

March 20, 2025

The Honorable Pam Bondi
Attorney General of the United States
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20530

Dear Attorney General Bondi:

I write to urge you to abandon reported efforts to “slash” the Department of Justice’s Public Integrity Section by reassigning its career prosecutors and eliminating its ability to oversee investigations or prosecutions.¹ Any move that further weakens the Public Integrity Section would signal that the Trump Department of Justice intends not to protect the American people against corruption.

Created in response to Watergate, the Public Integrity Section exists to ensure that the Department of Justice fairly and thoroughly investigates corruption by government officials at the federal, state, and local level without regard to those officials’ political views or allegiances. This Section has steadfastly pursued justice against both Republicans and Democrats, including securing a bribery conviction against a former Democratic United States Senator during the Biden administration.

As a former U.S. Attorney who prosecuted these kinds of cases, I know the importance of U.S. Attorneys around the country who put politics aside and follow the facts when a government official is suspected of breaking the law.

Certain political appointees in this Department of Justice have already proven they put President Trump’s political interests over their duties as prosecutors and as lawyers. Multiple Public Integrity Section attorneys resigned rather than endorse then-Acting Deputy Attorney General Emil Bove’s unethical *quid pro quo* in dropping the case against New York City Mayor Eric Adams.² Interim U.S. Attorney for the District of Columbia Ed Martin reportedly abandoned a baseless attempt to open a grand jury investigation into Senator Chuck Schumer for political speech only after other Justice Department officials “rebuffed” him.³ He appears to have also

¹ Alanna Durkin Richer & Eric Tucker, *Justice Department is expected to slash public corruption unit*, AP sources say, AP News (Mar. 11, 2025), <https://apnews.com/article/justice-department-public-corruption-unit-cuts-4123347b1ffe4a0f3c681e49a15ab4ca>.

² William K. Rashbaum et al., *Order to Drop Adams Case Prompts Resignations in New York and Washington*, N.Y. Times (Feb. 13, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/02/13/nyregion/danielle-sassoon-quit-eric-adams.html>.

³ Glenn Thrush, *U.S. Attorney Rebuffed by Justice Dept. in Push to Escalate Inquiry Into Schumer*, N.Y. Times (Mar. 3, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/03/03/us/politics/us-attorney-justice-dept-schumer-inquiry.html>.

manufactured a pretextual criminal case in order to freeze and seize billions of dollars belonging to private groups.⁴

In less than three months since President Trump took office, the Department of Justice has taken multiple overt steps to undermine the fight against corruption at home and abroad. The Department has disbanded anti-kleptocracy working groups dedicated to combatting foreign corruption linked with drug cartels and transnational criminal organizations, halted nearly all enforcement of a law prohibiting bribery of foreign officials by U.S. companies, and limited the scope of another law requiring the registration of lobbyists for foreign countries. Additionally, President Trump has pardoned one former governor convicted of trying to sell a U.S. Senate seat and a former state senator convicted of illegally using campaign funds.⁵ If the Trump administration's goal was to encourage corruption and abuse of office, it is hard to know what it would do differently.

Attorney General Edward Levi established the Public Integrity Section to restore the public's confidence that the Department of Justice would root out—not enable—corruption in the United States. You should not allow the Department to renege on this promise under your leadership. In the absence of such a commitment, I request a briefing as soon as possible on any plans to restructure or restaff the Public Integrity Section, including any intended changes to Department policies related to the Public Integrity Section and its role in consulting on all investigations involving Members of Congress and congressional staff.

Sincerely,



Sheldon Whitehouse
Ranking Member
Senate Judiciary Subcommittee on
Federal Courts, Oversight,
Agency Action, and
Federal Rights

⁴ Letter from Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse to Hon. Pam Bondi, Attorney General of the United States, & Hon. Kash Patel, Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation 2 (Mar. 11, 2025), <https://www.whitehouse.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/2025-03-11-Letter-to-DOJ-and-FBI-re-Greenhouse-Gas-Reduction-Fund.pdf>.

⁵ Julie Bosman, *Trump Pardons Rod Blagojevich, the Former Illinois Governor*, N.Y. Times (Feb. 10, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/02/10/us/politics/rod-bлагоjevich-trump-pardon.html>; Jonathan Mattise, *Ex-Tennessee lawmaker announces pardon from Trump 2 weeks into prison time*, ABC News (Mar. 12, 2025), <https://abcnews.go.com/US/wireStory/tennessee-lawmaker-announces-trumps-pardon-2-weeks-prison-119714730>.