



CITIZENS FOR  
RESPONSIBILITY &  
ETHICS IN WASHINGTON

February 5, 2026

VIA EMAIL: [SIRecordsReq@si.edu](mailto:SIRecordsReq@si.edu)

Jessica Sanet  
Associate General Counsel  
Smithsonian Institution  
Office of General Counsel  
MRC 012  
P.O. Box 37012  
Washington, DC 20013-7012

**Re: Request for Smithsonian Institution Information**

Dear Information Request Officer:

Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (“CREW”) submits this request for records pursuant to Smithsonian Institution (“Smithsonian” or “SI”) information policy.<sup>1</sup>

Specifically, CREW requests:

1. Final decisions, policies, memoranda, or other internal documents related to records, historical artifacts, monuments, and other physical materials moved or relocated pursuant to or as a result of Smithsonian’s implementation of Executive Order 14253, *Restoring Truth and Sanity to American History*.<sup>2</sup>
2. Records sufficient to provide the current locations of all records, historical artifacts, monuments, and other materials moved or relocated pursuant to or as a result of Smithsonian’s implementation of Executive Order 14253, *Restoring Truth and Sanity to American History*.

The above request excludes records consisting solely of news articles, press clippings, and other publicly-available material, so long as the records include no accompanying discussion by Smithsonian officials.

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<sup>1</sup> Smithsonian Directive 807 (March 20, 2023), [https://www.si.edu/sites/default/files/unit/OGC/sd\\_807\\_w\\_attachsmithsonian\\_directive\\_807\\_-\\_requests\\_for\\_smithsonian\\_institution\\_information\\_disclosure\\_policy.pdf](https://www.si.edu/sites/default/files/unit/OGC/sd_807_w_attachsmithsonian_directive_807_-_requests_for_smithsonian_institution_information_disclosure_policy.pdf). (“It is the policy of the Smithsonian Institution...to respond timely to written requests for Smithsonian information consistent with the principles of disclosure under the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and in a manner that fosters openness and accountability and supports the Smithsonian’s mission.”)

<sup>2</sup> Exec. Order No. 14253, 90 C.F.R. 14559 (Apr. 3, 2025).



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Please search for responsive records regardless of format, medium, or physical characteristics. We seek records of any kind, including paper records, electronic records, audiotapes, videotapes, photographs, data, and graphical material. Our request includes without limitation all correspondence, letters, emails, text messages, facsimiles, telephone messages, voice mail messages, and transcripts, notes, or minutes of any meetings, telephone conversations, or discussions. Our request also includes any attachments to emails and other records, and anyone who was cc'ed or bcc'ed on any emails.

If it is your position any portion of the requested records is exempt from disclosure, CREW requests that you provide it with an index of those documents as required in FOIA contexts under *Vaughn v. Rosen*, 484 F.2d 820 (D.C. Cir. 1973). If some portions of the requested records are properly exempt from disclosure, please disclose any reasonably segregable non-exempt portions of the requested records. *See, e.g.*, 5 U.S.C. § 552(b). If it is your position that a document contains non-exempt segments, but that those non-exempt segments are so dispersed throughout the document as to make segregation impossible, please state what portion of the document is non-exempt, and how the material is dispersed throughout the document.

### **Fee Waiver Request**

In accordance with Smithsonian policy and 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(A), CREW requests a waiver of fees associated with processing this request for records. The subject of this request concerns the operations of the federal government as it relates to the Smithsonian. Disclosures will likely contribute to a better understanding of relevant government procedures by CREW and the general public in a significant way. *See id.* § 552(a)(4)(A)(iii). Moreover, the request primarily and fundamentally is for non-commercial purposes. *See, e.g., McClellan Ecological v. Carlucci*, 835 F.2d 1282, 1285 (9th Cir. 1987).

On March 27, 2025, President Trump issued Executive Order 14253, *Restoring Truth and Sanity to American History* (“the Executive Order”).<sup>3</sup> The purpose of the Executive Order is to counter what the Trump Administration calls a “revisionist movement” that “seeks to undermine the remarkable achievements of the United States by casting its founding principles and historical milestones in a negative light.”<sup>4</sup> To advance this policy, the Trump administration aims to “restore the Smithsonian Institution to its rightful place as a symbol of inspiration and American greatness” by removing “improper ideology.”<sup>5</sup> It also directs the Vice President and the Office of Management and Budget to work with Congress to ensure that future appropriations “prohibit expenditures on exhibits or programs that degrade shared American values, divide Americans based on race, or promote programs or ideologies inconsistent with federal law and policy.”

