

# United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6275

February 20, 2025

Pam Bondi  
Attorney General  
U.S. Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20530

Emil Bove  
Acting Deputy Attorney General  
U.S. Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20530

Dear Attorney General Bondi and Acting Deputy Attorney General Bove:

We write to strongly object to your alarming decision to grant decision-making authority regarding sensitive ethics and personnel issues—responsibilities long assigned to a senior career Department of Justice (DOJ) official<sup>1</sup>—to two inexperienced political appointees.<sup>2</sup> This decision is a dramatic departure from practice under previous Democratic and Republican administrations, where a senior DOJ career official had decision-making responsibilities on matters related to ethics, employee discipline, whistleblower complaints, and information provided to inspectors general and Congress. Previous administrations did not consider granting these responsibilities to political appointees for good reason; politicizing this role is profoundly dangerous to the integrity of the Department and threatens the employees who work there.

These changes—reportedly outlined in a January 27 memo from Acting Deputy Attorney General Emil Bove—sideline a well-qualified and experienced career official, thereby removing a roadblock to potentially unethical actions by you and your political subordinates. The January 27 memo reassigned these responsibilities to Mr. Bove’s chief of staff, who graduated from law school in 2021, and a former criminal defense attorney who served on President Donald Trump’s defense team.<sup>3</sup> According to the memo, these two individuals, both of whom have never worked at the Department before, will have final decision-making authority with respect to “adverse personnel actions and bar referral matters.”<sup>4</sup> The memo also reportedly provides these political appointees with the authority to decide “ethics recusals and waivers [and] nominee financial disclosures,” as well as “referrals from the Office of Special Counsel, which investigates federal employee whistleblower complaints; inspector general requests for access to grand jury material; and disclosures to Congress.”<sup>5</sup> Additionally, the memo gives these political appointees the authority to approve waivers that allow Department officials—such as yourselves—to participate

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<sup>1</sup> Sarah N. Lynch, *U.S. Justice Department senior career ethics official removed from post, source says*, REUTERS (Jan. 27, 2025), <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/us-justice-department-senior-career-ethics-official-removed-post-source-says-2025-01-27/>.

<sup>2</sup> Ben Penn, *Trump DOJ Assigns Sensitive Ethics Power to Political Aids*, BLOOMBERG LAW (Feb. 16, 2025), <https://news.bloomberglaw.com/us-law-week/trump-doj-delegates-sensitive-ethics-powers-to-political-aides> (describing the contents of a January 27 memo from Emil Bove).

<sup>3</sup> *Id.*

<sup>4</sup> *Id.*

<sup>5</sup> *Id.*

in matters in which the officials have a personal financial interest and otherwise would be recused.<sup>6</sup>

Attorney General Bondi, this new directive is in direct conflict with promises made by you, under oath, to Congress and the American people during your confirmation hearing. When Ranking Member Durbin asked you about your many potential conflicts of interest as a former lobbyist—including your representation of foreign regimes like Qatar, corporate giants like Amazon and Uber, and the private prison company, the GEO Group—you responded that, to avoid conflicts, you “would consult with the *career ethics officials within the Department* and make the appropriate decision” (emphasis added).<sup>7</sup> In your written responses to senators’ questions after your confirmation hearing, you again pledged that you would consult with career ethics officials to avoid conflicts of interest.<sup>8</sup> When asked at his February 12, 2025, Senate Judiciary Committee nomination hearing to be Deputy Attorney General whether he would recuse himself from DOJ’s review of Special Counsel Smith’s investigation of President Trump, Todd Blanche, who served as the President’s criminal defense attorney, testified to the Committee that he “will follow the rules, as told to [him] by the experts, career prosecutors in the department.”<sup>9</sup> By transferring responsibilities for ethics decisions from a senior career ethics official to political appointees, you have coincidentally removed the appropriate career ethics official with whom you and your colleagues promised to consult.

Attorney General Bondi, your sworn testimony misled Congress and the American people and Mr. Bove’s directive eliminated a critical safeguard against corruption within the Department. Business leaders from wealthy corporations were reportedly optimistic upon President Trump’s announcement that he intended to nominate you as Attorney General,<sup>10</sup> and, without a serious check on DOJ leadership’s decision-making regarding corporate interests, we are concerned that you will fail to hold companies accountable.<sup>11</sup> Already, on February 5, you signed a memo disbanding Task Force KleptoCapture, which coordinated the investigation of certain companies for illegal exports and money laundering, and announced steps to scale back

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<sup>6</sup> *Id.*

<sup>7</sup> *The Nomination of the Hon. Pamela Jo Bondi to be Att’y Gen. of the U.S. Before the S. Comm. on the Judiciary*, 119th Cong. 37-38 (2025) (on file with Committee).

