



**Written Testimony of Tony Perkins  
President, Family Research Council**

**Before the U.S. House Judiciary Committee  
“The Southern Poverty Law Center: Manufacturing Hate”**

**May 20, 2026**

Chairman Jordan, Ranking Member Raskin, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

My name is Tony Perkins, and I serve as president of Family Research Council (FRC) in Washington, D.C., a position that I have held since 2003.

**The Indictment Beneath the Indictment**

When federal prosecutors finally brought down Al Capone, it was not for murder, extortion, racketeering, or the violence that defined his criminal empire. It was for tax evasion.

The charge was real. The conviction was legitimate. But no serious student of history believes tax evasion told the whole story of Capone’s criminal empire. It was simply the charge prosecutors believed they could most readily prove.

Today, the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) stands federally indicted on charges involving bank fraud, wire fraud, and money laundering.

Those charges are serious. However, for those familiar with the SPLC’s destructive actions, the indictment is just the tip of the iceberg of what appears to have been a much broader system of coordinated influence and institutional coercion.

First, I want to commend the FBI and the Department of Justice for their investigation and indictment.

For many years, the SPLC has been the Left’s vanguard in their attack on conservative organizations that stood in their way. But with this indictment, cowardly corporate figures who once kowtowed to the SPLC are starting to speak out. As a result, we are gaining new insights.

However, there are several realities to consider.

When it realized that traditional hate organizations like the Ku Klux Klan were drying up, the SPLC adjusted its business model by appointing itself the national arbiter of “hate.” Leveraging

its storied reputation from the civil rights era, the SPLC expanded its targets far beyond violent extremist groups.

The first reality we need to understand is this: although the indictment focused on the SPLC's money-raising scheme, the SPLC's real focus was its institutional influence on government, media, and corporate America. Its goal? Silencing and intimidating decent Americans who disagreed with its dystopian, racist vision for America.

Over time, the SPLC's hate and extremist classifications evolved into far more than media narratives. Its labels increasingly became a form of reputational risk assessment used by banks, payment processors, technology companies, financial compliance systems, law enforcement, media organizations, and even elements of the federal government.<sup>1</sup> The SPLC became embedded into the architecture of America's charitable giving financial system as a bad cop.

The jewel of the SPLC operation was its Intelligence Project, which became deeply influential as government bodies, media, and financial institutions used its biased data to determine which organizations were acceptable participants in the financial and digital marketplace.

In November 2010, the SPLC placed its first wave of Christian organizations on its hate list and hate map, with Family Research Council being one of the most prominent.<sup>2</sup>

In August 2012, a gunman entered FRC's headquarters in Washington, D.C., intending to carry out a mass shooting. He shot our building manager before being disarmed. He carried nearly 100 rounds of ammunition and 15 Chick-fil-A sandwiches, which he intended to stuff into the mouths of his victims. Why FRC? The gunman, Floyd Corkins, later confessed to federal agents that he selected FRC after using the SPLC website and hate map.<sup>3</sup>

Following the shooting at FRC, we requested that the SPLC remove organizations like ours from its hate list and hate map, as it had been linked to an act that was officially classified as domestic terrorism. However, the SPLC did not respond to our appeal.

Unfortunately, that was not the last shooting perpetrated by individuals linked to the SPLC. On June 14, 2017, House Majority Leader Steve Scalise was shot and critically wounded by a politically agitated activist, Roy T. Hodgkinson, who had "liked" the SPLC on Facebook. Hodgkinson was immersed in the online waters of agitation propaganda created by the SPLC and other leftist groups targeting conservatives and Trump supporters. He targeted Scalise and dozens of other Republican senators and House members while they were practicing for a bipartisan charity baseball game at a baseball field in Alexandria, Virginia. Scalise required multiple surgeries and almost died from his wounds, and hundreds of bullet fragments remain in his body.

Turning Point USA (TPUSA) was added to the SPLC hate map in May 2025. That same month, the SPLC released "The Year in Hate and Extremism 2024" and included a section called

“Turning Point USA: A case study of the hard right in 2024.” This report targeted Charlie Kirk and TPUSA. Tragically, later that same year, on September 10, 2025, Kirk was shot and killed.

It is clear that the SPLC was unwilling to remove these labels due to the institutional influence it had gained: the ability to silence the Left’s opponents.

Around 2016, the SPLC led an ad hoc coalition of left-wing activist groups that began pressuring technology companies and financial institutions to deplatform and defund conservative organizations. PayPal was among the early targets, although the initial success of these efforts was limited.

Then came Charlottesville.

Charlottesville was a catalytic event that rapidly accelerated the SPLC’s efforts, particularly its efforts to coerce corporations to deplatform and debank conservative and Christian organizations.

