

TESTIMONY  
BEFORE THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON JUDICIARY  
ON  
“THE SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER:  
MANUFACTURING HATE, PART II”

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TO THE PRESIDENT

ALLIANCE DEFENDING FREEDOM

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Dear Chairman Jordan, Ranking Member Raskin, and Members of the Committee:

Alliance Defending Freedom is one of the nation’s most successful Supreme Court advocates, with 18 wins since 2011 and two more decisions pending. We work in the courts and with lawmakers from both parties to protect children, safeguard parents’ rights, advocate for the most vulnerable among us at the beginning and end of life, and defend the First Amendment freedoms that define us as Americans. We serve thousands of churches through our Church and Ministry Alliance, advocate for religious freedom and free expression before international courts and bodies, and engage directly with major corporations to ensure their policies respect employees’ and customers’ religious and political viewpoints.

All of our work is grounded in our religious convictions. And it is precisely because of those convictions — and the speech and advocacy that flows from them — that ADF has been blacklisted. The Southern Poverty Law Center (“SPLC”) categorically opposes our speech and advocacy on gender ideology, life, and other consequential social issues, and so placed us on its “Hate Map.” As a consequence, we have lost access to charitable giving platforms, web hosting services, donor-advised funds, and nonprofit software pricing. How? Because the SPLC’s “hate group” designation has quietly influenced decision-making by America’s leading financial, technology, and digital communications firms, giving a single, partisan, corrupt, and discredited organization a private veto over who can transact, donate, and participate in everyday American life. The federal indictment of the SPLC in April 2026, and the superseding indictment in June 2026, for wire fraud, bank fraud, and money laundering, is the occasion for this hearing. But that is just the beginning of the story of the SPLC’s pernicious influence.

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## **Part I: The SPLC’s Record of Corruption and Abuse**

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### **A. The Launch of the SPLC’s HATE Map...And Its Trail of Victims**

The SPLC was founded in 1971 to combat racism in the South, but long ago abandoned its original mission. Today, as *Politico* put it, it operates as “more of a partisan progressive hit operation than a civil rights watchdog.”<sup>1</sup>

In 2000, the SPLC launched its “Hate Map,” now tracking over 1,300 organizations it brands as hateful and extremist. Many of those groups found their way onto the map for one reason only:

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<sup>1</sup> Ben Schreckinger, *Has a Civil Rights Stalwart Lost Its Way?*, *Politico*, July/August 2017, <https://politi.co/2lsnOxw>.

they disagree with the SPLC's far-left political ideology. The SPLC does not engage ideas. It slanders and eliminates its competition by destroying reputations.

The consequences have been deadly. Turning Point USA founder Charlie Kirk was murdered 24 hours after the SPLC named him in an article sub-headlined "Militia and antigovernment movement activity."<sup>2</sup> Kirk and TPUSA had been added to the SPLC's "Hate Map" just months before his assassination. Days after his murder, the smear piece was still live on the SPLC's website.

The SPLC, however, knew about the dangerous effect of adding groups to its Hate Map long before that, but refused to end its cavalier practices. In 2012, Floyd Corkins walked into the Family Research Council with a gun and 100 rounds of ammunition. His plan: kill as many people as possible. He told FBI investigators he chose his target by consulting the SPLC's website.<sup>3</sup>

Kirk and FRC are not isolated cases. The SPLC has dramatically expanded its definition of "hate" to target everyday Americans with conservative views — especially targeting anyone concerned about the imposition of extreme, and increasingly discredited, gender ideology in schools. Consider the organizations the SPLC has branded hateful in just the past few years:

- Focus on the Family - Founded in 1977, Focus on the Family is a Colorado-based Christian ministry that provides resources on marriage, parenting, and family life. It operates radio programs, publishes magazines, and offers counseling and educational content.
- PragerU - A nonprofit media organization, PragerU produces videos on economics, politics, and culture with a conservative viewpoint. Founded by radio host Dennis Prager in 2009, it engages a general audience through social media and YouTube. Its professional branding and broad reach have helped it cultivate a mainstream digital influence.
- Moms for Liberty - Launched in 2021 by former school board members, Moms for Liberty advocates for parental rights in public education. The group opposes government overreach in schools and supports curriculum transparency and school choice. It is a grassroots organization with hundreds of local chapters.

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<sup>2</sup>The original SPLC article has since been removed. See Alexandra Koch, *FBI cuts ties with leftist group that put Turning Point USA on its 'hate map' before Kirk assassination*, FOX NEWS (Oct. 3, 2025), <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/fbi-cuts-ties-leftist-group-put-turning-point-usa-its-hate-map-before-kirk-assassination> ("on Sept. 9, the day before Kirk's murder, the SPLC published a newsletter 'directly attacking Charlie'").

<sup>3</sup> Carol Cratty and Michael Pearson, *DC shooter wanted to kill as many as possible, prosecutors say*, CNN (Feb. 6, 2013), <https://www.cnn.com/2013/02/06/justice/dc-family-research-council-shooting/index.html>.

- Do No Harm - A medical advocacy organization formed in response to concerns about identity politics in healthcare. It campaigns against the incorporation of discriminatory DEI (Diversity, Equity, Inclusion) mandates in medical education and practice. It defends the integrity of medicine and the doctor-patient relationship through nonpartisan, evidence-based principles.
- Parents Defending Education - A nonprofit watchdog group focused on pushing back against what it views as politicized content in K–12 schools. PDE investigates school policies, files FOIA requests, and supports parents who advocate for curriculum transparency.
- Parents’ Rights in Education - Founded in Oregon, this group aims to promote parental involvement in education policy and resist state-mandated curriculum they view as overreaching. It networks with local chapters nationwide and encourages activism at the school board level.
- Parents Involved in Education - This group coordinates with state chapters to eliminate federal and ideological influence in public education. It advocates for a return to “classical education” and local control over schools. It is nonpartisan and appeals to a broad base of parents concerned about academic standards and values in schools.
- No Left Turn in Education - Founded in 2020, No Left Turn in Education is a nonprofit advocacy group that supports parental involvement, curriculum transparency, and academic rigor in U.S. public schools. It focuses on removing what it sees as political indoctrination—particularly related to race, gender, and sexuality—from K–12 curricula.

