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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 8, 2021

**Statement on Behalf of the Center for the Study of the Presidency and  
Congress on the Lessons of January 6, 2021**

Rep. Glenn Nye, President and CEO  
Amb. Thomas Pickering, Chair  
Pamela Scholl, Vice-Chair  
Rep. Mike Rogers, David M. Abshire Chair

The dramatic events of January 6, 2021 reveal that America is facing a dark moment, one that should cause us all to reflect on its lessons. It was shocking to watch an American president exhort a crowd of angry supporters to forcefully break into the U.S. Capitol in order to interrupt a proceeding of the Congress, especially one historically designed to symbolically show the coming together of elected officials from both parties to formally end an election campaign and turn the attentions of themselves and the country to the necessary work of the nation. It was a credit to the Vice President and Members of Congress to reconvene that same day in order to complete the constitutionally required business of counting the official electoral slates from each state. The violent episode was brought to an end and the mob dispersed, but it remains incumbent on all of us to take the lessons of the day to heart as we seek to end this period of deep division and heal our country.

American elections are always contentious and inevitably leave huge numbers of our citizens disappointed with the outcomes; our divisive politics and the commonness of vitriolic campaign rhetoric from all corners often leaves many voters sadly fearful of the direction our country may take if their favored politicians are not elected. The meanness of our politics has unfortunately been steadily worsening for many years, but we have always managed to pull the country through it and find rare moments of bipartisanship, despite a set of political incentives under which the simple act of working with the other political team creates electoral peril. We cannot now fail to see how polarized we have become, nor to minimize that challenge to the success of our country. The notion promoted by the president, after all legal and proper means of challenging an election outcome have been exhausted, that our presidential election was a sham and that the office of the presidency was stolen, is a monumental barrier to the healing that must follow. This lie, if allowed to fester in the minds of millions of our citizens, will severely hamper our ability to move forward as a country.

There is no excuse for the violence perpetrated at the Capitol on January 6<sup>th</sup>. Those who have protested peacefully the result of the election have the right to do so, protected by our constitution. But voter anger has sadly been stoked by the president's insistence the election was a fraud. There are undoubtedly tens of millions of citizens at home who believe the president, whose statements are given credence by some others they trust, and who now question the very nature of our democracy. Senator Mitt Romney defined the most important next step succinctly in his speech in the Senate on the same day, saying "the best way we can show respect for the voters who are upset is by telling them the truth. That is the burden, and the duty, of leadership." It is unquestionably difficult for any elected official to tell voters something they do not want to hear, particularly when the president is saying the opposite, but accepting election outcomes is a fundamental baseline for a democracy to exist. Whatever measures our political leaders decide to take in the wake of these incidents,

the establishment of the truth that our elections work, with all their quirks and room for improvement, must be our first order.

At CSPC we recognize that our politics are overdue for reforms that would make it easier for elected officials to work better together, avoid demonizing each other and our institutions, and also be able to win re-election. We seek to incorporate in our work a sincere effort to encourage politicians to look to our better angels and work together for the betterment of our country. As Senator Mitch McConnell stated in his senate speech: “we cannot keep drifting apart into two separate tribes; with separate facts, and separate realities; with nothing in common except hostility toward each another and mistrust for the few national institutions that we still share.” It’s time to get to the work of governing, and to look for ways we can come together across the divide to refresh the faith of all our citizens in our electoral system.

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*The Center for the Study of the Presidency and Congress (CSPC) is a non-partisan think tank that addresses the key challenges facing our nation through studying the lessons of history, convening decision-makers from government and the private sector, and educating the next generation of leaders.*