

ONE HUNDRED NINETEENTH CONGRESS

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

2138 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6216

(202) 225-6906
judiciary.house.gov

October 27, 2025

The Honorable Pamela J. Bondi
Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530

The Honorable Todd M. Blanche
Deputy Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530

The Honorable Stanley E. Woodward, Jr.
Associate Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530

Dear Attorney General Bondi, Deputy Attorney General Blanche, and Associate Attorney General Woodward:

President Trump has described a blatantly illegal and unconstitutional effort to steal \$230 million from the American people. As the senior Department of Justice (DOJ) officials responsible for approving that shakedown, you each face a choice: uphold your constitutional oath and refuse this flagrantly illegal demand, or become complicit in perhaps the most brazen violation of the Constitution's anti-corruption provisions in American history. Of course, Mr. Blanche and Mr. Woodward—who represented President Trump and his co-defendant in the same case that is behind some of these outlandish claims—must be recused from any aspect of evaluating and approving these claims.

The Constitution's Domestic Emoluments Clause categorically prohibits the President from receiving any payment from the federal government beyond his \$400,000 annual salary.¹ That Clause exists for precisely this situation: the Framers feared that future Presidents might be tempted to use their control over the executive branch to enrich themselves at public expense. Its prohibition is absolute and is not even waivable by Congress.² Any DOJ official who signs off on a payment to President Trump in violation of this constitutional command will be personally complicit in that violation and subject to legal consequences.

¹ U.S. Const. art. II, § 1, cl. 7.

² See Cong. Rsch. Serv., R45992, *The Emoluments Clauses and the Presidency: Background and Recent Developments* (2019), available at <https://www.everycrsreport.com/reports/R45992.html>.

The legal defects in President Trump’s claims are obvious and plentiful. *First*, President Trump’s reported demand for \$85 million in punitive damages is legally impossible under the Federal Tort Claims Act (FTCA), which expressly prohibits punitive damages.³ Any lawyer reviewing these claims would immediately recognize that clear bar. If you approve a claim for punitive damages that federal law categorically forbids, you will be acting outside the scope of your authority and potentially subjecting yourselves to personal liability.

Second, President Trump’s underlying legal claims are obviously baseless. DOJ opened the Russia investigation based on substantial evidence of Russian interference in the 2016 election, and DOJ’s Inspector General found the investigation to be properly predicated.⁴ A federal magistrate judge authorized the Mar-a-Lago search based on probable cause that President Trump was unlawfully retaining classified documents.⁵ President Trump has chosen not to litigate these claims in court—where they would be subject to public scrutiny, the adversarial process, and an independent adjudicator—but instead is trying to have his own personal lawyers secretly approve them behind closed doors.

Third, and most fundamentally, approving any payment to President Trump violates the Domestic Emoluments Clause regardless of the underlying merits of his claims. The Constitution does not say the President may not receive payments “unless he thinks he was treated unfairly.” It says categorically that he “shall not receive within that Period any other Emolument from the United States.”⁶ Any member of the Executive Branch who orders the U.S. Treasury to cut the President a check for \$230 million—or any other amount other than his salary—violates the Constitution.

On top of the flagrant illegality of President Trump’s demands, there are also fundamental and unwaivable ethical conflicts involving two of you—Deputy Attorney General Todd Blanche and Associate Attorney General Stanley Woodward—who have the authority to approve this payment. Mr. Blanche and Mr. Woodward both served on President Trump’s personal legal teams, representing him and his associates in the *very matters* for which he now seeks compensation.⁷ Mr. Blanche was President Trump’s lead criminal defense attorney in both the classified documents case and the January 6th election interference case, while Mr. Woodward represented President Trump’s co-defendant Waltine Nauta in the classified

³ 28 U.S.C. § 2674 (“The United States ... shall not be liable for interest prior to judgment or for punitive damages.”).

