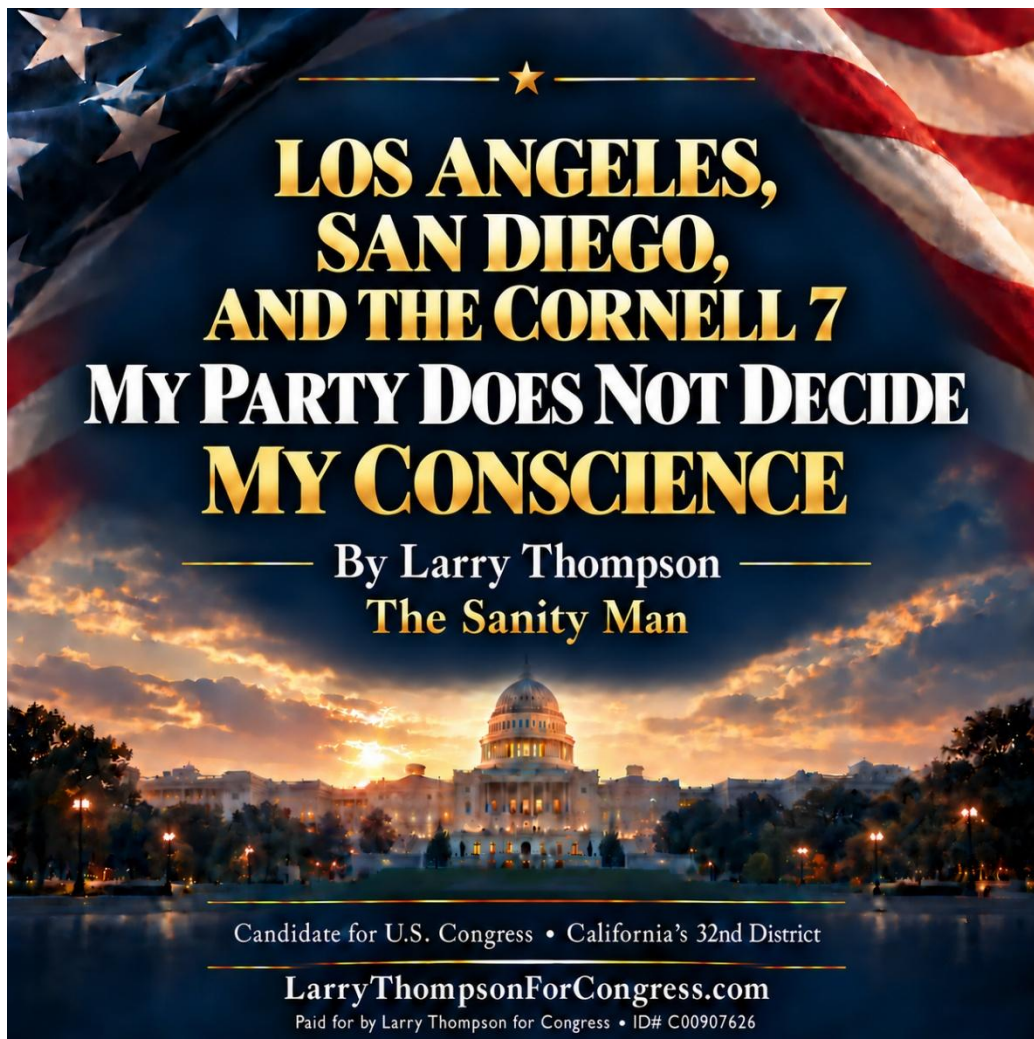




My Party Does Not Decide My Conscience
By Larry Thompson

I cannot justify Donald Trump's recent comments about Los Angeles and San Diego. Nor can I justify Congressman Brad Sherman's apparent public silence about the disturbing allegations at Cornell University and the university's handling of the case.

These are different controversies, but both raise a basic question: Will our leaders speak clearly and responsibly when human safety and dignity are at stake?

At his October 5 rally in Nebraska, President Trump said, "Let them take out Los Angeles. Let them take out San Diego." The White House says he was describing the danger Iran could have posed and explaining why the sacrifices associated with confronting that threat were necessary. A review by FactCheck dot org likewise concluded that the broader context

supports that interpretation.

That context matters. I will not accuse the President of deliberately inviting an attack when his intended meaning is disputed. But I cannot excuse his words.

A president must communicate with extraordinary care about threats to American cities. Families should never have to wonder whether their safety has become a punch line, a political provocation, or an acceptable sacrifice. Los Angeles and San Diego deserve an unmistakable assurance that their President will protect them.

I am a centrist, independent-minded Republican. That does not require me to defend every statement made by a Republican president. My responsibility is to exercise my own judgment and speak honestly.

That same standard informs my response to the current Cornell University controversy.

A woman identified in court documents as Jane Doe alleges that members of Cornell's Chi Phi fraternity drugged and sexually assaulted her in October 2024. Her lawsuit has brought renewed scrutiny to the response by university officials and law enforcement. The accused men have denied wrongdoing, and the allegations must be investigated through a fair legal process.

Cornell says it banned the chapter and handed out "a range of disciplinary measures." The lawsuit challenges the adequacy of that response, including opportunities allegedly offered to some individuals to mitigate penalties through essays. Governor Hochul has called for an independent review and appointed Letitia James as special prosecutor.

Those steps deserve scrutiny. An institution's reputation must never take priority over student safety, a complainant's dignity, or a thorough investigation.

As of October 7, I have not been able to find a public statement from Congressman Brad Sherman addressing this specific case and Cornell's handling of it. If he has made one, I welcome the opportunity to read it. If he has not, I urge him to speak.

Cornell is outside our congressional district, but campus safety is a national concern. Families here send their children to universities across the country. They deserve to know that their representatives take allegations of sexual violence and institutional failures seriously.

Congressman Sherman does not need to prejudge anyone's guilt. He can call for a thorough investigation, protection against retaliation, meaningful institutional accountability, and due process for everyone involved. Those principles should be easy to affirm.

As the father of a 24-year-old daughter, I take those principles personally. Every student deserves safety, dignity, and the assurance that a report of sexual assault will receive a serious and fair investigation.

President Trump's comments about the Cornell case also trouble me. He said he felt "badly" for the seven accused men and claimed they would not get "a fair shake" from New York Attorney General Letitia James. The accused deserve due process. But the President's personal conflict with the attorney general is no basis for prejudging her investigation. Jane Doe deserves to have her allegations investigated fully and fairly, without the case becoming another vehicle for political grievances.

I cannot excuse the President's irresponsible wording about Los Angeles and San Diego, his effort to cast doubt on the Cornell investigation before its completion, or Congressman Sherman's apparent public silence about the case.

I expect responsible words and meaningful accountability from leaders of both parties.

Leadership requires the courage to criticize your own party and the willingness to address painful questions. I intend to apply the same standard regardless of whose name is in the headline.

Larry Thompson, The Sanity Man

Sanity means speaking responsibly, demanding accountability, and putting human dignity first.

Larry Thompson is a lawyer, producer, and candidate for U.S. Congress in California's 32nd District.

www.LarryThompsonForCongress.com