

ONE HUNDRED NINETEENTH CONGRESS

# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

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May 12, 2026

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

Dear Acting Attorney General Blanche:

It has come to our attention that you have used your office to improperly shower government cash on Donald Trump's political operatives and sycophants, beginning with corrupt seven-figure "settlements" for disgraced Trump officials Michael Flynn and Carter Page who had already lost their initial cases against the government in court.<sup>1</sup> You have now proceeded behind closed doors to order the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) to pay millions of dollars to former FBI agents who were suspended, fired, and had their clearances revoked for criminal activity, major breaches of national security, or violations of the standards of conduct and professionalism required of law enforcement agents. All of these handouts constitute an astounding and lawless abuse of government office and taxpayer dollars.

The Committee on the Judiciary has learned from multiple sources that over the last several months, your office ordered the FBI to pay massive settlements to nearly a dozen FBI employees who were disciplined and suspended for gross violations of FBI policy and federal law. In one instance, an employee had his security clearance revoked and was fired from the FBI after he refused to investigate a violent white nationalist group. He later admitted to accepting commercial sex while on an official assignment overseas, yet under Director Kash Patel, the FBI reinstated him, reinstated his clearance and, amazingly after all this misconduct, paid *him* several hundred thousand dollars. In another case, an FBI employee participated in the violent mob that attacked the Capitol on January 6, 2021, and subsequently lied to the FBI's Security Division about his actions on that day. He had his security clearance revoked for this blatant misconduct and then left the Bureau. But under your leadership, the Department of Justice (DOJ) agreed to pay *him* a lump sum payment and backpay of several hundred thousand dollars at the expense of the FBI.

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<sup>1</sup> Steve Benen, *Trump's Justice Department Agrees to a Second Settlement with Michael Flynn*, MS NOW (Apr. 27, 2026), [www.ms.now/rachel-maddow-show/maddowblog/trumps-justice-department-agrees-to-a-second-settlement-with-michael-flynn](http://www.ms.now/rachel-maddow-show/maddowblog/trumps-justice-department-agrees-to-a-second-settlement-with-michael-flynn); Darih Gregorian & Ryan J. Reilly, *Justice Department Settles Lawsuit Brought by Trump-Russia Probe Subject Carter Page*, NBC NEWS (Apr. 23, 2026), [www.nbcnews.com/politics/justice-department/justice-department-settles-carter-page-lawsuit-trump-russia-probe-rcna341640](http://www.nbcnews.com/politics/justice-department/justice-department-settles-carter-page-lawsuit-trump-russia-probe-rcna341640).

Two threads seem to unify these astonishingly corrupt “settlements,” which are, of course, not actual settlements because the beneficiaries have generally already lost, or in many cases, not even filed their cases. These checks are just political handouts and payoffs.

First, the fired agents are ardent supporters and foot soldiers of President Trump. Second, they are all represented by *Empower Oversight*, an organization founded and run by former staffers to Senator Chuck Grassley, Chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee. According to information we have learned, *current* staffers working for Senator Grassley have actually participated in the “settlement” communications among your office, the FBI, and the agents’ lawyers at Empower Oversight.<sup>2</sup> You, of course, have signed off on these illegitimate payments of taxpayer dollars while you seek appointment as Attorney General, an appointment that would be considered by the very Committee that Senator Grassley chairs and whose staffers are working with you on “settlement” negotiations.

