

President Donald Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave, NW
Washington, D.C. 20050

Dear Mr. President:

We write to express our concerns with recent reports that the White House may have instructed certain Federal agencies to refuse requests for information from Democratic members of Congress. If true, such an instruction would be a significant departure from the practices of past Administrations and seriously inhibit Congress's ability to fulfill its legislative and oversight duties.

Congress has a constitutional obligation to conduct oversight, and the Supreme Court has long recognized the need for the legislative branch to obtain information from the executive branch. The Court has stated that "[t]he scope of [Congress'] power of inquiry ... is as penetrating and far-reaching as the potential power to enact and appropriate under the Constitution" and this power "encompasses inquiries concerning the administration of existing laws as well as proposed or possibly needed statutes." There has also been judicial recognition that Congress, including its members in the minority, "must have the widest possible access to executive branch information if it is to perform its manifold responsibilities effectively."

Since the start of your Administration, members of Congress have requested information from the Federal agencies on a number of issues, including health care, the economy, immigration, the environment, and national security. While some agencies have responded to limited number of these requests, most have gone unanswered. If at the instruction of the White House information is being intentionally withheld on a partisan basis, such actions would be simply unacceptable.

When Congress raises legitimate questions, the response of any Administration should be to provide answers that ensure the confidence of the American people—not to obstruct congressional effort to promote transparency, accountability, and good governance. Federal agencies should generally provide information voluntarily in response to congressional requests, especially if these agencies would be required to provide the same information to the general public if requested under the Freedom of Information Act.

For these reasons, we request that you clarify that your Administration will not refuse requests for information from Congress, including Democratic members, and will provide the courtesy of a response to congressional inquiries in a timely and comprehensive manner. If there are disagreements between co-equal branches of government regarding access to information, we ask that your Administration work in good faith to resolve any disputes.

Sincerely,
Senator Charles E. Schumer, Senate Democratic Leader
Senator Dick Durbin, Minority Whip and Assistant Democratic Leader
Senator Patty Murray, Ranking Member on the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions

Senator Debbie Stabenow, Ranking Member on the Committee on Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry

Senator Bernie Sanders, Ranking Member on Committee on the Budget

Senator Amy Klobuchar, Ranking Member on the Committee on Rules and Administration

Senator Tom Carper, Ranking Member on the Committee on Environment and Public Works

Senator Bob Casey, Vice Chair on the Special Committee on Aging

Senator Ron Wyden, Ranking Member on the Committee on Finance

Senator Jack Reed, Ranking Member on the Committee on Armed Services

Senator Sherrod Brown, Ranking Member on the Committee on Banking, Housing, and Urban Affairs

Senator Dianne Feinstein, Ranking Member on the Committee on the Judiciary

Senator Tom Udall, Vice Chair on the Committee on Indian Affairs

Senator Patrick Leahy, Vice Chairman on the Committee on Appropriations

Senator Maria Cantwell, Ranking Member on the Committee on Energy and Natural Resources

Senator Mark Warner, Vice Chairman on the Select Committee on Intelligence.