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VERMONT

COMMITTEES:
AGRICULTURE, NUTRITION, AND FORESTRY
APPROPRIATIONS
JUDICIARY

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510–4502

April 20, 2016

The Honorable Denise Turner Roth
Administrator
General Services Administration
1800 F Street, NW
Washington, DC 20405

Dear Administrator Roth:

As the General Services Administration (GSA) continues its process to locate a site for the new headquarters of the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), I strongly urge the GSA not to take steps to transfer the name of former FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover to any new federal building.

As subsequent historical evidence has shown, during the course of his decades-long career, Director Hoover routinely violated the law and infringed on the constitutional rights of American citizens by ordering investigations of individuals and groups who were not suspected of any criminal wrongdoing. Many of these investigations, as documented by the Church Committee's landmark reports, were politically motivated and specifically targeted civil rights organizations, political dissidents, and peaceful protestors within the United States. For example, the FBI illegally compiled thousands of dossiers on nonviolent civil rights groups such as the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and the NAACP, and engaged in a campaign to disparage the reputation of Martin Luther King Jr., to undermine him as an effective civil rights leader.

The FBI under Director Hoover also waged a concerted campaign against gay and lesbian Americans working for the Federal government and against gay and lesbian organizations. Director Hoover ordered his agents to identify these workers and their associates and then to share that information with their respective agencies so they would be fired. The FBI ultimately amassed more than 360,000 files as part of this program, which cost employees their careers and ruined the lives of law-abiding, patriotic Americans, solely because of their sexual orientation.

Director Hoover's abuse of power and interference with the lawful activities of Americans betrayed the public trust in the FBI. Placing law-abiding Americans under surveillance simply for exercising their constitutionally protected rights is inconsistent with a free and open society. Given the systemic abuses carried out under Director Hoover's leadership, it would be a mistake to associate his name with the new FBI headquarters. If the new building will be named for anyone, the Federal government must consider individuals who represent our values and who have dedicated their public service careers to upholding the rule of law.

Sincerely,

Patrick Leahy

PATRICK LEAHY
United States Senator

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