Charlottesville is referenced in the recent federal indictment, which identified one of the many extremist group members allegedly funded by the SPLC: the individual identified as F-37. According to the indictment:

F-37 was a member of the online leadership of the chat group that planned the 2017 “Unite the Right” event in Charlottesville, Virginia and attended the event at the direction of the SPLC. F-37 made racist postings under the supervision of the SPLC and helped coordinate transportation to the event for several attendees. Between 2015 and 2023, the SPLC secretly paid F-37 more than \$270,000.<sup>4</sup>

Following Charlottesville, major corporations publicly aligned themselves with the SPLC. Apple donated \$1 million.<sup>5</sup> JPMorgan Chase and others followed.<sup>6</sup>

Was Charlottesville designed to be a catalytic event to further the SPLC’s efforts to move reluctant corporations?

Post-Charlottesville, in October of 2018, the ad hoc coalition formally organized into what became known as Change the Terms, led by the SPLC and the Center for American Progress.

The timeline of Change the Terms closely parallels the rapid acceleration of debanking and deplatforming directed at conservative and Christian organizations. BB&T, now Truist, notified FRC that, in accordance with our services agreement, they can “at any time, close an account . . . at [their] discretion” (See Exhibit 1).

It is a bit ironic that, according to the indictment, the SPLC’s bank let them operate known fraudulent accounts for over a decade.

Change the Terms sought to establish standards for technology and financial companies that would deny digital access and funding mechanisms to organizations targeted by the SPLC's purpose-driven definition of "extremist."

SPLC officials were explicit about this strategy.

In congressional testimony delivered on January 15, 2020, SPLC official Lecia Brooks stated:

For decades, the SPLC has been fighting hate and exposing how hate groups use the internet. We have lobbied internet companies, one by one, to comply with their own rules to prohibit their services from being used to foster hate or discrimination. A key part of this strategy has been to target these organizations' funding.<sup>7</sup>

Brooks continued:

On Oct. 25, 2018, the Change the Terms coalition – including the SPLC and other civil rights groups – released a suite of recommended policies for technology companies that would take away the online microphone that hate groups use to recruit members, raise funds and organize violence. In response to Change the Terms' advocacy, several Silicon Valley leaders have made promising changes that align with the coalition's vision for a safer online world.<sup>8</sup>

But Brooks went further, openly describing the pressure campaign:

The public exposure was half the battle. We conducted the other part of the campaign privately. SPLC officials held dozens of meetings with top Silicon Valley executives. Some companies acted. Some took half steps. Others did little or nothing. But eventually, the far-right extremists who depended on Silicon Valley were beginning to feel the pain.<sup>9</sup>

What the SPLC appears to have done, according to reports, is bully the cowardly corporations, leveraging its political connections, including regulators.

And finally, Brooks told the Committee:

Hate groups have clearly been damaged by the efforts of the SPLC and its allied organizations, including the Change the Terms coalition, to fight them and their funding sources online. But the fight is far from over.<sup>10</sup>

This brings us to another significant point.

The indictment paints a picture that the SPLC was propping up some of the very extremist entities it publicly claimed to be dismantling.

And the indictment makes clear these were not undercover informants or “snitches,” as we used to call them when I was a police officer. In some cases, these were individuals allegedly running or helping run operations.

The evidence appears to suggest that these extremist organizations served a larger purpose: providing potent imagery that immediately marginalized legitimate conservative and Christian organizations that were listed alongside these groups.

We need to be clear: this was not about the SPLC’s financial survival.

For anyone tempted to feel sorry for the SPLC and start a GoFundMe account for its legal defense, the SPLC’s 2024 audited financial statement shows an endowment fund of approximately \$734 million.<sup>11</sup>

Nor should anyone assume this indictment marks the end of the SPLC. While many financial institutions that partnered with or relied upon SPLC classifications beginning around 2017 have begun distancing themselves from the organization, the SPLC still maintains enormous institutional reach.

Its school-based program, Learning for Justice, formerly Teaching Tolerance, still reportedly reaches roughly 450,000 educators.<sup>12</sup> Every public school system in America should be asked whether SPLC curriculum materials are being used in their schools.

The SPLC’s public labeling system became far more than a public list. Whether by design or evolution, it functioned as a strategic weapon against conservatives who stood in the way of the Left’s agenda. Behind it, SPLC designations were increasingly used by media organizations to marginalize or exclude targeted individuals and groups, while also influencing banking access, digital platforms, fundraising capacity, and overall public legitimacy.

The indictment may focus on bank fraud and wire fraud. But like Al Capone’s tax evasion case, there is much beneath the surface: a sophisticated system of influence designed to not only oppose ideas but also marginalize and economically destroy those who hold them.

The entities that collaborated with the SPLC and did real harm to individuals and organizations should also be held accountable.

