

Washington State Domestic Extremism & Mass Violence Task Force – September 26, 2025
Public Comments – Received by October 3, 2025 at 5pm PST

Sue Lani Madsen	<p>Originally published on Substack Sept 27, 2025 at https://suelanimadsen.substack.com/p/set-up-for-failure Left wing inspired violence is on track to set a new record in 2025, with high-profile examples in Utah, California, Texas and Washington state. A week before the May 2025 meeting of the Domestic Extremism and Mass Violence Task Force, organized domestic extremists caused over \$1 million dollars in damage to the new Interdisciplinary Engineering Building on the UW Seattle campus. It wasn't even mentioned at the meeting. It didn't fit into the agenda. Starting with the launch of the Task Force last November, the public comments submitted in writing and available on the DEMV website have consistently challenged the Task Force to broaden its view of the driving factors behind domestic extremism. Violence has been committed by people tied to the left wing, the right wing, and the cuckoo wing. Meanwhile, Gov. Bob Ferguson and Attorney General Nick Brown's DEMV Task Force is doggedly pursuing an old-fashioned public health framework as the solution, like a campaign to reduce heart disease with healthier living. Multiple expert presenters brought into the Task Force meetings by the Attorney General's staff have emphasized radical right-wing influenced violence and minimized left wing radicalization. It's a position backed up by historical data but ignores the developing trend described in a report published September 25, 2025 by the cross-partisan Center for Strategic and International Studies: "The left-wing movement as a whole has not returned to its violent heights of the 1960s and 1970s, but the number of terrorist incidents involving left-wing extremists so far this year puts 2025 on pace to be the left's most violent year in more than three decades. Moreover, 2025 marks the first time in more than 30 years that left-wing attacks outnumber those from the far right. Indeed, the increase in left-wing attacks is particularly noticeable because attacks from right-wing perpetrators have sharply declined in 2025." With accelerating threats coming from a radical left-wing convinced those who disagree with them are enemies to be dealt with by any means necessary, the Task Force emphasis on old examples of fringe right-wing violence is disappointing. So how should we expect the Task Force to contribute to a safer Washington? What's their assignment? The DEMV has been operating since November 2024 without adopting the charter defining their task. As part of a discussion on charter adoption at the September 26, 2025 meeting, the Task Force considered whether they needed to define extremism and/or mass violence. The conclusion was no, a general understanding is enough, and focus should be on making policy recommendations to the legislature for a public health approach "to prevent, stop or address mobilization before it's happened or after the fact." Walla Walla County Sheriff Mark Crider described the situation as a set up for failure. He pointed to the abortion issue as an example where both sides see the other side as extremist. He said: "The premise of trying to fix domestic extremism in the state is problematic. The problem that we're trying to fix is violence created by these things. All the attorneys have shown us that you can't be the thought</p>
-----------------	---

police and police people's ideas and thoughts on what is and is not extremism, but you can police their actions. The authority and purpose this [Task Force] was initially set up on sets us up for failure because in my opinion there's no way that we can define domestic extremism and come to a resolution on what is the extremism." Professor Cynthia Idriss-Miller from the Polarization and Extremism Research and Innovation Lab (PERIL) of American University has been advising the Task Force since its first meeting last November on PERIL's pet public health prescription to combat political violence. She responded to Sheriff Crider's comments, explaining: "The public health metaphor is meant to compare, for example, the way that we have created public health education classes to promote heart healthy activities and to reduce the incidence of diabetes. The Task Force would not be looking at individuals who are already mobilizing to violence, we're trying to prevent an outcome in which violence is an acceptable solution but without infringing on free speech . . . we're talking about community and society-wide factors that you can create interventions for that reduce the incidence." The bottom line is the Task Force will not be addressing the rising trend in deranged left-wing violence or any reactionary acts out of the unhinged right, if any. Those war horses are already out of the barn and halfway down the road. No gentle public health style education campaign is going to turn them back to a civilized pasture. We've clearly not done our best as a community to introduce norms for behavior to the generation of young adults now tempted into radicalization. Will a public health framework actually work? A National Institute of Health publication lists 26 current public health campaigns, most having to do with physical health, some with changing specific behaviors. None seem like an apt fit to the problem. Intervening in the lives of gamers living in a virtual world will have to take a very different form than Click It or Ticket billboards and handing out T-shirts at a grade school assembly. The Task Force would do well to support the growing awareness to one of the most glaring risk factors for today's youth, led by social psychologist Jonathan Haidt. Author of "The Anxious Generation: How the Great Rewiring of Childhood Is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness," Haidt has taken as his life mission promoting the unplugged and unprogrammed childhood. Children exploring the real world, in relationship with real people, learning how to negotiate disagreements in free play without a referee stepping in. We have over-protected our children in the physical world and under-protected them in the virtual world. There is another campaign for better public health predating Haidt's evangelical-style promotion of the phone-free childhood. It's based on a classic ten point list of shared values and used to be recognized as the basis of western civilization. But the movement lost some momentum in the last century and now we're reaping what we've sowed. The ten core values: No murder, no cheating, no lying, no stealing, and don't be envious about what somebody else has that you don't. Watch your language. Don't idolize unimportant things. Honor your father and mother. Take a break from work once a week to connect with what's really important. And according to the original creator of the list, what's really important is: "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of Egypt, out of the land of slavery. You shall have no other gods before me." A free society requires citizens who are able to exercise self-control for the common good.

	<p>Posting the Ten Commandments of the Judeo-Christian tradition in schools is an obvious non-starter in a blue state like Washington, but it's hard to argue with the other nine as positive values for civilized behavior. For Christians it's a way to honor our Creator as well as good advice for a joyful life. As President John Adams wrote in a letter to his wife Abigail, "Our constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other." To "prevent an outcome in which violence is an acceptable solution" we need to teach the old lessons. Hold onto the core values of Judeo-Christian civilization. We can no longer shy away from fear of divisive speech in the name of politeness. Words are not violence. As Charlie Kirk said, "When people stop talking, that's when you get violence. That's when civil war happens, because you start to think the other side is so evil, and they lose their humanity." Let's keep on talking. Postscript: In preparing this essay, I looked back at what I had previously written on the DEMV Task Force and the problem of political violence. From Dec 18, 2024: https://suelanimadsen.substack.com/p/barbarians-among-us "In a civil society, celebrating murder is unthinkable. Despicable. Roundly condemned as out of bounds. If you're not on the side of civil society, then you are a barbarian." From May 15, 2025: https://suelanimadsen.substack.com/p/extremism-from-the-social-justice "And yet when asked specifically about the destruction and vandalism on the UW Seattle campus which clearly met the [domestic terrorism] standard set in his own report, Gov. Ferguson said "whether something meets a definition of domestic terrorism, I don't know exactly what that definition is." See the original Substack post for sources and relevant background links.</p>
Joe Kunzler	<p>Some thoughts. 1) Your charter revisions including "The Task Force will not investigate or respond to mass violence incidents" do not inspire confidence. You should discuss these kind of things. 2) What the hell is being done to deal with Avrum (Alex) Tsimerman? He's a ticking time bomb that was just found incompetent to help prepare a defense by King County District Court. Shows up at public meetings with National Socialist (Nazi) salutes and rhetoric. Absolutely hateful. There was a chance to get Tsimerman mental health care and nobody on this Task Force spoke up for that. Just me. Time for your talk to start becoming action, please. 3) The Governor and Attorney General need to CONDEMN antisemitism. Please. Thank you.</p>