The SPLC has also targeted traditional Catholics, Muslim reformers, and public officials such as U.S. Senators Ted Cruz, Josh Hawley, and Marsha Blackburn, and former HUD Secretary Dr. Ben Carson.

## **B. The Harm to ADF From the SPLC’s “Hate” Campaign**

The SPLC’s hateful labels cause real harm to ADF and its employees, and the SPLC’s power to exclude American citizens and institutions from access to critical financial and technology services may be the most underappreciated, and most damaging, aspect of its work.

The SPLC branded ADF a “hate group” in 2016 around the time ADF petitioned the Court to hear the case of Colorado cake artist, Jack Phillips, and his business, Masterpiece Cakeshop.

Violence followed. Kristen Waggoner, who was the lead counsel in the case, had her car window shot out shortly after her oral argument at the Supreme Court.<sup>4</sup> The word “HATE” was plastered in red letters across the photograph of her in top Google image-search results.<sup>5</sup> And she was accosted and threatened at Yale Law School in 2022, forcing her to depart the event under a police escort. Other employees have asked to have “ADF” removed from their company credit cards to avoid harassment. ADF has had to expand our security in response to increased threats against our staff. When a group like the SPLC can make hundreds of employees of a nonprofit civil liberties law firm feel legitimately threatened, their influence has clearly become abusive, if not obviously hateful of people who don’t share their radical views.

Beyond the SPLC’s dangerous rhetoric, which has encouraged violence, the SPLC has also severed Americans’ access to financial systems and digital services that are necessary for modern life. When the SPLC brands an organization a “hate group,” powerful companies, including Amazon, Twitter, Facebook, and Apple, have relied on that designation to exclude organizations from services that are essential for modern commerce and communication. This reputational smear campaign amounts to an economic sanction imposed without due process, without evidentiary standards, and without an ability to appeal. The SPLC has manipulated the market to banish voices that disagree with its ideology from the digital public square and strip them of financial resources.

Corporate cancellations of ADF based on the SPLC’s smear campaign provide a small glimpse of the massive harm caused by their targeting. AmazonSmile, which allowed customers to donate to charities of their choice, terminated ADF from the program in 2018, explicitly referencing the SPLC’s “hate group” list. Microsoft/TechSoup, which provides technology pricing to nonprofits, removed ADF’s access because of SPLC screening. Pantheon, which provides a web infrastructure platform, stopped renewing its contract with ADF after adopting a new policy that relied on the SPLC’s list. And Fidelity Charitable, which sponsors the nation’s largest donor-advised funds, or “DAFs,” blocked or conditioned anonymous donations to ADF.

These facts alone show how the SPLC’s activities destroy civil discourse. Instead of open debate, they excommunicate. The cancellations faced by ADF alone show how any nonprofit targeted by the SPLC could be unable to fundraise, unable to access donors, unable to access

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<sup>4</sup> Kristen Waggoner, *We Were Smeared by the SPLC*, WALL STREET JOURNAL (April 3, 2019), <https://www.wsj.com/articles/we-were-smeared-by-the-splc-11554332764>.

<sup>5</sup> *Id.*

mission-critical software like email and document management, unable to post a webpage or process online payments and donations, and much more. Any one of these cancellations could bankrupt a fledgling nonprofit. They could certainly stop new nonprofits from ever seeing the light of day.

When corporations adopt the SPLC's designations by denying services, they not only debilitate the person or group, they signal that these targets are legitimate objects of hostility and stop others with similar views from entering the marketplace of ideas. This corporate endorsement of the SPLC's hate labels must stop.

The SPLC's discriminatory power to censor must be acknowledged. A private entity has exercised control over access to essential services, including banking and online platforms. It has caused powerful social media companies to shadow-ban and publicly shame any person or entity that it decides to add to its list. Worst of all, these authoritarian tactics lead to physical violence and economic ruin. In light of the SPLC's own extremism, reported internal racism and sexism, and publicly acknowledged defamation, the SPLC's labels should be considered worthless.

### **C. The True Extent of the SPLC's Corruption.**

The deepest irony of this story is that the organization wielding this extraordinary power over American civic life has never been trustworthy enough to hold it.<sup>6</sup>

***Federal indictment.*** In April 2026, the SPLC was indicted on six counts of wire fraud, four counts of bank fraud, and one count of money laundering. The indictment was superseded by another indictment in June 2026, just a few days ago, that elaborated on the eleven alleged criminal offenses. The government alleges that between 2010 and 2023, the SPLC secretly funneled more than \$4 million dollars to informants embedded in KKK chapters and other white supremacist groups — the very organizations it raised millions of dollars to fight — using accounts held in fictitious names like “Fox Photography” and “Rare Books Warehouse.”<sup>7</sup> Acting Attorney General Blanche summarized it plainly: the SPLC “was not dismantling extremism, but funding it.”<sup>8</sup> The

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<sup>6</sup> See *Setting the Record Straight – SPLC*, ALLIANCE DEFENDING FREEDOM, <https://adflegal.org/setting-the-record-straight/> (last visited June 5, 2026).

<sup>7</sup> Indictment ¶ 15, *United States v. Southern Poverty Law Center*, No. 2:26-cr-00139-ECM-KFP (M.D.AL. Jun.2, 2026). [https://www.bloomberglaw.com/public/desktop/document/USAvSouthernPovertyLawCenterIncDocketNo226cr00139MDAlaApr212026Co/10?doc\\_id=XB0H5P6F3M86N8OADFM88PGUJP%5C](https://www.bloomberglaw.com/public/desktop/document/USAvSouthernPovertyLawCenterIncDocketNo226cr00139MDAlaApr212026Co/10?doc_id=XB0H5P6F3M86N8OADFM88PGUJP%5C).

<sup>8</sup> Alexander Mallin, *DOJ charges Southern Poverty Law Center with bank, wire fraud and money laundering offenses*, ABCNEWS (April 21, 2026), <https://abcnews.com/US/southern-poverty-law-center-facing-justice-department-probe/story?id=132238304>.

indictment underscores the irony: the SPLC was funding individuals involved in organizing events where actual violence occurred, including the 2017 Unite the Right rally in Charlottesville, while accusing organizations like ADF, which peacefully advocates for marginalized parents, children, and persons of faith, of “hatred.”