If America is to remain a nation where freedom of speech, religious liberty, and political dissent truly survive, then the broader conspiracy facilitated and directed by the SPLC must be confronted and exposed. If illegal conduct occurred, those responsible should be held accountable. And finally, safeguards must be established to ensure such a system is never allowed to operate again.

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<sup>1</sup> See Allen Mendenhall, “Turning the Tables on the SPLC,” The Heritage Foundation, November 5, 2025, <https://www.heritage.org/progressivism/commentary/turning-the-tables-the-splc>.

<sup>2</sup> See “Family Research Council,” Southern Poverty Law Center, accessed May 18, 2026, <https://www.splcenter.org/resources/extremist-files/family-research-council/>.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of Justice, “Virginia Man Sentenced To 25 Years In Prison In Shooting Of Security Guard At Family Research Council Defendant Targeted Organization In Planned Attack,” press release, September 19, 2013, <https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/pr/virginia-man-sentenced-25-years-prison-shooting-security-guard-family-research>.

<sup>4</sup> *United States of America v. Southern Poverty Law Center, Inc.*, No. 2:26-CR-00139, slip op. at 4 (M.D. Ala. Apr. 21, 2026).

<sup>5</sup> David Choi, “Apple CEO Tim Cook’s message to his employees after the Charlottesville violence,” World Economic Forum, August 17, 2017, <https://www.weforum.org/stories/2017/08/apple-ceo-tim-cooks-message-to-his-employees-after-the-charlottesville-violence/>.

<sup>6</sup> Emily Glazer, “J.P. Morgan Donates Up to \$2 Million to Organizations Following Charlottesville,” The Wall Street Journal, last updated August 21, 2017, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/j-p-morgan-donates-up-to-2-million-to-organizations-following-charlottesville-1503326740>; Charles Creitz, “SPLC saw revenue surge after Charlottesville rally as DOJ alleges informant ties,” Fox News, April 23, 2026, <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/splc-saw-revenue-surge-after-charlottesville-rally-doj-alleges-informant-ties>.

<sup>7</sup> Lecia Brooks, “SPLC Testifies Before Congress on Financing of Domestic Terrorism,” Southern Poverty Law Center, January 15, 2020, <https://www.splcenter.org/resources/stories/splc-testifies-congress-financing-domestic-terrorism/>.

<sup>8</sup> Brooks, “SPLC Testifies Before Congress on Financing of Domestic Terrorism.”

<sup>9</sup> Brooks, “SPLC Testifies Before Congress on Financing of Domestic Terrorism.”

<sup>10</sup> Brooks, “SPLC Testifies Before Congress on Financing of Domestic Terrorism.”

<sup>11</sup> Southern Poverty Law Center, Inc., Consolidated Financial Statements, October 31, 2024.

<sup>12</sup> “Learning for Justice,” Zinn Education Project, accessed May 18, 2026, <https://www.zinnedproject.org/materials/learning-for-justice/>.

# **EXHIBIT 1**

BB&T Now Truist  
MC 200-99-01-50  
PO Box 1250  
Winston-Salem, NC 27102-1250



Via First Class Mail

June 24, 2021

FAMILY RESEARCH COUNCIL  
801 G ST NW  
WASHINGTON DC 20001-3729

Subject: Notice of Account Closure(s)

Dear Client:

We regret to inform you that we have made a decision to close your account(s) with us as outlined below. This decision is in accordance with our BB&T Bank Services Agreement, which states that we may, at any time, close an account you have with us at our discretion.

This decision is not based on credit reporting information or any other considerations related to your credit. We have made this decision because some or all of your account activity is not consistent with the intended purpose of the account.

This closing affects any deposit accounts, safe deposit boxes, debit cards and credit cards that you maintain with us. This notification does not currently impact your Individual Retirement Accounts (IRAs), installment loans, mortgages, or home equity loans/lines and any credit card(s) attached to a home equity line. Certificates of Deposit (CDs) will stay open until their maturity date and will not be automatically renewed.

Please take action to close your deposit account(s) with us upon receiving this letter or they will be closed by us on **08/08/2021** (the "Effective Date"). Any related deposit or account services, including Online Banking, Bill Pay and Overdraft Protection, will also be discontinued.

If you lease a safe deposit box, you will need to make immediate arrangements with your local branch to secure all contents and close the box no later than the Effective Date. After that time, we will remove, inventory, and transport the contents of the safe deposit box to another safekeeping location.

You are responsible for repayment of all associated fees, overdraft balances, and items that are presented against your deposit account(s). For each account, we will mail a check to your address of record for any remaining balance.

If we can offer any assistance in closing your accounts or for information, you are welcome to contact your BB&T Relationship Banker or visit a local branch.

Sincerely,  
BB&T Now Truist