Your office’s instructions to pay these disgraced agents huge sums of money contravene the well-established process used by FBI agents to challenge personnel decisions made by the FBI. When an FBI employee is suspected of violating the FBI’s standards of conduct, “the allegation is investigated by either the DOJ Office of the Inspector General (OIG) or the FBI.” The result of that investigation is provided to attorneys in the FBI’s Office of Professional Responsibility which adjudicates the decisions and imposes discipline on FBI employees who have been found to have engaged in misconduct.<sup>3</sup> An agent who has been disciplined may first challenge the action through the Bureau, with numerous potential stages of independent review, and if the agent is unsuccessful in this internal administrative appeal process, he or she may then litigate the matter through the courts.<sup>4</sup>

The FBI’s well-defined disciplinary procedures are meant, in part, to ensure that leadership cannot bias or distort the application of federal law to federal agents. To be sure, these procedures have already been repeatedly violated by the current FBI Director Patel in other cases.<sup>5</sup> Now, betraying these same safeguards again, your office has circumvented all of the detailed internal procedures to directly provide millions of dollars in cash settlements to agents who have been justifiably disciplined and removed for significant misconduct. They have also been adjudged to lack any right to taxpayer compensation for their own wrongful behavior. But political appointees from your office, as well as staffers to Senator Grassley, have personally involved themselves in making these dumbfounding funding decisions and bypassed the findings of internal FBI reviews without making or publicizing any alternate findings of fact, seemingly

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<sup>2</sup> Empower Oversight, *Leadership*, <https://empowr.us/leadership/> (last visited May 11, 2026). Depending on the nature of this representation, thousands of dollars from the payouts to these agents could revert to Empower Oversight in the form of attorney fees.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Dep’t. of Just., Office of the Inspector General, Press Release, *DOJ OIG Releases Report on the FBI’s Adjudication Process for Misconduct Investigations*, <https://oig.justice.gov/news/doj-oig-releases-report-fbis-adjudication-process-misconduct-investigations>.

<sup>4</sup> *Id.*; Peyton Baker, *A Primer on FBI Personnel Disputes*, LAWFARE (Oct. 29, 2025), <https://www.lawfaremedia.org/article/a-primer-on-fbi-personnel-disputes>.

<sup>5</sup> *Driscoll, Jr. et al. v. Patel et al.*, Complaint (Sept. 10, 2025) (U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia), <https://clearinghouse.net/doc/163028/>.

providing these illegitimate settlements based solely on political loyalty to the President and baseless claims of “weaponization.”

I provide below several of these examples, naming agents only if Empower Oversight has already identified them in public releases:

- **Agent 1**—One agent had his clearance suspended because he was communicating classified information to reporters about Chinese intelligence activities. He resigned after his clearance was suspended and did not file a claim against DOJ or FBI. Nonetheless, five years after his initial suspension, your office ordered the FBI to restore his security clearance and awarded him \$15,000. Why? On what basis?
- **Agent 2**—Another FBI agent had his clearance suspended and then revoked based on his presence within the restricted area of the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021, a serious criminal intrusion confirmed by pictures, statements, and publicly available videos. When questioned by the FBI’s Security Division, the agent provided false and misleading information to investigators. Despite this damning evidence, DOJ Office of the Deputy Attorney General (ODAG) agreed to make a lump sum payment of \$63,500 to *him* and backpay amounting to hundreds of thousands of additional dollars, even though he was not even statutorily eligible under the *Back Pay Act*. Why? On what basis?
- **Special Agent (SA) Steven Friend**—SA Friend refused to participate in an arrest operation, illegally recorded conversations in FBI space with his management team, downloaded FBI documents from a classified system onto his personal thumb drive, and participated in unsanctioned media interviews with Russian state media outlets. He resigned from the FBI in February 2023. Despite his clearance revocation and resignation from the FBI, DOJ ODAG ordered the FBI to reinstate him, award him a lump sum settlement of \$61,430, and give him hundreds of thousands of dollars in back pay. Why? On what basis? After being reinstated, the FBI recently had to terminate Mr. Friend a second time for unauthorized and unprofessional conduct with the media.
- **Agent 4**—An agent was removed from the FBI for misconduct for failing to participate in an operation investigating a violent white nationalist group, Patriot Front, claiming falsely that the investigation was politically motivated.<sup>6</sup> He brought multiple claims against the FBI but, since his claims lacked merit, was unsuccessful at every level of the process. Nonetheless, the ODAG began “negotiations” with Empower Oversight. During these negotiations, it became clear that the agent had also engaged in commercial sex overseas while on an