***Federal Courts and the FBI.*** Two federal courts have ruled SPLC’s hate designations “entirely subjective,” and its Hate Map categorization as “not one ‘of fact.’”<sup>9</sup> The FBI retracted a memo targeting so-called “radical” traditional Roman Catholics in 2023 for relying on SPLC — a source that “[did] not meet the exacting standards of the FBI” — and formally cut ties in October 2025.<sup>10</sup>

***Defamation.*** SPLC publicly apologized to Maajid Nawaz — a counter-extremism activist it had labeled an extremist — and paid \$3.4 million to settle his defamation claim.<sup>11</sup> It also apologized to Dr. Ben Carson.<sup>12</sup>

***Internal Corruption.*** In 2019, SPLC fired co-founder Morris Dees, and its president resigned amid staff reports of a “systemic culture of racism and sexism.”<sup>13</sup> A former female staffer then wrote that the culture of sexual harassment was continuing under new management.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> *Ctr. for Immigr. Stud. v. Cohen*, 410 F. Supp. 3d 183 (D.D.C. 2019); *Coral Ridge Ministries Media, Inc. v. Amazon.com, Inc.*, 406 F.Supp.3d 1258, 1287(2019).

<sup>10</sup> Memorandum from Department of Justice to FBI Richmond, Interest of Racially or Ethically Motivated Violent Extremists in Radical-Traditionalist Catholic Ideology Almost Certainly Presents New Mitigation Opportunities, (Jan. 23, 2023), <https://judiciary.house.gov/sites/evo-subsites/republicans-judiciary.house.gov/files/evo-media-document/fbi-anti-catholic-memo.pdf>; Annie Grayer and Alayna Treene, *Jordan issues subpoena to FBI director for documents over withdrawn memo on Catholic churches*, CNN (Apr. 10, 2023), <https://www.cnn.com/2023/04/10/politics/jordan-subpoena-fbi-director/index.html>; see also *Koch*, *supra* note 2.

<sup>11</sup> David A. Graham, *The Unlabelling of an ‘Anti-Muslim Extremist,’* THE ATLANTIC (June 18, 2018), <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2018/06/maajid-nawaz-v-splc/562646/>.

<sup>12</sup> *Southern Poverty Law Center apologizes to Ben Carson, takes him off ‘extremist’ list*, FOX NEWS (Feb. 12, 2015), <https://www.congress.gov/119/meeting/house/118758/documents/HHRG-119-JU10-20251216-SD011.pdf>.

<sup>13</sup> Nick Valencia, *Famous civil rights group suffers from ‘systemic culture of racism and sexism,’ staffers say*, CNN (March 29, 2019), <https://www.cnn.com/2019/03/29/us/splc-leadership-crisis>.

<sup>14</sup> Laurel Wamsley, *Southern Poverty Law Center Fires Morris Dees, Its Co-Founder*, NPR (March 14, 2019), <https://www.npr.org/2019/03/14/703526235/southern-poverty-law-center-fires-morris-dees-its-co-founder>; Alan Blinder, *Southern Poverty Law Center President Plans Exit Amid Turmoil*, N.Y. Times (March 22, 2019), <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/03/22/us/splc-richard-cohen-resigns.html>; Matt Pearce, *Southern Poverty Law Center fires co-founder Morris Dees amid employee uproar*, LA Times (March 14, 2019), <https://www.latimes.com/nation/la-na-splc-morris-dees-20190314-story.html>; Cheyenne Blackburn, *I Saw the CEO of Time’s Up Gloss Over Harassment at the Southern Poverty Law Center*, THE DAILY BEAST (Aug. 20, 2021), <https://www.thedailybeast.com/i-saw-times-up-ceo-tina-tchen-gloss-over-harassment-at-southern-poverty-law-center>.

**Declared Intent to Destroy.** SPLC Senior Fellow Mark Potok stated on video: “Our aim in life is to destroy these groups, to completely destroy them.”<sup>15</sup> This is the organization that American corporations entrusted with neutral, objective vetting. The statement, of course, is fully consistent with the SPLC’s methodology: don’t engage in good faith with your opponents; rather, slander, smear, and strong-arm them out of existence.

**Partisan Bias.** *Politico* has noted the longstanding criticism that SPLC is “becoming more of a partisan progressive hit operation than a civil rights watchdog.”<sup>16</sup> It has even targeted American parents and families who support the Homeschool Legal Defense Fund. The SPLC’s bias has become so extreme that it even targeted the Boston chapter of The Federalist Society on its “HateWatch blog” because it hosted then-United States Attorney General Jeff Sessions for a talk on “The Future of Religious Liberty.”<sup>17</sup>

**Lack of Credibility.** Jeff Bezos acknowledged to Congress that Amazon’s use of the SPLC “hate group” list to determine which nonprofits can participate in AmazonSmile is “an imperfect system” and that he “would like a better source if [he] can get it.”<sup>18</sup>

**Fraudulent Fundraising Tool.** In an article titled “The Southern Poverty Law Center Is Everything that’s Wrong with Liberalism,” Nathan J. Robinson, the editor-in-chief of *Current Affairs*, carefully scrutinized SPLC’s “Hate Map” and concluded that it is an “outright fraud” and “a willful deception designed to scare older liberals into writing checks to the SPLC.”<sup>19</sup> And former SPLC employee Bob Moser wrote that “it was hard, for many of us, not to feel like we’d become pawns in what was, in many respects, a highly profitable scam.”<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Tyler O’Neil, *Southern Poverty Law Center: ‘Our Aim in Life Is to Destroy These Groups, Completely’*, PJ MEDIA (Sept. 1, 2027), <https://pjmedia.com/tyler-o-neil/2017/09/01/southern-poverty-law-center-our-aim-in-life-is-to-destroy-these-groups-completely-n53297>; See also Alliance Defending Freedom, “*Our aim in life is to destroy these groups*” | *SPLC’s Mark Potok*, at (YouTube, Aug. 30, 2018), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vi1KQte6y0I&feature=youtu.be>.

