

U.S. Sen. Baldwin: Joins Klobuchar, Smith, and colleagues to reiterate call for investigation into racially discriminatory and violent policing at Minneapolis Police Department

Posted on Thursday, Jun 11, 2020

>> **WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)**

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Today, U.S. Senator Tammy Baldwin joined Senators Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) and Tina Smith (D-MN) to follow up on their [previous letter to Attorney General Barr](#) requesting that the Department of Justice open an investigation into patterns and practices of racially discriminatory and violent policing in the Minneapolis Police Department (MPD). The senators asked for an explanation from Attorney General Barr on why he did not respond to their letter and to explain his statements on June 7 in an appearance on *Face the Nation* during which he said, “I don’t think necessarily starting a pattern or practice investigation at this stage is warranted.”

“If you believe, as you implied on the show, that such an investigation is not warranted, we ask that you provide a full explanation why, given these outrageous facts, you would refuse to initiate the investigation,” **the 25 lawmakers wrote.**

“Appearing on a Sunday show is not an acceptable response to our letter. It is imperative that you formally inform us of your decision whether to open a pattern and practice investigation at the MPD,” **the lawmakers continued.**

Baldwin, Klobuchar and Smith were joined by Senators Michael Bennet (D-CO), Richard Blumenthal (D-CT), Sherrod Brown (D-OH), Tom Carper (D-DE), Ben Cardin (D-MD), Bob Casey (D-PA), Chris Coons (D-DE), Tammy Duckworth (D-IL), Dick

Durbin (D-IL), Kirsten Gillibrand (D-NY), Mazie Hirono (D-HI), Ed Markey (D-MA), Catherine Cortez Masto (D-NV), Chris Murphy (D-CT), Jack Reed (D-RI), Jacky Rosen (D-NV), Brian Schatz (D-HI), Jeanne Shaheen (D-NH), Debbie Stabenow (D-MI), Jon Tester (D-MT), Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), and Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI).

Full text of the letter can be found [here](#) and below. An online version of this release is available [here](#).

Dear Attorney General Barr:

We write to follow up on our May 29 request that the Department of Justice work with state and local officials to investigate the death of George Floyd and immediately open an investigation to evaluate unconstitutional patterns and practices of violent policing targeting communities of color in the Minneapolis Police Department (MPD). While we have not yet received a response to our letter, you appeared on *Face the Nation* on June 7 and stated that you “don’t think necessarily starting a pattern or practice investigation at this stage is warranted.” We write to ask for an explanation for this statement, as well as why you have not responded to our letter.

The Civil Rights Division at the Department of Justice has the authority to investigate patterns and practices of racially discriminatory and violent policing at law enforcement departments. The authority is an essential tool for ensuring lawful and fair police practices. Under President Obama, the Justice Department opened 25 pattern and practice investigations across the country, and used court-supervised consent decrees to ensure oversight, enforcement, and accountability. This Administration has only opened one pattern and practice investigation into a single unit of the Springfield Police Department in Massachusetts.

We have all seen the horrifying and gut-wrenching video of George Floyd pinned to the ground by a police officer who held his knee against Mr. Floyd’s neck as he pleaded for his life. None of the officers on the scene responded when Mr. Floyd repeatedly cried out that he could not breathe. All four officers have now been charged by Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation is investigating whether federal charges are appropriate.

But justice in this case requires a full scale pattern and practice review of the MPD, and as we stated in our letter, it is critical that the Department of Justice begin this review immediately.

Appearing on a Sunday show is not an acceptable response to our letter. It is imperative that you formally inform us of your decision whether to open a pattern and practice investigation at the MPD. If you believe, as you implied on the show, that such an investigation is not warranted, we ask that you provide a full explanation why, given these outrageous facts, you would refuse to initiate the investigation.