presidents George Washington and Thomas Jefferson over ties to slavery? What about the memorial of Franklin D. Roosevelt over his position on internment camps? Should the Baltimore memorial of your father Thomas D'Alesandro Jr. be removed for his comments concerning Confederate leaders? And if it is so important that we police those who have made controversial comments, why then are you attempting to discipline former Members who have been dead for over 100 years, when you as Speaker have refused to discipline current Members of your caucus who have made anti-Semitic statements? Simply put, this is a dangerous path to go down and I do not believe that removing a portrait outside the chamber of the People's House will benefit our country, foster more equality, or help Americans achieve greater economic prosperity. These actions only serve as a continuation of the folly that is "cancel culture," and seeks to further divide Americans.

Madam Speaker, since the Clerk of the House has followed your direction pursuant to Public Law 100-696, I request that you return this portrait back to its original location in the Capitol Complex. However, if that is not to be the case, I am requesting that it at the very least the portrait be allowed to display in my Congressional office in the Rayburn House Office Building where it may be preserved for historical purposes. It is imperative that we do not erase history but rather for it to be learned from and contextualized so we all can join in continuing to make America the greatest country in the history of the world.

Thank you for your consideration of this letter and if you wish to contact me directly, please do not hesitate.

Blessings and Liberty,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jeff Duncan". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Jeff Duncan  
Member of Congress