

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 30, 2025

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Trump:

We write regarding your demolition of the East Wing of the White House to make room for a ballroom funded by \$300 million¹ in special interest money.

The decision to demolish the East Wing of the White House is not responsible stewardship of public property but is instead an unauthorized, unprecedented, and likely unlawful misuse of federal authority. This demolition occurs while the government remains shut down due to your refusal even to consider action to reduce soaring health insurance premiums for tens of millions of Americans. We demand lawful transparency related to this project.

The solicitation and acceptance of private funding for this project presents a profound risk of pay-to-play corruption. By substituting transparent, appropriated federal funds with opaque private donations, you permit wealthy special interests to buy access to the President and influence over official decisions. As President George W. Bush's former chief ethics lawyer said: "People who want to be in good with the president are going to write checks."²

Reporting suggests that you have already collected around \$200 million from government contractors and other companies with financial interests in government decisions including Lockheed Martin (\$10 million), Google (\$5 million), Booz Allen Hamilton, Meta, Palantir, and Caterpillar.³ Stephen Schwarzman, CEO of the Blackstone Group, and Harold Hamm, Chair of Continental Resources and one of your top fossil fuel industry donors, also gave undisclosed amounts.⁴ Of the approximately \$200 million already collected, only \$60 million can be tied to specific donors. The public has a right to know exactly who is funding the destruction of a protected historic structure, how much they are contributing, and what, if anything, they have been promised in return.

¹ Luke Broadwater, "Trump is Wasting No Time in Tearing Down the East Wing," *New York Times* (Oct. 22, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/10/22/us/politics/east-wing-white-house-demolition-trump.html>.

² Ashleigh Fields, "Hillary Clinton: Trump 'destroying' White House with demolition for ballroom," *The Hill* (Oct. 21, 2025), <https://thehill.com/homenews/administration/5565322-trump-ballroom-project-slammed/>; see also Meridith McGraw and Annie Linskey, "Trump Hosts Corporate Ballroom Donors at Glitzy White House Dinner," *Wall Street Journal* (Oct. 15, 2025), https://www.wsj.com/politics/policy/trump-ballroom-donors-white-house-dinner-ccba9448?reflink=desktopwebshare_permalink.

³ Alan Jaffe, "Trump's White House Ballroom Sparks Questions About Funding and Ethics," *FactCheck* (Oct. 22, 2025), <https://www.factcheck.org/2025/10/trumps-white-house-ballroom-sparks-questions-about-funding-and-ethics/>.

⁴ Arden Fahri & Jennifer Jacobs, "Who's paying for the White House ballroom and what's in it for them," *CBS News* (Sep. 19, 2025), <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/trump-white-house-ballroom-donor-names/>; Timothy Cama, "Harold Hamm, NextEra Energy among Trump's ballroom donors," *E&E News* (Oct. 23, 2025), <https://subscriber.politicopro.com/article/eenews/2025/10/23/harold-hamm-nextera-among-trumps-ballroom-donors-00620336>.

Your approach to this project is also likely illegal. To alter our capital complex, the federal government must follow the statutory process outlined in 40 U.S.C. § 3307, requiring the General Services Administration (GSA) to get Congressional approval. Without approval from the Senate Committee on Environment and Public Works, construction or alteration of a public building is forbidden. Similarly, federal Standards for Rehabilitation maintained by the Secretary of the Interior provide explicit guidance for construction projects affecting historic properties to protect the historic fabric of the properties and important architectural features.⁵

Additionally, 40 U.S.C. § 8722(b)(1) requires that the National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) review and comment on plans for federal buildings before final site or design approval. Multiple NCPC commissioners have come forward to note that this project is “all being managed by a single person at the highest level” but that NCPC’s members are reluctant to come forward out of “fear [for your] penchant for punishing those who don’t bend to [your] will.”⁶ And in other action to eliminate anyone standing in your way, on October 28, 2025, you fired all six members of the *independent* Commission of Fine Arts—established by Congress in 1910 to provide advice to you and other officials on design and preservation for projects such as the ballroom construction—in order to replace them with, in a White House official’s own words, “a new slate of members who are more aligned with Mr. Trump’s policies.”⁷

The National Trust for Historic Preservation issued a public plea to your Administration and the National Park Service—which manages the land on which the White House sits and has traditionally played a lead role in White House projects—to pause the demolition of the East Wing until the legally required review and consultation processes with NCPC and others were complete.⁸ The demolition went ahead anyway.