<sup>16</sup> Ben Schreckinger, *Has a Civil Rights Stalwart Lost Its Way?*, *Politico*, July/August 2017, <https://politi.co/2lSnOxw>.

<sup>17</sup> *Roundup of anti-LGBT events and activities 11/6/2018*, HATEWATCH (Nov. 6, 2018), <https://www.splcenter.org/hatewatch/2018/11/06/roundup-anti-lgbt-events-and-activities-1162018>.

<sup>18</sup> *Heads of Facebook, Amazon, Apple and Google Testify on Antitrust Law*, C-SPAN at 3:53:07–3:53:48 (July 29, 2020), <https://www.c-span.org/program/house-committee/heads-of-facebook-amazon-apple-and-google-testify-on-antitrust-law/550170>.

<sup>19</sup> Nathan J. Robinson, *The Southern Poverty Law Center Is Everything That’s Wrong With Liberalism*, *Current Affairs* (Mar. 26, 2019), <https://www.congress.gov/116/meeting/house/109266/documents/HHRG-116-JU00-20190409-SD022.pdf>.

<sup>20</sup> Bob Moser, *The Reckoning of Morris Dees and the Southern Poverty Law Center*, *The New Yorker* (Mar. 21, 2019), <https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/the-reckoning-of-morris-dees-and-the-southern-poverty-law-center>.

***Domestic Terrorism.*** An SPLC staff attorney was arrested and charged with domestic terrorism for his involvement in a violent riot against Atlanta police officers.<sup>21</sup> The SPLC responded by partnering with the far-left National Lawyers Guild in condemning the arrest as “heavy-handed law enforcement intervention against protestors.”<sup>22</sup>

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## **Part II: How the SPLC Became a Private Arbiter of Access to Financial and Technology Services**

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The SPLC’s corruption extends far beyond federal indictments and rising condemnation from different quarters. Over the past fifteen years, this private, hyper-partisan nonprofit — with no statutory authority, no judicial oversight, and no constitutional constraints — has systematically embedded itself into the compliance systems of American banking, payments, and charitable giving. And it has become a key player in setting the terms of engagement employed by leading technology and digital communications firms. This was not an accident. It was a deliberate, methodical campaign with identifiable phases, documented tactics, and a paper trail.

### **A. Phase One: Building Credibility (2010–2016)**

The SPLC could not have embedded itself into America’s modern financial and business infrastructure without the credibility earned fighting the Klan decades earlier. After taking on the Klan and other overtly racist groups, the SPLC began searching for other enemies to fight—and to highlight for fundraising purposes. Of course, it leveraged its previously won credibility for everything that followed.

In November 2010 — years before Charlottesville — SPLC made a pivotal strategic shift. It expanded its targets beyond violent extremist groups and began labeling mainstream Christian and conservative organizations as “hate groups” because their positions on marriage and sexuality were inconsistent with the cultural vanguard’s, and the SPLC’s, political agenda. Those positions remain commonplace to this day, however, and are consistent with thousands of years of culture and across numerous religions. In the case of Christianity, those teachings were infused with a message of sacrificial love and redemption, not “hatred” as the SPLC maliciously claimed. Yet the SPLC

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<sup>21</sup> Tyler O’Neil, *SPLC Lawyer Arrested in Atlanta Molotov Cocktail Riot, Faces Terrorism Charges*, The Daily Signal (March 6, 2023), <https://www.dailysignal.com/2023/03/06/splc-lawyer-arrested-atlanta-molotov-cocktail-riot-faces-terrorism-charges/>.

<sup>22</sup> SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER, *NLG and SPLC Statements on Arrest of Legal Observer* (March 6, 2023), <https://www.splcenter.org/presscenter/nlg-and-splc-statements-arrest-legal-observer>.

persisted in its smear campaign. Family Research Council was among the first wave. This was not a gradual definitional drift; it was a deliberate expansion of the list's scope to encompass lawful, protected advocacy. Of course, it also expanded the SPLC's opportunities to raise funds.

The list's power grew because journalists, academics, and government officials—many of whom aligned with the SPLC's political agenda—chose to cite the list as an authoritative reference. By the mid-2010s, the “hate group” label had taken on quasi-official status in elite public discourse — appearing in congressional hearings, federal agency documents, and mainstream news coverage — despite having no legal standing and no evidentiary standard behind it.

Around 2016, the SPLC began operationalizing this credibility, leading an ad hoc coalition of left-wing activist groups to pressure technology companies and financial institutions to deplatform and defund organizations it had labeled extremist. Businesses were a strategic target because they are highly motivated by shifting consumer sentiment and, unlike government actors, are not bound by the First Amendment. PayPal was an early target. Even so, initial success was limited. Then came Charlottesville.

## **B. Phase Two: Charlottesville as Catalyst — and the Indictment's Most Explosive Allegation (August 2017)**

Charlottesville transformed the SPLC's corporate pressure campaign from a fringe operation into an institutionalized system. It also, in light of the DOJ's indictment, gives rise to the most explosive part of this story.

On August 12, 2017, white nationalists marched on Charlottesville, Virginia, resulting in three deaths and dozens of injuries.<sup>23</sup> The event became a national moral emergency and put enormous pressure on corporate America to signal that it was on the right side.

The SPLC conveniently positioned itself as the avatar of the “right side.”

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<sup>23</sup> Joe Ruiz, Doreen McCallister, *Events Surrounding White Nationalist Rally in Virginia Turn Fatal*, NPR (Aug. 12, 2017), <https://www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2017/08/12/542982015/home-to-university-of-virginia-prepares-for-violence-at-white-nationalist-rally>.

The corporate response was immediate and massive. Apple CEO, Tim Cook, announced a \$1 million donation to the SPLC.<sup>24</sup> JPMorgan Chase pledged \$500,000.<sup>25</sup> Facebook, YouTube, Google, and Twitter all formally partnered with or consulted with the SPLC to identify and ban groups from their platforms.<sup>26</sup> Fortune magazine ran a glowing feature on all the companies taking a stand.<sup>27</sup>

Now consider what the federal indictment alleges: informant F-37, secretly on the SPLC's payroll, "was a member of the online leadership chat group that helped plan the 'Unite the Right' rally in Charlottesville... and assisted in arranging transportation for others involved in the movement to the event."<sup>28</sup> Between 2014 and 2023, F-37 received more than \$300,000 from the SPLC.<sup>29</sup> The event that stamped corporate America into adopting SPLC screening lists was allegedly planned and attended by an SPLC-paid asset. SPLC raised millions in donations in the weeks following Charlottesville, capitalizing directly on the moral emergency.