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<sup>6</sup> For a full account of Patriot Front’s recent violent activities, including numerous members’ collective assault of a black man during a march in Boston, please see the following: Southern Poverty Law Center, *Patriot Front SPLC Designated Hate Group* (last accessed May 7, 2026), [www.splcenter.org/resources/extremist-files/patriot-front/](http://www.splcenter.org/resources/extremist-files/patriot-front/).

official FBI assignment—unequivocal grounds for security clearance revocation and dismissal from the FBI. Nonetheless, ODAG directed the FBI to grant this agent a clearance, and ODAG also negotiated a lesser discipline for him than his misconduct warranted based on FBI precedent. Despite the agent’s egregious violations of professional duties, the DOJ ordered the FBI to issue *him* a lump sum payment, backpay, and reinstatement to his former job. Why? On what basis?

- **Special Agent Garret O’Boyle**—An agent disclosed classified information regarding a criminal investigation into Project Veritas, taking screenshots of his computer and sending them to third parties. The FBI eventually determined that this agent made unauthorized disclosures of classified FBI information about a pending criminal investigation and suspended the agent’s security clearance in 2022 and revoked it in 2024. DOJ OIG also initiated a criminal investigation into the agent but ultimately declined prosecution. The agent then filed multiple claims against the FBI but was unsuccessful both in appealing within the agency and through the courts. However, when you entered into office, the DOJ reinstated the agent and agreed to a lump sum settlement payment to *him* of more than \$100,000 and back pay of nearly \$500,000, for his spurious causes of action that had already been rejected for various reasons in both administrative and judicial proceedings. Why? On what basis?

There are many more examples of these indefensible and lawless payments. Altogether, the DOJ and FBI have already paid out several *million* dollars of taxpayer money to disgraced agents and employees who violated their professional and legal duties to the government. While Empower Oversight has brazenly described these scofflaws as “whistleblowers” in press releases, none of them was ever disciplined for engaging in any purported “whistleblowing.” They were disciplined for serious professional misconduct. Sleeping with sex workers, lying to government investigators, and refusing to investigate violent white nationalist groups are not “whistleblower” activities. Backing up the FBI’s secrecy and disinformation in this matter, Empower Oversight’s descriptions of these agents and their cases contain significant omissions and misleading statements which obscure the underlying professional misconduct. Empower Oversight’s ludicrous claims that agents were disciplined for whistleblowing activity fall apart instantly when the actual content of their FBI files is reviewed. For example, Empower Oversight concedes that Agent 2 entered a restricted area of the Capitol on January 6th but omits the fact that Agent 2 provided false and misleading statements to the FBI about entering the Capitol, which is a dismissible offense.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> By way of further example, Empower Oversight concedes that Agent 1 communicated with a reporter but states he did not provide any “sensitive information.” However, the FBI review contradicts this assertion. It determined Agent 1 likely communicated classified information to reporters about Chinese intelligence activities. Empower Oversight focuses on the fact that SA Friend protested the measures to arrest a January 6th rioter, but neglects to mention that SA Friend was disciplined for illegally recording conversations in FBI space with his management team—a violation of Florida law. It also neglects to mention he improperly downloaded classified information to a flash drive, and when the FBI required Mr. Friend to attend a Security Awareness Briefing regarding this breach of security, he refused to do so. Similar omissions and misstatements regarding other FBI agents abound.