Past presidents of both parties have gone through standard reviews and consultations before making renovations to the White House—even you. In 1949, President Truman initiated the last major structural overhaul of the White House. Congress authorized his renovations and created a commission to ensure safety, efficiency, and practicality in such a large project.⁹ President Truman also assigned GSA to supervise the renovation. Since then, GSA has managed *all* renovations to the White House’s core infrastructure—often alongside NPS—until now.¹⁰

⁵ National Park Service, *The Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties: Rehabilitation as a Treatment and Standards for Rehabilitation*, accessed Oct. 24, 2025, <https://www.nps.gov/articles/000/treatment-standards-rehabilitation.htm>.

⁶ Jonathan Edwards & Dan Diamond, “Trump put allies on obscure board set to decide White House ballroom’s fate,” *Washington Post* (Oct. 28, 2025), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2025/10/28/trump-ballroom-planning-commission/>.

⁷ Chris Cameron, “White House Fires Commission Overseeing Trump’s D.C. Building Projects,” *New York Times* (Oct. 28, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/10/28/us/politics/trump-white-house-commission-fine-arts.html>.

⁸ Letter from Dr. Carol Quillen, Chief Executive Officer, National Trust for Historic Preservation, to Mr. William Scharf, National Capital Planning Commission, Ms. Jessica Bowron, National Park Service, and Ms. Billie Tsien, Commission of Fine Arts (Oct. 21, 2025), <https://cdn.savingplaces.org/2025/10/21/16/37/39/cef1be54-2bad-4340-8724-4075af333a93/WH%20Ballroom%20Letter.pdf>.

⁹ National Archives, Truman Library, *Records of Temporary Committees, Commissions and Boards: Records of the Commission on the Renovation of the Executive Mansion (Record Group 220)*, accessed Oct. 24, 2025, <https://www.trumanlibrary.gov/library/federal-record/records-temporary-committees-commissions-and-boards-records-commission>.

¹⁰ U.S. General Services Administration, *Our mission’s evolution*, accessed Oct. 24, 2025, <https://www.gsa.gov/about-us/mission-and-background/our-missions-evolution>; Jason Miller, “GSA: 75 years of adapting to the changing needs of agencies,” *Federal News Network* (Aug. 5, 2024), <https://federalnewsnetwork.com/federal->

The current NCPC Chairman has argued nonsensically that you did not need NCPC's approval to tear down the East Wing because NCPC has jurisdiction over construction, not demolition, as if the demolition was not a necessary precursor to construction.¹¹ At least one NCPC commissioner has stated publicly that "the Park Service has been shut out of the most important planning decisions regarding the ballroom building."¹²

Notably, even your first Administration worked closely with GSA on the \$3.4 million repair of the South Portico steps of the White House in 2017.¹³ To date, neither you nor GSA has contacted Congress about the proposed plans for the ballroom. The private donations for the ballroom do not negate your obligation to work with Congress and executive branch agencies to follow the law.

On July 31, 2025, you promised that your ballroom project would not alter the existing White House structure.¹⁴ You said: "It won't interfere with the current building. It'll be near it but not touching it and pay total respect to the existing building, which I'm the biggest fan of."¹⁵ Nevertheless, on October 20, 2025, excavators tore into the edifice that has housed First Lady's staff and wartime shelters since 1942.¹⁶ Where the East Wing once stood now sits a pile of rubble:



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report/2024/08/gsa-75-years-of-adapting-to-the-changing-needs-of-agencies/.

¹¹ Edwards & Diamond, *supra* note 6.

¹² *Id.*

¹³ *Id.*; Nick Mafi, "The White House West Wing Has a Brand-New Look," *Architectural Digest* (Aug. 24, 2017), <https://www.architecturaldigest.com/story/the-white-house-west-wing-has-brand-new-look>.