In addition to that glaring hypocrisy and funding of the leadership and organization of the Charlottesville rally, the indictment contains other appalling examples of SPLC funding hate. For instance, it alleges that "the SPLC secretly funneled approximately \$4.1 million dollars in tax-exempt donor funds to a series of fictitious accounts." In addition, the SPLC allegedly paid over \$1.2 million to F-9, who was in a romantic relationship and living with an SPLC employee and who fundraised for a neo-Nazi organization called the National Alliance. The SPLC also purportedly paid \$70,000 to F-30, who led a faction of the Aryan Nation with chapters in 17 states and hosted and recruited new members to his extremist organization. The SPLC was apparently so committed to helping F-30 succeed, it is alleged to have softened its criticism of F-30 on its website to help recruit new members to F-30's racist organization. What's more, instead of ushering people out of violent racist

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<sup>24</sup> Jamie Ostroff, *Apple CEO announces \$1 million donation to SPLC*, CBS42 (Aug. 18, 2017), <https://www.cbs42.com/news/apple-ceo-announces-1-million-donation-to-splc/>.

<sup>25</sup> David Henry, *JPMorgan pledges up to \$2 million to fight racism, support human rights*, REUTERS (Aug. 21, 2017), <https://www.reuters.com/article/business/jpmorgan-pledges-up-to-2-million-to-fight-racism-support-human-rights-idUSKCN1B11VS/>.

<sup>26</sup> Peter Hasson, *EXCLUSIVE: Facebook, Amazon, Google And Twitter All Work With Left-Wing SPLC*, DAILY CALLER (June 06, 2018), <https://dailycaller.com/2018/06/06/splc-partner-google-facebook-amazon/>.

<sup>27</sup> Don Reisinger, *Apple Accepting Donations for Southern Poverty Law Center*, FORTUNE (Aug. 21, 2017), <https://fortune.com/2017/08/21/apple-donations-southern-poverty-law-center/>.

<sup>28</sup> Indictment ¶ 18e, *United States v. Southern Poverty Law Center*, No. 2:26-cr-00139-ECM-KFP (M.D.AL. Jun.2, 2026),

[https://www.bloomberglaw.com/public/desktop/document/USAvSouthernPovertyLawCenterIncDocketNo226cr00139MDAlaApr212026Co/10?doc\\_id=XB0H5P6F3M86N8OADFM88PGUJP%5C](https://www.bloomberglaw.com/public/desktop/document/USAvSouthernPovertyLawCenterIncDocketNo226cr00139MDAlaApr212026Co/10?doc_id=XB0H5P6F3M86N8OADFM88PGUJP%5C).

<https://www.justice.gov/opa/media/1437146/dl>.

<sup>29</sup> *Id.*

organizations, the SPLC allegedly paid F-31 and F-32 to stay in a Ku Klux Klan affiliate even though they were trying to leave, and they ended up assuming leadership positions where they recruited new members. And these are only a sample of the indictment’s allegations. It lists additional instances of more money being funneled to more members of racist organizations, and more examples of funds being used to buy materials for cross burnings and robes for members of the Ku Klux Klan.

### **C. Phase Three: Change the Terms — Building the Compliance Architecture (October 2018)**

Post-Charlottesville, the SPLC formalized the corporate pressure campaign. The mechanism it chose reveals the deliberateness of what followed.

In October 2018, the SPLC and the Center for American Progress led a coalition of more than 40 left-wing organizations in launching Change the Terms, a set of model corporate policies explicitly designed to be adopted as binding terms of service and acceptable use policies.<sup>30</sup> Coalition partners included Color of Change, the National Hispanic Media Coalition, and the Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law.<sup>31</sup>

The critical definitional move appeared when Change the Terms framed its policies as applying to “Internet Companies,”<sup>32</sup> but then explicitly included payment processors: “while an online payment processor may not be the vehicle through which a group directly engages in hateful activities, the online payment processor should not knowingly allow the group to use its services to fund hateful activities. Not denying services under this example would mean that the online payment processor is financially profiting from hateful activities.”<sup>33</sup> This was not a narrow initiative to regulate targeted speech. It clearly focused on banking and financial infrastructure.

***The Trusted Flagger provision.*** The model policies called on companies to create a “trusted flagger program for vetted, well-established civil and human rights organizations to expedite review of potential hateful activities.”<sup>34</sup> This embedded the SPLC and its allied organizations inside

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<sup>30</sup> Amy Kroin, *Coalition Launches Campaign to Combat Hateful Activity Online*, FREE PRESS, (Oct. 25, 2018), <https://www.freepress.net/blog/coalition-launches-campaign-combat-hateful-activity-online>.

<sup>31</sup> CHANGE THE TERMS, <https://changethetterms.com/> (bottom of page reflecting coalition partners); *Join the Coalition*, CHANGE THE TERMS, <https://changethetterms.com/join-the-coalition>.

<sup>32</sup> *The Terms*, CHANGE THE TERMS, <https://changethetterms.com/the-terms>.

<sup>33</sup> *Recommended Policies for Tech Companies to Curb Hateful Activities Online*, CHANGE THE TERMS, [https://cdn.prod.website-files.com/5bba6f4828dfc3686095bf6b/62584c0404f49927c7e404a6\\_recommended-policies-for-tech-companies-to-curb-hateful-activities-online-2204.pdf](https://cdn.prod.website-files.com/5bba6f4828dfc3686095bf6b/62584c0404f49927c7e404a6_recommended-policies-for-tech-companies-to-curb-hateful-activities-online-2204.pdf).

<sup>34</sup> *Id.*

corporate enforcement operations — giving them privileged, expedited access to flag groups for removal across platforms, financial services, and giving programs with no judicial process, no notice to the target, and no meaningful appeal.

