

January 28, 2011

Board of Directors, News Corporation
Mr. Roger Ailes, President, Fox News Channel
Mr. Glenn Beck, Fox News Channel

Fox News Channel
1211 Avenue of the Americas
New York, NY 10036

Dear Mr. Ailes, Mr. Beck, and members of the board:

The American Political Science Association is deeply troubled by the personal attacks upon, and in particular the death threats directed against, Professor Frances Fox Piven (professor of political science and sociology at the City University of New York, Graduate Center). Dr. Piven is a past vice president of our association as well as a past president of the American Sociological Association and of the Society for the Study of Social Problems.

Francis Fox Piven is a distinguished social scientist who is well-known and highly regarded for her contributions to social theory, and her studies of poor people's movements and the welfare state. She is also a public intellectual who participates in public discussions about such matters as welfare and economic conditions. These are controversial subjects where a wide range of opinions is to be expected. Indeed, scholarly research and inquiry thrives on the expression of different views about everything from empirical evidence and public policy to the reading of texts. But such exchange and debate can only take place in a climate of tolerance and civility where it is ideas that are challenged and debated, without the persons expressing them being personally vilified or threatened. Physical security is fundamental to freedom of speech and the exchange of ideas.

Similarly, in a democracy citizens hold widely differing opinions about many different topics and vigorous debate about controversial matters is part of the lifeblood of any thriving democracy. Freedom of expression is a value central to both democracy and scholarly work and in both cases death threats have no place. In the era of electronic communication, insults, intimidation and threats are easy to broadcast, but they are much less likely in a tolerant and civil climate. The media and its commentators have a special responsibility to help create and uphold the conditions necessary for democratic free expression. We call upon all those who have singled out Professor Piven to put forward their views in a manner that fosters constructive debate.



Carole Pateman
President, on behalf of the Council of the American Political Science Association

APSA Officers, 2010-2011

Carole Pateman, President
University of California, Los Angeles

G. Bingham Powell Jr., President-Elect
University of Rochester

Larry M. Bartells, Vice President
Princeton University

Luis Ricardo Fraga, Vice President
University of Washington

Nancy L. Rosenblum, Vice President
Harvard University

Arthur Lupia, Treasurer
University of Michigan

Susan Peterson, Secretary
College of William & Mary

Cristina Beltrán
Haverford College

Jeffrey M. Berry
Tufts University

Yun-han Chu
Academia Sinica/National Taiwan University

Michael C. Desch
University of Notre Dame

Christopher F. Gelpi
Duke University

Mark A. Graber
University of Maryland

Simon Hix
London School of Economics and Political Science

Mala Htun
The New School for Social Research

Evelyne Huber
University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill

Thomas E. Mann
Brookings Institution

Joseph P. McCormick II
Pennsylvania State University, York

Anne Norton
University of Pennsylvania

Julie Novkov
State University of New York, Albany

Laura Katz Olson
Lehigh University

Dara Z. Strolovitch
University of Minnesota, Twin Cities

S. Laurel Weldon
Purdue University

Ron Rogowski, Editor-in-Chief
American Political Science Review
University of California, Los Angeles

Jeffrey C. Isaac, Editor-in-Chief
Perspectives on Politics
Indiana University

Frances Hagopian, Annual Meeting Program Co-Chair
University of Notre Dame

Bonnie Honig, Annual Meeting Program Co-Chair
Northwestern University

Michael Brintnall, Executive Director