



CITIZENS FOR  
RESPONSIBILITY &  
ETHICS IN WASHINGTON

March 10, 2026

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**Re: Freedom of Information Act Request**

Dear FOIA Officer:

Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (“CREW”) submits this request for records pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act (“FOIA”), 5 U.S.C. § 552, and Department of Justice (“DOJ”) regulations.

Specifically, CREW requests:

1. From January 20, 2021 to the date this request is processed, any Standard Form 95 or other document asserting an administrative claim for relief under the Federal Tort Claims Act (FTCA), 28 U.S.C. §§ 2671-2680, pursuant to 28 C.F.R. § 14.2, including all documentation, exhibits, affidavits, and evidence submitted with such claims, submitted by or on behalf of the following individuals (hereinafter the “named individuals”):
  - a. Michael T. Flynn, former National Security Advisor of the United States
  - b. Steve Bannon, former White House Chief Strategist
  - c. Waltine Nauta, aide to President Donald Trump
  - d. Peter Navarro, former director of the White House National Trade Council of the Office of Trade and Manufacturing Policy
  - e. Scott Jenkins, former Culpeper County (VA) Sheriff
  - f. George Santos, former U.S. Representative for New York’s 3rd congressional district
  - g. Changpeng Zhao, former CEO of Binance

- h. Paul Walczak, former nursing home executive
  - i. Trevor Milton, former executive chairman and CEO of Nikola Corporation
  - j. Joe Arpaio, former Maricopa County (AZ) Sheriff
  - k. George Papadopoulos, former advisor to President Donald Trump's 2016 presidential campaign
  - l. Roger Stone, former advisor to President Donald Trump's 2016 presidential campaign
  - m. Paul Manafort, former chairman of President Donald Trump's 2016 presidential campaign
  - n. Charles Kushner, United States ambassador to France and Monaco
2. From January 20, 2021 to the date this request is processed, any final denial, issued pursuant to 28 C.F.R. § 14.9(a), of an administrative claim for relief under the FTCA submitted by or on behalf of any of the named individuals, including the statement of reasons for the denial and any other accompanying documentation.
  3. From January 20, 2021 to the date this request is processed, any request for reconsideration of a final denial of any FTCA claim filed by or on behalf of any of the named individuals pursuant to 28 C.F.R. § 14.9(b), and any final disposition of the claim.
  4. From January 20, 2021 to the date this request is processed, any document memorializing an award, compromise, or settlement made pursuant to 28 C.F.R. § 14.10, regarding any FTCA claim submitted by or on behalf of any of the named individuals, including records sufficient to identify the amount of any payment made, any related Standard Form 1145, any evidence of approval of the payment by the Attorney General or his or her designee, and any other accompanying documentation.

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 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 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. See *Mead Data Central v. U.S. Dep't of the Air Force*, 566 F.2d 242, 261 (D.C. Cir. 1977).

Please be advised that CREW intends to pursue all legal remedies to enforce its rights under FOIA. Accordingly, because litigation is reasonably foreseeable, the agency should institute an agencywide preservation hold on all documents potentially responsive to this request.

### **Fee Waiver Request**

In accordance with 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(A) and agency regulations, 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, and the disclosures likely will 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).

The documents requested here relate to administrative claims under the FTCA submitted by the named individuals. The FTCA permits certain claims against the United States and its executive agencies under the FTCA for damages caused by federal employee conduct within the scope of that employee's federal employment.<sup>1</sup> Standard Form 95 may be used, but is not required, to present an FTCA claim and convey the information necessary to support the claim.<sup>2</sup> 28 C.F.R. §§ 14.9 and 14.10 establish the process by which an agency may deny or approve a claim, and how a claimant may request reconsideration of a denial. If an agency denies a claim or fails to respond within six months, the claimant may then file a lawsuit.

Recent reporting indicates that Michael Flynn, one of the named individuals, is in talks with the DOJ to settle a \$50 million FTCA claim arising from the Department's investigation and prosecution of Flynn during the first Trump administration.<sup>3</sup> President Trump later pardoned Flynn. Additionally, President Trump filed multiple FTCA claims seeking \$230 million in damages for alleged violations of his rights during multiple DOJ investigations into his own potentially criminal activity, including the investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election from which Flynn's FTCA claim also arises.<sup>4</sup>

These events, and their prominence, raise the possibility that other named individuals might have filed FTCA administrative claims seeking damages for the government's conduct while it was investigating or prosecuting them for an array of alleged

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of Justice Civil Division, *Documents and Forms* (last rev. Sept. 30, 2025), <https://www.justice.gov/civil/documents-and-forms-0>.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*

<sup>3</sup> Zoe Tillman, *Michael Flynn, DOJ in Settlement Talks Over \$50 Million Claim*, Bloomberg (Nov. 14, 2025), <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2025-11-14/michael-flynn-doj-in-settlement-talks-over-50-million-claim>.

<sup>4</sup> Devlin Barrett and Tyler Pager, *Trump Said to Demand Justice Dept. Pay Him \$230 Million for Past Cases*, New York Times (Oct. 21, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/10/21/us/politics/trump-justice-department-compensation.html>.

crimes. President Trump pardoned, commuted the sentences of, or ended investigations into nearly all of the named individuals.