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<sup>3</sup> *See supra* n. 2.

<sup>4</sup> *Id.* Sec. 1.

<sup>5</sup> *Id.* Sec. 1; Sec. 2(a).



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On August 12, 2025, in a letter sent to Secretary Lonnie G. Bunch III, the Trump administration announced an internal review of Smithsonian exhibitions and materials “to assess tone, historical framing and alignment with American ideals.”<sup>6</sup> The letter required museums to adjust any content that the Administration finds problematic within 120 days, “replacing divisive or ideologically driven language with unifying, historically accurate and constructive descriptions.”<sup>7</sup> About a week later, the White House published a list of Smithsonian exhibits, programming, and artwork it considered objectionable.<sup>8</sup>

The Smithsonian is reportedly cooperating with the Trump administration’s demands as it relates to the Executive Order and August 12, 2025 letter. It agreed to establish a team to review Smithsonian materials that could be shared with the White House, and as of September 2025, has partially complied with the Administration’s demands for programming records.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, after facing increasing pressure from the White House to disclose even more records, the National Portrait Gallery removed references to President Trump’s two impeachments from his portrait display.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Letter from Lindsey Halligan, Special Assistant to the President and Senior Associate Staff Secretary, to the Honorable Lonnie G. Bunch III, Smithsonian Institution Secretary (Aug. 12, 2025), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/Letter-Sec.-Bunch-Smithsonian-8.12.2025.pdf>; see also Graham Bowley, Jennifer Schuessler, and Robin Pogrebin, *White House Announces Comprehensive Review of Smithsonian Exhibitions*, *The New York Times* (Aug. 12, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/08/12/arts/design/smithsonian-exhibitions-review-white-house-trump.html>.

<sup>7</sup> Halligan, *supra* n. 6.

<sup>8</sup> The White House listed 20 Smithsonian exhibits that it alleges are being used to frame historical events through “ideological” narratives instead of factual evidence. Those exhibits include an educational campaign at the National Museum of African American History and Culture titled “Being Antiracist”; an exhibit at the National Museum of the American Latino that portrays the U.S. as stolen land and characterizes U.S. history as rooted in colonization; depictions of Benjamin Franklin as a slave owner at the National Museum of American History; and an exhibit titled “LGBTQ+ History” at the National Museum of American History lauding the 50th anniversary of Title IX with a focus on transgender athletes. *President Trump is Right About the Smithsonian*, *The White House* (Aug. 21, 2025), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/articles/2025/08/president-trump-is-right-about-the-smithsonian/>; Ashleigh Fields, *White House lists 20 objectionable Smithsonian exhibits, artworks*, *The Hill* (Aug. 22, 2025), <https://thehill.com/homenews/administration/5465414-trump-administration-smithsonian-shakeup-exhibits/>.

<sup>9</sup> Graham Bowley, *White House Chides Smithsonian for Delayed Turnover of Programming Records*, *The New York Times* (Dec. 19, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/12/19/us/politics/smithsonian-records-trump.html?searchResultPosition=4>.

<sup>10</sup> Bill Barrow and Anna Johnson, *Reference to Trump’s impeachments is removed from the display of his Smithsonian photo portrait*, *Associated Press* (Jan. 11, 2026), <https://apnews.com/article/trump-smithsonian-impeachment-national-portrait-gallery-photo-47a192aa3fdb9c434e405812a36b455a>.



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The records CREW seeks would shed light on the Smithsonian's implementation of the Executive Order and its motivation to remove specific content from its museums. There is a sustained and significant interest in the Administration's actions as it relates to the Executive Order.<sup>11</sup> And given the Administration's rush to make significant changes to America's public sites in advance of the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, mere months from now, there is an urgent need to inform the public of how and why these significant decisions are being made. The American public has a right to know its history in all of its complexity. The records requested here would shed significant light on the Administration's brazen attempt to re-write America's story.