***The Report Card mechanism.*** Change the Terms announced it would track major companies' adoption and issue public annual “report cards” grading their compliance.<sup>35</sup> This worked as a public-shaming campaign designed to coerce companies that had not yet adopted SPLC-derived policies. Non-compliant companies, including platforms and payment processors, faced public criticism for allowing their services to be used to fund hateful activities.<sup>36</sup> Companies viewed the reputational risk of not kowtowing to the SPLC in the post-Charlottesville environment as substantial.

***The Governance demand.*** The model policies required companies to assign a board committee with responsibility for assessing management efforts to stop hateful activities, name a senior executive accountable for it, and create a committee of outside advisors (a role in which the SPLC helpfully offered to serve) with expertise in hateful activities to produce annual reports.<sup>37</sup> In practice, this created permanent institutional roles inside major corporations accountable to the SPLC and its allies.

The timeline speaks for itself. The acceleration of debanking and deplatforming of conservative and Christian organizations tracks precisely with the post-Charlottesville campaign and the formal launch of Change the Terms.

#### **D. Phase Four: Embedding Blacklists in Financial Infrastructure — The Private, Domestic Parallel to OFAC (2018 to Present)**

The result of Phases One through Three was the SPLC's operational embedding in the compliance systems of American financial institutions — without statute, without judicial authorization, and without any of the constitutional constraints that govern actual law enforcement.

The U.S. government maintains an authoritative financial blacklist: the Office of Foreign Assets Control's Specially Designated Nationals (SDN) list, created by statute, subject to

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<sup>35</sup> *Id.*

<sup>36</sup> *The Terms*, CHANGE THE TERMS, <https://changethetterms.com/the-terms>.

<sup>37</sup> *Id.*

constitutional constraints, and answerable to Congress and the courts.<sup>38</sup> An OFAC hit automatically and legally stops a financial transaction. Banks face federal criminal exposure for willful non-compliance.

Patrick McKenzie, a former employee and current advisor for Stripe and a financial infrastructure expert, recently documented what SPLC achieved: its list “is used in a delegated authority fashion for some products at some firms . . . an SPLC hit kills an account application or transaction as cleanly and automatically as an OFAC hit does.”<sup>39</sup>

When Jeff Bezos told Congress in 2020 that Amazon relied on both SPLC and OFAC to govern AmazonSmile eligibility, he was describing something extraordinary: a compliance architecture that placed a private political organization on equal operational footing with a federal law enforcement agency, with no statutory authorization, no due process, and no remedy for those wrongly targeted and punished.<sup>40</sup>

McKenzie’s warning: “If you assume the public examples are fully representative of the SPLC’s delegated authority, you will materially underestimate how much actual power the SPLC has over financial infrastructure.”<sup>41</sup> The documented cases — Amazon, PayPal, Fidelity Charitable, Pantheon — are the visible tip of the iceberg. SPLC screening operates on an advisory basis across many more sectors without public disclosure.

## **E. The Employee Giving Layer**

The private ideological blacklisting instituted by the SPLC also affects every employee who is forced by their employers to disassociate from groups that don’t align with the SPLC’s views. The capture of the employee charitable giving market is one of the most thoroughly documented instances of SPLC’s delegated authority and the one directly affecting the most Americans.

Workplace giving programs account for approximately \$5 billion annually; corporate matching alone represents \$2–3 billion per year, with an estimated additional \$4–7 billion in eligible

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<sup>38</sup> *Specially Designated Nationals List*, OFAC SANCTIONS LIST SERVICE, <https://sanctionslist.ofac.treas.gov/Home/SdnList> (last updated Jun.2, 2026).

<sup>39</sup> Patrick McKenzie, *Notes on non-profit indicted for bank fraud*, BITS ABOUT MONEY (May 1, 2026) <https://www.bitsaboutmoney.com/archive/nonprofit-indicted-bank-fraud/>.

<sup>40</sup> *Online Platforms and Market Power, Part 6: Examining the Dominance of Amazon, Apple, Facebook, and Google, Before the Subcomm. on Antitrust, Commercial and Administrative Law of the H. Comm. on the Judiciary*, 116th Cong. (statement of Jeff Bezos, Chief Executive Officer of Amazon.com, Inc.).

<sup>41</sup> *McKenzie*, *supra* note 39.

matching going unclaimed.<sup>42</sup> Over 26 million Americans work for companies with matching programs; 65% of Fortune 500 companies offer them.<sup>43</sup>

Benevity, the dominant enterprise platform in the employee charitable giving market, processed \$3.74 billion in 2025 and manages over \$20 billion in overall total grants.<sup>44</sup> It serves nearly 1,000 enterprise companies, including 224 Fortune 1,000 firms: Google, Amazon, Apple, Coca-Cola, McDonald's, Netflix, Spotify, Visa, and dozens more.<sup>45</sup>

SPLC's politicized "Hate List" is baked into the giving platforms to discriminate against SPLC's targeted organizations. Benevity's own Global Cause Vetting document states it uses "an in-house list that builds on the Southern Poverty Law Center's list of malicious organizations."<sup>46</sup> In 2021, Benevity's then-CEO Kelly Schmitt presented a PowerPoint explicitly stating the company used the "Southern Poverty Law Center Hate List" to vet 2 million nonprofits.<sup>47</sup> The Daily Caller obtained direct platform access and confirmed via timestamped screenshots that SPLC-designated organizations were blocked or invisible in employee-facing databases.<sup>48</sup>

Groundswell, a corporate social responsibility (CSR) and employee giving platform that competes with Benevity, also leverages the SPLC's hate list. Its clients include Bank of New York Mellon, Under Armour, and Publicis Groupe. Groundswell's FAQ explicitly states it "does not process donations to organizations denoted as hate groups by the Southern Poverty Law Center."<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> *Facts & Statistics on Workplace Giving, Matching Gifts, and Volunteer Programs*, AMERICA'S CHARITIES, <https://www.charities.org/facts-statistics-workplace-giving-matching-gifts-and-volunteer-programs/>.

<sup>43</sup> *Corporate Giving and Matching Gift Statistics*, DOUBLE THE DONATION, <https://doublethedonation.com/matching-gift-statistics/> (last updated 2026).