¹⁴ Broadwater, *supra* note 1 (citing Zolan Kanno-Youngs, "White House Unveils Plan for \$200 Million Ballroom, Trump's Long-Sought Imprint," *New York Times* (Jul. 31, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/07/31/us/politics/white-house-ballroom-trump.html>).

¹⁵ *Id.*

¹⁶ Stewart McLaurin, "An Ever-Changing White House," *The White House Historical Association*, accessed Oct. 24, 2025, <https://www.whitehousehistory.org/an-ever-changing-white-house>.

¹⁷ Dan Diamond, et al., "White House expands East Wing demolition as critics decry Trump overreach," *Washington Post* (Oct. 21, 2025), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2025/10/21/white-house-continues-east-wing-demolition-amid-cries-trump-overreach/>.

As ranking members of the Environment and Public Works Committee, with jurisdiction over U.S. federal buildings and GSA, the Energy and Natural Resources Committee, with jurisdiction over NPS, which manages the land on which the White House sits, and the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee, with jurisdiction over government ethics and the NCPC, we request the following information and documents—pursuant to our obligations and rights to conduct Congressional oversight of the executive branch—by no later than November 13, 2025:

1. Did the General Services Administration (GSA) approach you, or did you approach GSA, about collaboration on a prospectus for the ballroom project? Please provide details regarding the time(s) of any such meeting(s), your response(s), and all related communications.
2. Did the National Park Service (NPS) approach you, or did you approach NPS, about collaboration on the ballroom project? Please provide details regarding the time(s) of any such meeting(s), your response(s), and all related communications.
3. Please provide an itemized list of each donor and respective donation amounts, as well as all related donation documentation.
4. For each donor, please provide all communications dating from January 20, 2025, with your administration regarding any business currently active before or with the government.
5. For each donor, please provide all communications dating from January 20, 2025, with you or any representative of the Trump Organization, or any other companies affiliated with you or your family, regarding any real or potential business transactions.
6. Were any of the donors foreign individuals or entities? At any time, did you, your administration, or anyone representing you or your administration solicit donations from foreign individuals or entities? Please identify them.
7. Please provide a breakdown of all funds used or planned for use for this project (*e.g.*, appropriated funds, private donations, specific budget accounts, etc.) and final plans for the ballroom.
8. Please describe in detail what efforts were taken to preserve and protect historical items and furnishings previously within the East Wing prior to its demolition.
9. Please provide all documents related to:
 - a. Any bids, contracts, and solicitations demonstrating compliance with Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR).
 - b. Any National Capital Planning Commission (NCPC) and Commission of Fine Arts (CFA) submitted plans, transcripts of review meetings, and evidence of necessary approvals for exterior alterations to a protected structure in the Monumental Core.

- c. The termination of all six sitting members of the CFA on October 28, 2025.
- d. Any Presidential Memorandum on Federal Real Property Management with justification for why demolition, rather than renovation or adaptive reuse, was deemed necessary for a structure central to the nation's history.
- e. A full environmental assessment or environmental impact statement.
- f. Asbestos and lead paint abatement plans, and documentation ensuring compliance with the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA) and related regulations regarding waste disposal.
- g. A detailed plan for the handling, transportation, and final disposal of demolition debris, including efforts to recycle or divert materials from landfills.

Sincerely,



Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator
Ranking Member
Committee on Environment
and Public Works



Martin Heinrich
United States Senator
Ranking Member
Committee on Energy and
Natural Resources



Gary C. Peters
United States Senator
Ranking Member
Committee on Homeland
Security and
Governmental Affairs

cc: Senator Shelley Moore Capito
Chairman, Senate Committee on Environment & Public Works

Senator Mike Lee
Chairman, Senate Committee on Energy & Natural Resources

Senator Rand Paul
Chairman, Senate Committee on Homeland Security & Governmental Affairs

Mr. Michael Rigas
Acting Administrator, General Services Administration

Ms. Jessica Bowron
Acting Director, National Park Service

Mr. William Scharf
Chair, National Capital Planning Commission

Dr. Carol Quillen
President & Chief Executive Officer, National Trust for Historic Preservation