

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 29, 2022

President Joseph R. Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden:

We write to request that you grant clemency to Native American rights activist Leonard Peltier by commuting the remainder of his sentence. Mr. Peltier has spent more than half of his life behind bars. Now, at seventy-seven years old, he suffers from numerous health conditions, including a potentially fatal abdominal aortic aneurysm.

Over the past several decades, clemency for Mr. Peltier has received sweeping support from many faith and human rights leaders, including Pope Francis, Archbishop Emeritus Desmond Tutu, Saint Mother Teresa, Nelson Mandela, the Dalai Lama, and Coretta Scott King. Each have articulated the moral imperative of granting Mr. Peltier clemency.

Moreover, mounting evidence of clear misconduct has warranted outcry from the very officials who put Mr. Peltier behind bars. James H. Reynolds, the U.S. Attorney who oversaw Mr. Peltier's prosecution on appeal, stated that "the prosecution and continued incarceration of Mr. Peltier was and is unjust."¹ The late Judge Gerald Heaney, who presided over Mr. Peltier's 1986 appeal in the Eighth Circuit, also called for the commutation of Mr. Peltier's sentence in a powerful letter that detailed the injustice of Mr. Peltier's trial and proclaimed that "a healing process must begin."²

We commend the steps that your administration has taken to right past wrongs of our government's treatment of Native Americans, particularly through Secretary Haaland's leadership and her Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative.

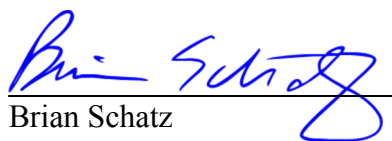
Furthermore, your administration has demonstrated a laudable commitment to upholding the core American values of liberty and justice, and rectifying inequities in the criminal justice system. Consistent with these actions, we urge you to grant clemency to Mr. Peltier by commuting the remainder of his sentence. Mr. Peltier's continued imprisonment defies the promises of justice, and the power to exercise mercy in this case lies solely within your discretion.

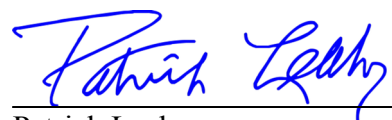
Thank you for your attention to this matter.


¹ Jennifer Bendery, "Leonard Peltier Is America's Longest-Serving Political Prisoner. Biden May Be His Last Hope," *HuffPost*, 12 Nov. 2021, https://www.huffpost.com/entry/leonard-peltier-prison-clemency-biden_n_618049f3e4b059d0bfc19e5c.

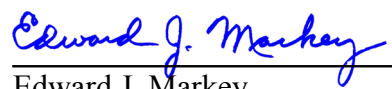
² Letter from Gerald H. Heaney, U.S. Senior Cir. Judge, 8th Cir., to Daniel K. Inouye, Chairman, U.S. Senate Select Comm. on Indian Affairs (Apr. 18, 1991), <http://www.whoisleonardpeltier.info/download/Heaney.pdf>.


Sincerely,



Brian Schatz
United States Senator



Patrick Leahy
United States Senator


Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator


Edward J. Markey
United States Senator


Bernard Sanders
United States Senator


Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator


Tina Smith
United States Senator

cc: The Honorable Merrick B. Garland
Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice

Elizabeth G. Oyer
Pardon Attorney
Office of the Pardon Attorney
U.S. Department of Justice