CREW is a non-profit corporation, organized under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. CREW is committed to protecting the public's right to be aware of the activities of government officials, to ensuring the integrity of those officials, and to highlighting and working to reduce the influence of money on politics. CREW uses a combination of research, litigation, and advocacy to advance its mission. CREW intends to analyze the information responsive to this request and to share its analysis with the public through reports, press releases, or other means. In addition, CREW will disseminate any documents it acquires from this request to the public through its website, [www.citizensforethics.org](http://www.citizensforethics.org). The release of information obtained through this request is not in CREW's financial interest.

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<sup>11</sup> Michelle Stoddart, Katherine Faulders, Rachel Scott, and Will Steakin, *Museums and parks must remove some items related to race and gender: Executive order*, ABC News (March 27, 2025), <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/museums-parks-remove-items-related-race-gender-executive/story?id=120236863>; Max Matza, *Trump targets 'anti-American ideology' at Smithsonian museums*, BBC (Mar. 27, 2025), <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cdjy1jmvvwzo>; Darlene Superville, *Trump executive order to force changes at Smithsonian Institution, targeting funding for programs with 'improper ideology'*, PBS (Mar. 28, 2026), <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/nation/trump-executive-order-to-force-changes-at-smithsonian-institution-targeting-funding-for-programs-with-improper-ideology>; Chloe Veltman, *Trump executive order seeks to 'restore' American history through Smithsonian overhaul*, NPR (Mar. 28, 2025), <https://www.npr.org/2025/03/27/nx-s1-5342914/smithsonian-president-trump-executive-order>; Graham Bowley and Robin Pogrebin, *The Smithsonian Faces New Pressure to Submit to Trump's Will*, The New York Times (Jan. 8, 2026), <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/01/08/arts/design/smithsonian-trump-pressure.html>; Meg Kinnard, Gary Fields, and Calvin Woodward, *Smithsonian responds to White House pressure by handing over more plans on its exhibits*, AP (Jan. 14, 2025), <https://apnews.com/article/smithsonian-deadline-trump-250-027cef04e347d5519b528e7dd632d65b>; Laura Fay and Scott Jacobson, *Slavery displays removed from Philadelphia historical site after Trump directive*, CBS News (Jan. 23, 2026), <https://www.cbsnews.com/philadelphia/news/presidents-house-independence-mall-slavery-trump/>; Jake Spring, *National park signs related to Native Americans, climate change to be removed*, The Washington Post (Jan. 27, 2026), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/climate-environment/2026/01/27/national-parks-signs-censorship/>.



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CREW further requests that it not be charged search or review fees for this request pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(A)(ii)(II) because CREW qualifies as a member of the news media. See *Nat'l Sec. Archive v. U.S. Dep't of Defense*, 880 F.2d 1381, 1386 (D.C. Cir. 1989) (holding non-profit a "representative of the news media" and broadly interpreting the term to include "any person or organization which regularly publishes or disseminates information to the public").

CREW routinely disseminates information obtained through FOIA to the public in several ways. For example, CREW's website receives over 150,000 page views every month. The website includes blogposts that report on and analyze newsworthy developments regarding government ethics, corruption, and money in politics, as well as numerous reports CREW has published to educate the public about these issues. These reports frequently rely on government records obtained through FOIA. CREW also posts the documents it obtains through FOIA on its website.

Under these circumstances, CREW satisfies fully the criteria for a fee waiver.

### **Conclusion**

If you have any questions about this request or foresee any problems in fully releasing the requested records, please email me at [mimran@citizensforethics.org](mailto:mimran@citizensforethics.org) and [foia@citizensforethics.org](mailto:foia@citizensforethics.org) or call me at (202) 408-5565. Also, if CREW's request for a fee waiver is denied, please contact our office immediately upon making such a determination.

Where possible, please produce records in electronic format. Please send the requested records to [mimran@citizensforethics.org](mailto:mimran@citizensforethics.org) and [foia@citizensforethics.org](mailto:foia@citizensforethics.org) or by mail to Mahnoor Imran, Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington, P.O. Box 14596, Washington, D.C. 20044.

Sincerely,

Mahnoor Imran  
Press Associate