

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 21, 2025

Christina Butler
Chief, FOIA/PA Unit
Criminal Division
Department of Justice
950 Constitution Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20530

Dear FOIA Officer:

Implicit in Article I of the Constitution is Congress's power of inquiry, which is an essential component of Congress's legislative and oversight functions. Concurrent with inquiries we have made to the Department of Justice pursuant to our Article I oversight authority, which have not yet received a response, we are submitting a parallel expedited request under the Freedom of Information Act, 5 U.S.C. § 552, and 28 C.F.R. Part 16, for the following records.

Requested Records

On February 5, 2025, Attorney General Pam Bondi announced the disbanding of the Justice Department's anti-kleptocracy initiatives, including Task Force KleptoCapture, the Kleptocracy Team, and the Kleptocracy Asset Recovery Initiative.

Please produce within twenty business days the following records:

1. All records documenting the number and statuses of pending cases undertaken by Task Force KleptoCapture, the Kleptocracy Team, and the Kleptocracy Asset Recovery Initiative.
2. All records reflecting funding specifically appropriated to support the work of Task Force KleptoCapture, and any unspent amounts thereof.
3. All records, including memoranda, organizational charts, and Reductions in Force (RIF) directives, relating to reductions in force or other personnel actions resulting in the reduction of the number of attorneys, investigators, or support staff in any Justice Department office or component after the disbanding of Task Force KleptoCapture, the Kleptocracy Team, and the Kleptocracy Asset Recovery Initiative.

For all parts of this request, please produce all responsive records from January 20, 2025, through the date the search is conducted.

Fee Waiver Request

In accordance with 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(A)(iii) and 28 C.F.R. § 16.10(k), a waiver of fees associated with processing this request is appropriate. Disclosure of the requested information is in the public interest because it (i) would shed light on the operations or activities of the government; (ii) would contribute

significantly to the general public's understanding of government operations and activities; and (iii) is necessary to carry out Congress's Article I oversight functions, as opposed to for a commercial purpose.

First, disclosure of the requested records would shed light on how and why the Department of Justice disbanded several anti-kleptocracy initiatives with a proven record of success. One such initiative was Task Force KleptoCapture, which had secured the forfeiture of, or consent to forfeiture of, approximately \$170 million worth of assets of private oligarchs unlawfully aiding Russia, with approximately \$450 million more pending in litigation. *See, e.g.,* Andrew Goudswaard, *Trump administration disbands task force targeting Russian oligarchs*, Reuters (Feb. 6, 2025), <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/trump-administration-disbands-task-force-targeting-russian-oligarchs-2025-02-06/>; Alex Dziadosz, *How to Hide a 350-Foot Megayacht*, New York Times (May 27, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/05/27/magazine/trump-offshore-money-russia-oligarchs.html>. In addition, the Kleptocracy Asset Recovery Initiative was a 15-year-old program that had recovered more than \$1.7 billion by the end of 2023 for the benefit of people harmed by acts of corruption and abuse of office. *See, e.g.,* *Letter from Senator Sheldon Whitehouse to Attorney General Pam Bondi* (Feb. 28, 2025), https://www.whitehouse.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/2025-02-28_Letter-re-Disbanding-of-Anti-Kleptocracy-Initiatives_FINAL.pdf. Congress and the public have a strong interest in knowing why the Justice Department shuttered these programs.

Second, disclosure of the requested records would contribute significantly to the general public's understanding of the rationale behind the disbanding of the anti-kleptocracy initiatives and the subsequent impact of the disbanding on personnel and pending litigation. This information is not already in the public domain, despite congressional oversight requests. Upon receipt of these records, we intend to disseminate pertinent information along with our analysis through publication on our offices' various platforms, which will enhance the public's understanding of the government's activities.

Third, the request is wholly for non-commercial purposes. Our Senate offices operate as part of the federal government. We seek the requested information not for commercial use, but to aid in congressional oversight, good government, and transparency for the American people.

Expedited Processing Request

Pursuant to 5 U.S.C. 552(a)(6)(E) and 28 C.F.R. § 16.5(e)(1)(ii) and (iv), expedited processing is warranted. Expedition is required when there is a compelling need for the requested information, including where requests involve urgency to inform the public concerning actual or alleged federal government activity or a matter of widespread and exceptional media interest in which there exist possible questions about the government's integrity that affect public confidence. We certify to be true and correct to the best of our knowledge that circumstances warranting expedited processing exist here.