<sup>44</sup> *Benevity Releases List of Top Charitable Causes Supported by Companies and Their People in 2025*, BENEVITY (Jan. 27, 2026), <https://benevity.com/press-releases/top-charitable-causes-2025-giving-trends>; *The 2025 Benevity Impact Report*, BENEVITY (2025), <https://benevity.com/annual-impact-report/2025>.

<sup>45</sup> *Who is Benevity?*, BENEVITY, <https://causeshelp.benevity.org/hc/en-us/articles/360000438726-Who-is-Benevity> (last updated Oct. 2025); *Tech Firms' Reliance On Biased Southern Poverty Law Center is Eroding*, OFF THE PRESS (Oct. 24, 2025), <https://www.offthepress.com/tech-firms-reliance-on-biased-southern-poverty-law-center-is-eroding/>.

<sup>46</sup> Rainey Reitman, *Big Finance Might Be Dooming the SPLC—Even Before Its Day in Court*, THE INTERCEPT (May 8, 2026), [https://theintercept.com/2026/05/08/splc-donations-banks-censorship/?utm\\_content=buffer666de&utm\\_medium=buffer&utm\\_source=facebook&utm\\_campaign=theintercept](https://theintercept.com/2026/05/08/splc-donations-banks-censorship/?utm_content=buffer666de&utm_medium=buffer&utm_source=facebook&utm_campaign=theintercept).

<sup>47</sup> *Tech Firms' Reliance On Biased Southern Poverty Law Center is Eroding*, OFF THE PRESS (Oct. 24, 2025), <https://www.offthepress.com/tech-firms-reliance-on-biased-southern-poverty-law-center-is-eroding/>.

<sup>48</sup> Melissa O'Rourke, *Corporate America's Charity Machine Relies On Infamous 'Hate List' Blacklisting Conservative Groups*, DAILY CALLER (Oct. 16, 2025), <https://dailycaller.com/2025/10/16/corporate-americas-charity-machine-relies-on-infamous-hate-list-blacklisting-conservative-groups/>.

<sup>49</sup> *Id.*; FAQs: *About Groundswell*, GROUNDSWELL, <https://web.archive.org/web/20251013164559/https://www.groundswell.io/faq>.

Another corporate giving platform, Millie, whose clients include Chipotle, Butcher Box, and Sentinel Group, has stated openly on its company blog that “All vetting for the Millie database is done through the SPLC!”<sup>50</sup>

By targeting workplace giving, the SPLC is targeting the benefits of every employee of Benevity’s clients. Employer matching is a benefit much like a 401(k) match. When an employer blocks a charitable match because of an SPLC label, it is withholding an employee’s benefits based on the employee’s religious and associational choices. By embedding the SPLC’s weaponized criteria in their services, corporate giving platforms multiply this injustice across millions of workers at hundreds of corporations — most of whom have no idea their charitable giving is being screened through a partisan political lens.

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### **Part III: What This Has Meant for ADF — And Countless Others**

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Corporate America’s reliance on the SPLC’s biased lists has caused immeasurable damage to mainstream conservative and religious organizations seeking to participate in the public square. This includes ADF. After the SPLC added ADF to its “Hate Map” in 2016, ADF suffered a string of corporate cancellations as a result.

*AmazonSmile (May 2018).* ADF participated in AmazonSmile from its launch in 2013. Amazon terminated ADF five years later with a form notice: “You have been excluded from the AmazonSmile program because the Southern Poverty Law Center lists Alliance Defending Freedom in an ineligible category.” Amazon’s own program documents placed SPLC alongside the U.S. Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) — a federal law enforcement list — as the two governing gatekeepers of the widely used program. Jeff Bezos later acknowledged to Congress that this was “an imperfect system” and that he “would like a better source.”<sup>51</sup>

*Microsoft/TechSoup (November 2018).* ADF lost access to nonprofit technology pricing through TechSoup, the nonprofit software clearinghouse used by Microsoft, Adobe, Intuit, DocuSign, and others, which explicitly relied on SPLC screening.

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<sup>50</sup> MILLIE, *How to Make Sure You’re not Donating to a Hate Group*, (Oct. 27, 2022), <https://blog.milliegiving.com/how-to-make-sure-youre-not-donating-to-a-hate-group/>.

<sup>51</sup> *Heads of Facebook, Amazon, Apple and Google Testify on Antitrust Law*, C-SPAN at 3:53:07–3:53:48 (July 29, 2020), <https://www.c-span.org/program/house-committee/heads-of-facebook-amazon-apple-and-google-testify-on-antitrust-law/550170>; *Southern Poverty Law Center Hate List Gains Google, Apple*, WASHINGTON TIMES (Oct. 7, 2018), <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/oct/7/southern-poverty-law-center-hate-list-gains-google/>.

*Pantheon Web Hosting (2023).* Under sustained activist pressure citing SPLC’s designation of ADF, web infrastructure platform Pantheon — serving 700,000+ websites — published a new Acceptable Use Policy in October 2023 explicitly stating it would “avoid taking on Southern Poverty Law Center-designated hate groups as customers,” writing SPLC directly into its governing documents. As a result of this change, Pantheon did not renew its contract with ADF.<sup>52</sup>

*Fidelity Charitable (ongoing).* The nation’s largest donor-advised fund sponsor, facilitating \$11 billion in grants annually, adopted screening policies that blocked or conditioned anonymous donations to ADF. In one documented case, a donor directed gifts to four conservative nonprofits (including ADF, all SPLC-labeled) and four left-leaning groups through Fidelity. The conservative gifts were held or denied unless the donors agreed to waive their anonymity; the left-leaning gifts, however, passed unconditionally — including to groups with poor or no Charity Navigator ratings.<sup>53</sup> Ironically, after the April 2026 indictment, Fidelity applied its own standards and cut off the SPLC.<sup>54</sup>

ADF has also been forced to devote significant time and resources to stave off other imminent cancellations, costing ADF millions of dollars in the process. These examples represent merely a sample of the hurdles our organization has managed to overcome over the last decade. It is difficult to encapsulate the full extent of the harm faced by other people and organizations that have been targeted by the SPLC’s far-left political targeting, but a partial picture emerged from some examples that are already public.