The record definitively shows that the agents were not disciplined for making protected disclosures to Congress or for the imaginary offense of being a Republican. They were disciplined for reckless misuse of classified information or serious episodes of professional misconduct that endangered national security. It is black-letter law that even employees who have made protected disclosures remain accountable for other wrongdoing, a critical point that DOJ has ignored in your haste to promote falsified claims of conservative victimhood.<sup>8</sup>

The participants in these settlements further demonstrate the fundamentally corrupt nature of this process. These “negotiations” have been helmed on the DOJ side by Vance Day, a senior counsel on your staff, perhaps best known for violating the Constitution and refusing to marry same-sex couples as an Oregon state court judge, as well as hanging up a picture of Adolf Hitler in his chambers, putatively because he was concerned about the “scale” and “tragedy” of fascist violence in that era of history.<sup>9</sup> Mr. Day is assisted by another DOJ official, Colin McDonald, your new Assistant Attorney General for the newly-minted National Fraud Enforcement Division, who is apparently qualified for his position by virtue of the fact that he is approving huge payments of taxpayer dollars to discredited FBI agents on totally fraudulent grounds.<sup>10</sup> Senator Grassley vigorously supported Mr. McDonald’s nomination.<sup>11</sup> On the Empower Oversight side, Tristan Leavitt, who began his career working on the staff of Senator Grassley, has represented these disgraced former FBI agents and employees.<sup>12</sup> Remarkably, these communications have been joined by some of the senior-most current staffers to Senator Grassley on the Senate Judiciary Committee who have explicitly instructed DOJ to issue these payments.<sup>13</sup> Left out of this merry band of looters of the public treasury are the career men and women of the FBI who are familiar with the grievous misconduct of these agents and the abiding harm caused by their actions.

It is unclear how much money Empower Oversight has made from these payments; it is clear that neither they nor their clients should pocket a dime of taxpayer funds from their

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<sup>8</sup> *Crosbie v. Highmark*, 47 F.4th 140 (3rd. Cir 2022).

<sup>9</sup> *Oregon Judge Against Same-Sex Marriage Displayed Hitler Photo in Courthouse*, THE GUARDIAN (Sept. 9, 2015), [www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/sep/09/oregon-judge-same-sex-marriage-hitler-picture](http://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2015/sep/09/oregon-judge-same-sex-marriage-hitler-picture); Evelyn Frick, *This Clip About Nazis from ‘Succession’ is Way Too Relevant Right Now*, HEY ALMA (Jan. 27, 2025), [www.heyalma.com/this-clip-about-nazis-from-succession-is-way-too-relevant-right-now/](http://www.heyalma.com/this-clip-about-nazis-from-succession-is-way-too-relevant-right-now/).

<sup>10</sup> Jaelyn Diaz, *Senate Confirms Trump’s Pick for New Role of Fraud Enforcement at Justice Department*, NPR (Mar. 24, 2026), [www.npr.org/2026/03/24/g-s1-114956/trump-fraud-enforcement-justice-role](http://www.npr.org/2026/03/24/g-s1-114956/trump-fraud-enforcement-justice-role).

<sup>11</sup> See e.g., Senator Chuck Grassley, Press Release, *Grassley Supports Colin McDonald to be Fraud-Fighting Assistant Attorney General* (Mar. 24, 2026), [www.judiciary.senate.gov/press/rep/releases/grassley-supports-colin-mcdonald-to-be-fraud-fighting-assistant-attorney-general](http://www.judiciary.senate.gov/press/rep/releases/grassley-supports-colin-mcdonald-to-be-fraud-fighting-assistant-attorney-general).

<sup>12</sup> Senator Chuck Grassley, Press Release, *Grassley Opening Statement for Tristan Leavitt on the Merit Systems Protection Board* (Sept. 22, 2021), [www.grassley.senate.gov/news/remarks/grassley-opening-statement-for-tristan-leavitt-on-the-merit-systems-protection-board](http://www.grassley.senate.gov/news/remarks/grassley-opening-statement-for-tristan-leavitt-on-the-merit-systems-protection-board).