First, Congress has the constitutional authority to legislate and conduct oversight and is entitled to the expeditious disclosure of information to facilitate those processes. The requested information relates to the abrupt disbanding of several successful Justice Department anti-kleptocracy initiatives. Timely provision of this information is vital for Congress to perform its constitutionally mandated legislative and oversight functions.

Second, it is urgent that the public be made aware of all facts and circumstances regarding the disbanding of anti-kleptocracy initiatives given Russia's ongoing invasion of Ukraine and Task Force KleptoCapture's highly effective private oligarch asset seizure efforts before its disbanding. Upon receipt of these records, we intend to disseminate pertinent information along with our analysis through publication on our offices' various platforms.

Third, there is widespread and exceptional media interest in this matter, which, as explained above, raises questions about the government's integrity that affect public confidence. *See, e.g.,* Peter Whoriskey, *Disbanded anti-kleptocracy unit had entangled Trump allies*, Washington Post (Mar. 27, 2025), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2025/03/27/trump-allies-disbanded-prosecution-unit-kleptocracy/>.

Guidance Regarding the Search & Processing of Requested Records

Please search for responsive records regardless of format, medium, or physical characteristics. In conducting the search, please construe the terms “record,” “document,” and “information” in their broadest sense, including any written, typed, recorded, graphic, printed, or audio or video material of any kind. Any request for “records” includes any attachments to those records or other materials enclosed with those records when they were previously transmitted. Any request for “communications” includes, but is not limited to, emails, letters, memoranda, calendar invitations, text messages, direct messages, and attachments thereto. To the extent that an email is responsive to a request, the request includes all prior messages sent or received in that email chain, as well as any attachments to the email.

Please search all relevant records or systems containing records regarding agency business. Do not exclude records regarding agency business contained in files, email accounts, or devices in the personal custody of your officials, such as personal email accounts or text messages. Records of official business conducted using unofficial systems or stored outside of official files are subject to the Federal Records Act and FOIA.

FOIA requires agencies to disclose records to Congress that may otherwise be withheld from the public. 5 U.S.C. § 552(d). If it is your position that any of the requested documents are nonetheless exempted from disclosure requirements, please provide a *Vaughn* index as required by *Vaughn v. Rosen*, 484 F. 2d 820 (D.C. Cir. 1973); *see also Roth v. U.S. Dept. of Justice*, 642 F. 3d 1161, 1185 (D.C. Cir. 2011) (“Under our case law, agencies invoking a FOIA exemption must provide a specific, detailed explanation of why the exemption applies to the withheld materials.”). FOIA also requires agencies to release “any reasonably segregable portions” of documents that may be partially exempt and to prepare “an index relating any withheld portions to specific FOIA exemptions.” *Lykins v. U.S. Dept. of Justice*, 725 F.2d 1455, 1466 (D.C. Cir. 1984).

Where possible, please provide responsive material in an electronic format by email. Please send any responsive material being sent by email to Annie_Owens@judiciary-dem.senate.gov. Please send any material being mailed to Sheldon Whitehouse, 530 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20510. If it will accelerate release of responsive records, please provide responsive material on a rolling basis.

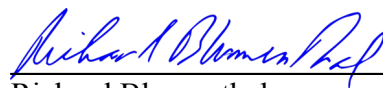
Conclusion

We look forward to working with the Department of Justice to ensure the timely and exhaustive disclosure of all non-exempt records responsive to this request. If you have any questions regarding how to construe this request or believe that further discussions regarding search and processing would facilitate a more efficient production, please do not hesitate to contact us. If the request for a fee waiver is denied in part or in full, please contact our offices immediately. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator
Ranking Member,
Subcommittee on Federal
Courts, Oversight, Agency
Action, and Federal Rights



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Adam B. Schiff
United States Senator

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 21, 2025

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Chief, Initial Request Staff
Office of the Attorney General
Office of the Deputy Attorney General
Department of Justice
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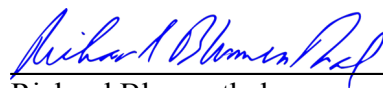
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United States Senator
Ranking Member,
Subcommittee on Federal
Courts, Oversight, Agency
Action, and Federal Rights



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



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