The same mechanism produced similar exclusions across the nonprofit landscape.

- MobileCause terminated the Family Research Council’s fundraising contract one hour before a major donor event in 2020, explicitly stating its policy: “Is the

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<sup>52</sup> Ashley Belanger, *WebOps platform Pantheon defends hosting “hate groups” as developers quit*, ARS TECHNICA (April 27, 2023), <https://arstechnica.com/tech-policy/2023/04/webops-platform-pantheon-defends-hosting-hate-groups-as-developers-quit/>; *Open Letter on Elevating Our Standards*, PANTHEON (Oct. 9, 2023), <https://pantheon.io/blog/open-letter-elevating-our-standards>.

<sup>53</sup> Sam Brownback, Jeremy Tedesco, *Stop the Troubling Trend of Politically Motivated Debanking*, NEWSWEEK (Mar. 15, 2023), <https://www.newsweek.com/stop-troubling-trend-politically-motivated-debanking-opinion-1787639>.

<sup>54</sup> Ashleigh Fields, *Fidelity blocks fund donations to SPLC after federal indictment*, THE HILL (April, 29 2026), <https://thehill.com/homenews/administration/5855617-fidelity-block-donor-advised-funds-southern-poverty-law-center-doj-indictment/>.

organization listed as a ‘hate group’ by the Southern Poverty Law Center? If so, we don’t work with the organization.”<sup>55</sup>

- Payment processor Vanco terminated the Ruth Institute in 2017.<sup>56</sup>
- D. James Kennedy Ministries was removed from AmazonSmile in 2017.<sup>57</sup>
- Eventbrite banned a parental rights organization in 2023 following agitation fueled by the SPLC.<sup>58</sup>

This list is just the tip of the iceberg. In every case, the mechanism is identical: a private platform, with no notice and no appeal, terminates service based on a subjective SPLC label. The targeted organization has no recourse, no due process, and no day in court.

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## Part IV: The SPLC’s Screening System Likely Violates Federal Law

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Financial institutions using SPLC’s Extremist Files to deny covered services to groups like ADF, the Ruth Institute, and Focus on the Family are likely violating the Equal Credit Opportunity Act (ECOA) and the Fair Housing Act (FHA) — statutes that Congress has put on the books, requiring no new legislation to enforce.

***The Argument.*** These, and many other groups, were designated by the SPLC because of their religiously motivated speech and advocacy — positions inseparable from their founding religious missions. Under the framework of Title VII (which courts use to interpret ECOA’s undefined “religion” protection), religious expression includes statements and actions on matters of public concern motivated by sincere religious belief. Accordingly, a lender that denies services based on SPLC’s designation is discriminating on the basis of religion. ECOA’s prohibition is, per the Senate Report, “unqualified,” meaning no undue hardship carve-out exists. Regulation B (12 C.F.R.

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<sup>55</sup> Samuel Smith, *Tech company terminates agreement with Christian group over SPLC ‘hate’ group label*, THE CHRISTIAN POST (Sept. 10, 2020), <https://www.christianpost.com/news/tech-company-terminates-agreement-with-christian-group-over-splc-hate-group-label.html>.

<sup>56</sup> Jim Graves, *Online Processor Drops Pro-Family Ruth Institute for Promoting ‘Hate,’* NATIONAL CATHOLIC REGISTER (Sept. 10, 2017), <https://www.ncregister.com/blog/online-processor-drops-pro-family-ruth-institute-for-promoting-hate>.

<sup>57</sup> *D. James Kennedy Ministry Appeals Defamation Case to Supreme Court*, NRB (Aug. 18, 2021), <https://nrb.org/d-james-kennedy-ministry-appeals-defamation-case-to-supreme-court/>.

<sup>58</sup> Odette Yousef, *A group claiming to protect parents’ rights in public schools is labeled as extremist*, NPR (June 6, 2023), <https://www.npr.org/2023/06/06/1180581882/a-group-claiming-to-protect-parents-rights-in-public-schools-is-labeled-as-extre>.

§ 1002.6(b)(1)) makes clear that a bank cannot push responsibility onto a vendor: banks cannot outsource religious discrimination to Benevity or the SPLC and disclaim responsibility.

***The Historical Parallel is Exact.*** Congress enacted ECOA's 1976 religion amendment in direct response to Arab states' boycott pressure on American banks to cut ties with Jewish customers. Congress acted then to stop third-party political pressure campaigns from corrupting bank credit decisions. The structural parallel to the SPLC's campaign could not be clearer.

***The Enforcement Ask.*** CFPB should investigate whether institutions using SPLC-linked tools comply with Regulation B. OCC, the Federal Reserve, and the FDIC should issue joint guidance clarifying that embedding a private partisan nonprofit's subjective designations in a bank's decisioning system creates material ECOA and fair lending exposure. ECOA's private right of action means ADF and similarly situated organizations may bring claims now, without new legislation.

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## Part V: Recommendations for Congressional Action

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Congress has the tools to remedy this harm. ADF respectfully offers the following recommendations:

- **Oversight.** Compel disclosure from Benevity, Groundswell, Millie, major DAF sponsors, and financial institutions of all policies relying on the SPLC or SPLC-derived screening.
- **CFPB/OCC enforcement.** Direct banking regulators to investigate ECOA and Regulation B compliance at institutions using SPLC-linked vetting tools. No new legislation is required.
- **Legislation.** Bar federally insured financial institutions from delegating account or transaction decision-making to private entities that discriminate based on speech or religious exercise that is protected by the First Amendment to the United States Constitution.

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## Conclusion

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The SPLC has built a shadow regulatory system over American financial and digital life — one with no statutory basis, no constitutional constraints, and no accountability. It has used that power to smear, silence, and exclude organizations whose only offense is holding views the SPLC finds politically inconvenient. The April 2026 indictment and June superseding indictment pulled back the curtain on decades of corruption, fraud, and possible complicity in violence. But the infrastructure the SPLC built remains in place. Every day it continues to operate, Americans are being denied access to banking, charitable giving, and digital services based on the say-so of a

discredited political organization. This Committee has oversight authority and the legislative tools to dismantle this system. ADF respectfully urges you to use them.