The alleged crimes for which the named individuals were investigated, indicted, or convicted all involved possible abuses of the public trust and are therefore of grave public concern. The misconduct in which the named individuals were alleged or found to have engaged in include misusing campaign donations, defrauding corporate investors, evading taxes, obstructing justice, and abusing public office.

Multiple named individuals faced charges for misusing campaign funds. Steve Bannon allegedly misused more than one million dollars in campaign donations to President Trump's 2016 presidential campaign, partly to pay his own personal expenses.<sup>5</sup> President Trump pardoned Bannon before any trial began.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, former congressman George Santos was convicted of wire fraud and identity theft for misusing donations to his congressional campaign.<sup>7</sup> President Trump commuted the remainder of his seven-year sentence.<sup>8</sup>

Other named individuals were found to have engaged in corporate financial misconduct. Nikola Corp. founder Trevor Milton was convicted of fraud after making claims about the company that cost investors hundreds of thousands of dollars.<sup>9</sup> President Trump pardoned Milton, following a nearly \$2 million donation from Milton to President Trump's re-election campaign.<sup>10</sup> Additionally, former Binance CEO Changpeng Zhao pled guilty to allowing his cryptocurrency platform to be used for money laundering, but received a pardon from President Trump after he and Binance spent hundreds of thousands of dollars hiring lobbyists with close ties to the president.<sup>11</sup>

Three named individuals were previously convicted of tax crimes. Former healthcare executive Paul Walczak withheld nearly \$11 million in tax payments from the IRS, but avoided a prison sentence and a \$4.4 million fine when he received a pardon from President

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<sup>5</sup> Jonathan Lemire, Eric Tucker, and Jill Colvin, *Trump Pardons Ex-Strategist Steve Bannon, Dozens of Others*, AP News (Jan. 20, 2021), <https://apnews.com/article/steve-bannon-trump-pardons-broidy-66c82f25134735e742b2501c118723bb>.

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

<sup>7</sup> Leila Fadel, *Trump Commuted the Prison Sentence of George Santos. A Look at How It Happened*, NPR (Oct. 20, 2025), <https://www.npr.org/2025/10/20/nx-s1-5579580/trump-commuted-the-prison-sentence-of-george-santos-a-look-at-how-it-happened>.

<sup>8</sup> *Id.*

<sup>9</sup> Larry Neumeister, *4 Years in Prison for Nikola Corp Founder for Defrauding Investors on Claims of Zero-Emissions Trucks*, AP News (Dec. 18, 2023), <https://apnews.com/article/nikola-trevor-milton-prison-sentence-electric-trucks-b566d493e79fbcc3e35f3b6b57819c2>.

<sup>10</sup> Matt Ott, *Convicted of Bilking Investors, Nikola Founder and Trump Donor Gets a Presidential Pardon*, AP News (Mar. 28, 2025), <https://apnews.com/article/nikola-trevor-milton-fraud-trump-pardon-3fceb0a3820cecb205656f2dc3f6764>.

<sup>11</sup> Daniel Barnes, *Binance Founder's Pardon Shows Power of Trump Allies on K Street*, Politico (Oct. 25, 2025), <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/10/25/binance-zhao-pardon-lobby-00621788>.

Trump after Walczak's mother attended a \$1 million-per-person fundraising dinner hosted by President Trump.<sup>12</sup> Charles Kushner, the father-in-law of President Trump's daughter, also pled guilty to several counts of tax evasion as well as to counts of witness retaliation and lying to the Federal Election Commission; he completed his sentence in 2006 and received a pardon more than a decade later.<sup>13</sup> And Paul Manafort, who at one time served as the chairman of President Trump's 2016 presidential campaign, received a pardon from President Trump after being convicted on several counts of tax and bank fraud stemming from his lobbying on behalf of the then-Ukrainian president.<sup>14</sup>

Beyond financial misconduct, several of the named individuals were alleged or found to have impeded federal or congressional investigations by lying to or concealing information from investigators. Roger Stone and George Papadopoulos were found guilty of obstructing the congressional and FBI investigations, respectively, into Russian interference in the 2016 presidential election, but both received full pardons.<sup>15</sup> Additionally, Waltine Nauta was charged alongside President Trump for mishandling classified documents and purportedly concealing information from investigators before the Department of Justice dropped those charges in 2025.<sup>16</sup> Finally, Peter Navarro was convicted of contempt of Congress for refusing to cooperate with an investigation into the January 6, 2021 attack on the U.S. Capitol.<sup>17</sup> After serving a four-month prison sentence in 2024, Navarro currently serves in the White House as a senior counsel for trade and manufacturing.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Press Release, Internal Revenue Service, Owner of Florida healthcare companies pleads guilty to tax crimes (Nov. 15, 2024),

<https://www.irs.gov/compliance/criminal-investigation/owner-of-florida-healthcare-companies-pleads-guilty-to-tax-crimes>; Kenneth Vogel, *Trump Pardoned Tax Cheat After Mother Attended \$1 Million Dinner*, New York Times (May 27, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/05/27/us/politics/trump-pardon-paul-walczak-tax-crimes.html>.