⁴ See U.S. Dep’t of Justice, Office of the Inspector General, *Review of Four FISA Applications and Other Aspects of the FBI’s Crossfire Hurricane Investigation* (2019), available at <https://www.oversight.gov/report/doj/review-four-fisa-applications-and-other-aspects-fbis-crossfire-hurricane>.

⁵ *Read the Search Warrant for Trump’s Mar-a-Lago Home*, N.Y. TIMES (Aug. 12, 2022), <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2022/08/12/us/politics/trump-search-warrant-document.html>.

⁶ U.S. Const. art. II, § 1, cl. 7.

⁷ See Devlin Barrett, *Trump Picks Todd Blanche, His Defense Lawyer, to Be Deputy Attorney General*, N.Y. TIMES (Nov. 14, 2024), <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/11/14/us/politics/todd-blanche-deputy-attorney-general-trump.html>; Devlin Barrett, *Lawyer for Many in Trump’s Orbit Is Picked for No. 3 Post at Justice Dept.*, N.Y. TIMES (Apr. 2, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/04/02/us/politics/trump-doj-pick-woodward.html>.

documents matter and was paid by the President's PAC.⁸ You are now being asked to evaluate and approve the President's demands for \$230 million based on the same investigations in which you defended President Trump and his associates. That conflict is absolute, unwaivable, and utterly disqualifying. You must recuse yourselves completely from any consideration of this matter.

President Trump himself has acknowledged the impropriety of this arrangement, stating: "I'm the one that makes the decision and that decision would have to go across my desk and it's awfully strange to make a decision where I'm paying myself."⁹ When even this ethically challenged President admits the situation is "awfully strange," you know you are doing something egregiously wrong. And President Trump's suggestion that he might donate any money he receives to charity does nothing to cure the constitutional violation—the Domestic Emoluments Clause prohibits the receipt of the payment itself, not what the President does with the money afterward. One does not get the right to take a bribe or kickback just by promising to give the proceeds to charity.

As senior DOJ officials, you have taken an oath to "support and defend the Constitution of the United States."¹⁰ You should be aware of the potential personal consequences you face if you violate that oath and proceed with approving these claims. Federal officials who violate the Constitution while acting in their official capacity may be held personally liable, particularly when they act outside the scope of their lawful authority.¹¹ You could face civil liability, ethics investigations, professional discipline, and potential criminal liability for conspiracy to defraud the United States.¹²

You have an independent obligation to uphold the Constitution. In the face of this outlandish assault from the President of the United States, you have a duty to immediately and publicly announce that the Department will *not* approve any payments to President Trump based on these administrative claims.

Further, in order to assist the Committee in understanding the extent of this illegal and unconstitutional attempt to steal taxpayer funds and hand them to the President, we demand that you produce the following documents and information to the Committee no later than 5:00 p.m., November 3, 2025:

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ Devlin Barrett & Tyler Pager, *Trump Said to Demand Justice Dept. Pay Him \$230 Million for Past Cases*, N.Y. TIMES (Oct. 21, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/10/21/us/politics/trump-justice-department-compensation.html>.

¹⁰ 5 U.S.C. § 3331.

¹¹ See, e.g., *Butz v. Economou*, 438 U.S. 478 (1978) (discussing circumstances under which federal officials may be held personally liable for constitutional violations).

¹² See, e.g., 18 U.S.C. § 371 (conspiracy to defraud the United States); 18 U.S.C. § 641 (theft of public money).