<sup>13</sup> It is unclear whether Senator Grassley is aware of the full scope of the misconduct of these agents or that his staff has instructed DOJ to expend taxpayer money; his Senate office has however taken credit for these corrupt settlements, featuring a quote from the Senator. Senator Chuck Grassley, Press Release, *Grassley Welcomes Resolution for 10 FBI Whistleblowers Following Years of Retaliation* (Aug. 26, 2025), [www.grassley.senate.gov/news/news-releases/grassley-welcomes-resolution-for-10-fbi-whistleblowers-following-years-of-retaliation](http://www.grassley.senate.gov/news/news-releases/grassley-welcomes-resolution-for-10-fbi-whistleblowers-following-years-of-retaliation).

involvement in this outrageous shakedown scheme. These reports reflect a broader pattern of the Trump Administration using the public fisc as a slush fund to reward its allies after promoting vague and unsubstantiated claims of ideological persecution and victimization. In just the last few months, DOJ has repeatedly approved seven-figure settlements to MAGA operatives and sycophants like Michael Flynn, who pled guilty to lying to the FBI and who even President Trump admits lied to the FBI, and Carter Page, who has described himself as an advisor to the Kremlin.<sup>14</sup> If there is one thing this Administration does well and with unswerving focus, it is lining the pockets of Trump operatives with taxpayer money.

Whistleblowers provide an essential service to our government and should be robustly protected, even more so than under current federal law. Yet making a protected disclosure can never mean a “get-out-of-jail free” card for misconduct, criminal activity, or actions that put our national security at risk. Here, DOJ, Senator Grassley’s office, and Empower Oversight have ignored these key distinctions and facilitated payments to individuals who were properly disciplined or removed from their position. Their actions in heaping cash settlements on individuals, any misconduct be damned, simply because these individuals are ideologically aligned with President Trump inevitably weaken protections for all whistleblowers.

The Treasury is not a personal checkbook for ideological payouts, and the misuse of millions of dollars in taxpayer resources for personal or political benefit is a felony.<sup>15</sup> The House Committee on the Judiciary is conducting oversight of institutional waste, fraud, and abuse at DOJ. To fully inform our investigation, please provide the following to the Committee no later than 5:00 p.m. on May 26, 2026:

1. All communications related to negotiations with or settlement agreements with fired or disciplined FBI employees amongst or between employees of the FBI, Empower Oversight, and the Office of the Deputy Attorney General, including but not limited to Colin McDonald and Vance Day;
2. All records relating to negotiations with or settlement agreements with the following FBI employees (provided under separate cover), including but not limited to pay stubs, transfers, and internal concerns regarding the propriety or legality of these agreements;
3. All documentation, including internal communications, regarding such awards, or other payments; and,
4. A full list of all employees at DOJ, FBI, or any component that have received a lump sum payment, back pay, reinstatement, security clearance reinstatement or

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<sup>14</sup> Steve Benen, *Trump’s Justice Department Agrees to a Second Settlement with Michael Flynn*, MS NOW (Apr. 27, 2026), [www.ms.now/rachel-maddow-show/maddowblog/trumps-justice-department-agrees-to-a-second-settlement-with-michael-flynn](http://www.ms.now/rachel-maddow-show/maddowblog/trumps-justice-department-agrees-to-a-second-settlement-with-michael-flynn); Dareh Gregorian & Ryan J. Reilly, *Justice Department Settles Lawsuit Brought by Trump-Russia Probe Subject Carter Page*, NBC NEWS (Apr. 23, 2026), [www.nbcnews.com/politics/justice-department/justice-department-settles-carter-page-lawsuit-trump-russia-probe-rcna341640](http://www.nbcnews.com/politics/justice-department/justice-department-settles-carter-page-lawsuit-trump-russia-probe-rcna341640).

<sup>15</sup> 18 U.S.C § 653 - Disbursing officer misusing public funds, <https://www.law.cornell.edu/uscode/text/18/653>.


The Honorable Todd Blanche

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any monetary benefit, as well as the settlement agreement and communications relating to the employee.

I look forward to your cooperation with these important oversight requests.

Very truly yours,

  
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Jamie Raskin  
Ranking Member

cc: The Honorable Jim Jordan, Chairman

Mr. William Blier, Acting Inspector General  
U.S. Department of Justice, Office of the Inspector General