<sup>8</sup> Sen. Alex Padilla, *Questions for the Rec., Hearing on The Nomination of Pamela Jo Bondi, Nominee to be Att’y Gen. of the U.S. Before the S. Comm. on the Judiciary*, 119th Cong. 10 (2025) (statement of Pamela Jo Bondi, Att’y Gen. of the U.S., Nominee); Sen. Cory A. Booker, *Questions for the Rec., Hearing on The Nomination of Pamela Jo Bondi, Nominee to be Att’y Gen. of the U.S. Before the S. Comm. on the Judiciary*, 119th Cong. 7 (2025) (statement of Pamela Jo Bondi, Att’y Gen. of the U.S., Nominee); Sen. Mazie Hirono, *Questions for the Rec., Nominations Hearing Before the S. Comm. on the Judiciary*, 119th Cong. 14 (2025) (statement of Pamela Jo Bondi, Att’y Gen. of the U.S., Nominee).

<sup>9</sup> *The Nomination of the Todd Blanche to be Deputy Att’y Gen. of the U.S. Before the S. Comm. on the Judiciary*, 119th Cong. 37-38 (2025) (on file with Committee).

<sup>10</sup> Hailey Fuchs, *Pam Bondi will face an ethics quagmire as attorney general*, POLITICO (Dec. 07, 2024), <https://www.politico.com/news/2024/12/07/pam-bondi-doj-ethics-00192890> (referencing corporate mergers, a Republican lobbyist stated Bondi “reinforce[s] that idea that we’re going back to normalcy on deal flow” and “[s]he understands that companies need to have an opportunity to be heard.”).

<sup>11</sup> See e.g., Eric Lipton, *Pam Bondi, a \$25,000 Donation and Trump University: Questions Remain*, NEW YORK TIMES (Nov. 22, 2024), <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/11/22/us/politics/pam-bondi-trump-university.html> (detailing how Pam Bondi failed, as Florida’s Attorney General, to initiate a fraud investigation against Trump University despite complaints against the University and after receiving a \$25,000 donation from Trump).

efforts to enforce laws related to foreign lobbying transparency and bribes of foreign officials.<sup>12</sup> You largely decapitated the division that goes after major corporate polluters. And now, important decisions on ethical questions related to companies that you have lobbied on behalf of—businesses with an extraordinary reach that impact millions of American consumers—will be made by political aides who report to you.

This Committee has a constitutional obligation to perform oversight over the Department and its components. To that end, we also ask that you provide the following information:

1. The January 27, 2025 memo or “delegation order” from Acting Deputy Attorney General Emil Bove detailing the responsibilities of Jordan Fox and Kendra Wharton;
2. Records reflecting or relating to the scope of the January 27, 2025 memo or “delegation order” prior to its issuance;
3. Records reflecting or relating to implementation of the January 27, 2025 memo or “delegation order” prior to its issuance;
4. Records reflecting or relating to the removal of Associate Deputy Attorney General Bradley Weinsheimer from his position with authority over ethics and employee discipline; and
5. Copies of “delegation orders” issued during the previous Trump Administration and the Biden Administration assigning authorities currently delegated to Jordan Fox and Kendra Wharton.

We call on you to produce these materials at your earliest possible convenience, and no later than March 6, 2025.

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<sup>12</sup> Mem. from Att’y Gen. to All Dep’t Employees regarding “Total Elimination of Cartels and Transnational Criminal Organizations,” <https://www.justice.gov/ag/media/1388546/dl?inline> (Feb. 5, 2025); *see also* Corporate Enforcement Tracker, Public Citizen (Feb. 11, 2025), <https://www.citizen.org/article/corporate-enforcement-trump-tracker/> (describing cases impacted by decision to disband Task Force KleptoCapture and other cases “at risk of being dropped, weakened, or otherwise modified by the incoming Trump administration”); Ben Penn, *Bondi Diminishes Justice Department White Collar Enforcement*, BLOOMBERG LAW (Feb. 5, 2025), <https://news.bloomberglaw.com/us-law-week/bondi-scales-back-us-justice-department-white-collar-enforcement>.

Sincerely,



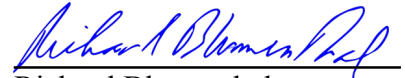
Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator



Mazie K. Hirono  
United States Senator



Adam B. Schiff  
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator



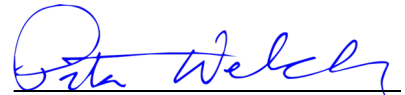
Amy Klobuchar  
United States Senator



Alex Padilla  
United States Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse  
United States Senator



Peter Welch  
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker  
United States Senator



Christopher A. Coons  
United States Senator

cc: The Honorable Charles E. Grassley  
Chairman, Senate Committee on the Judiciary

cc: The Honorable Michael E. Horowitz  
Inspector General, U.S. Department of Justice Office of the Inspector General