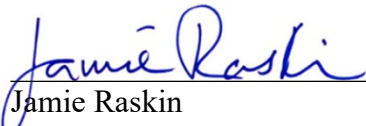
1. All administrative claims filed by Donald J. Trump or his legal representatives under the FTCA, 28 U.S.C. § 2671 et seq., including all documentation, exhibits, affidavits, and evidence submitted with such claims;
2. All correspondence between Donald J. Trump or his legal representatives and any DOJ official, including but not limited to the Attorney General, Deputy Attorney General, and Associate Attorney General, over official or personal channels, regarding the submission, processing, evaluation, or adjudication of these claims, from the filing of such claims through the present;
3. All correspondence between any White House official and any DOJ official, including but not limited to the Attorney General, Deputy Attorney General, and Associate Attorney General, over official or personal channels, regarding the submission, processing, evaluation, or adjudication of these claims, from the filing of such claims through the present;
4. All internal DOJ memoranda, legal analyses, or recommendations, from the filing of these claims through the present, concerning:
 - a. The legal merits of President Trump's administrative claims;
 - b. The applicability of the explicit prohibition on punitive damages under the FTCA, 28 U.S.C. § 2674, to any of President Trump's claims;
 - c. The constitutional implications of DOJ adjudicating claims filed by the sitting President under the Domestic Emoluments Clause or any other constitutional provision;
 - d. The ethical propriety of DOJ political appointees who previously served as President Trump's personal attorneys participating in decisions regarding claims filed by President Trump;
 - e. Any conflicts of interest, recusal obligations, or ethics concerns related to the adjudication of President Trump's claims; or
 - f. Any other aspect of President Trump's administrative claims; and
5. All documents identifying which DOJ officials have been assigned to evaluate or render final decisions on President Trump's claims, including the names, titles, and positions of all such officials; any recusal determinations made by such officials; any ethics opinions, advice, or guidance provided to such officials; and the extent to which DOJ political appointees have been involved in the evaluation and adjudication process.

In addition, we request that you each personally respond to the following questions in writing to the Committee no later than 5:00 p.m., November 3, 2025:

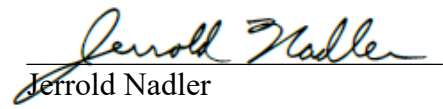
1. What steps, if any, have you taken to recuse yourself from any matters related to President Trump's administrative claims?
2. Have you sought guidance from DOJ's Office of Legal Counsel or any DOJ ethics office regarding the constitutional permissibility of approving these claims? If so, please provide copies of all such guidance.
3. Will you commit to making public any decision you render on President Trump's administrative claims at the time the decision is made, rather than concealing it until the end-of-year accounting to Congress?
4. Will you commit to refusing to approve any payment to President Trump that would violate the Domestic Emoluments Clause?

The American people deserve answers to these serious questions. We look forward to your prompt response.

Very truly yours,



Jamie Raskin
Ranking Member



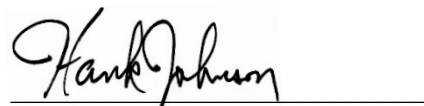
Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress



Zoe Lofgren
Member of Congress



Steve Cohen
Member of Congress



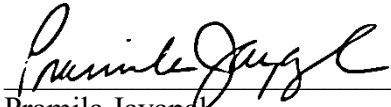
Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress



Eric Swalwell
Member of Congress



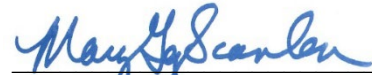
Ted W. Lieu
Member of Congress



Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress



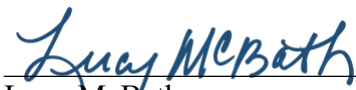
J. Luis Correa
Member of Congress



Mary Gay Scanlon
Member of Congress



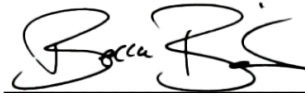
Joe Neguse
Member of Congress



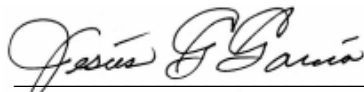
Lucy McBath
Member of Congress



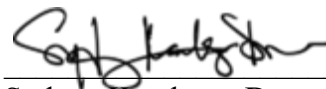
Deborah Ross
Member of Congress



Becca Balint
Member of Congress



Jesús G. "Chuy" García
Member of Congress



Sydney Kamlager-Dove
Member of Congress



Jared Moskowitz
Member of Congress



Dan Goldman
Member of Congress



Jasmine Crockett
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable Jim Jordan, Chairman