<sup>13</sup> Amita Kelly, Ryan Lucas, and Vanessa Romo, *Trump Pardons Roger Stone, Paul Manafort And Charles Kushner*, NPR (Dec. 23, 2020), <https://www.npr.org/2020/12/23/949820820/trump-pardons-roger-stone-paul-manafort-and-charles-kushner>.

<sup>14</sup> Matt Zapotosky, Lynh Bui, Tom Jackman, and Devlin Barrett, *Manafort convicted on 8 counts; mistrial declared on 10 others*, Washington Post (Aug. 21, 2018), [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/manafort-jury-suggests-it-cannot-come-to-a-consensus-on-a-single-count/2018/08/21/a2478ac0-a559-11e8-a656-943eefab5daf\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/manafort-jury-suggests-it-cannot-come-to-a-consensus-on-a-single-count/2018/08/21/a2478ac0-a559-11e8-a656-943eefab5daf_story.html); Kelly et al., *supra* note 13.

<sup>15</sup> Press Release, U.S. Attorney's Office, District of Columbia, Roger Stone Found Guilty of Obstruction, False Statements, and Witness Tampering (Nov. 15, 2019), <https://www.justice.gov/usao-dc/pr/roger-stone-found-guilty-obstruction-false-statements-and-witness-tampering>; Steve Holland, *Trump Grants Full Pardon to Russia Probe Figure George Papadopoulos*, Reuters (Dec. 22, 2020), <https://www.reuters.com/article/world/us/trump-grants-full-pardon-to-russia-probe-figure-george-papadopoulos-idUSKBN28X000/>; Kelly et al., *supra* note 13.

<sup>16</sup> Chelsea Bailey, *Who is Walt Nauta, The Aide Charged Alongside Donald Trump?*, BBC (Jun. 13, 2023), <https://www.bbc.com/news/65862112>; Jordan Rubin, *DOJ Ditches Bid to Reinstate Charges Against Trump's Former Co-Defendants in Florida Case*, MS NOW (Jan. 29, 2025), <https://www.ms.now/deadline-white-house/deadline-legal-blog/trump-classified-documents-nauta-de-oliveira-doj-rcna189819>.

<sup>17</sup> Caroline Linton, *Trump Taps Peter Navarro, Convicted of Contempt of Congress, as Trade Counselor*, CBS News (Dec. 4, 2024), <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/peter-navarro-trade-counsel-trump/>.

<sup>18</sup> *Id.*

Lastly, two named individuals were public officials convicted of crimes stemming from abuses of their respective offices. Culpeper County (VA) Sheriff Scott Jenkins was convicted of bribery, fraud, and conspiracy after accepting over \$75,000 as Culpeper County Sheriff in exchange for appointing various individuals as auxiliary deputy sheriffs.<sup>19</sup> Another sheriff, Joe Arpaio of Maricopa County (AZ), was convicted of criminal contempt of court after defying an order to stop detaining people solely based on suspicion of their immigration status.<sup>20</sup> Both individuals were pardoned before facing any punishment.<sup>21</sup>

The crimes allegedly or actually committed by the named individuals inflicted tangible losses on private citizens and the American public. Schemes to defraud donors and mislead investors led to real financial harm, while efforts to evade taxes, obstruct federal investigations, and abuse government positions undermined the capacity of public institutions to serve the American people. Yet most of these individuals avoided full accountability through pardons, commutations, or the dropping of charges. The public has a compelling interest in knowing whether these individuals have now filed FTCA claims seeking taxpayer-funded compensation for the prosecutions arising from their alleged or actual misconduct. Transparency about such claims is essential to ensure that public funding is not quietly redirected toward individuals who have already imposed substantial costs on the American people but avoided full accountability because of their personal, professional, or financial connections to President Trump.

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.

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").

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<sup>19</sup> Press Release, U.S. Attorney's Office, Western District of Virginia, Former Culpeper Sheriff Sentenced to 10 Years on Federal Bribery Charges (Mar. 21, 2025), <https://www.justice.gov/usao-wdva/pr/former-culpeper-sheriff-sentenced-10-years-federal-bribery-charges>.

<sup>20</sup> Julie Hirschfeld Davis and Maggie Haberman, *Trump Pardons Joe Arpaio, Who Became Face of Crackdown on Illegal Immigration*, *New York Times* (Aug. 25, 2017), <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/25/us/politics/joe-arpaio-trump-pardon-sheriff-arizona.html>.

<sup>21</sup> Danai Nesta Kupemba, *Trump Pardons Former Sheriff Convicted of Bribery*, *BBC* (May 27, 2025), <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cwynp1lw0l7o>.

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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 blog posts 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 [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] 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 [REDACTED] or by mail to Sacha Heymann, Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington, P.O. Box 14596, Washington, D.C. 20044.

Sincerely,

Sacha Heymann  
Senior Policy Fellow