

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

February 26, 2025

Vice Chairman James E. “Trey” Trainor III
Commissioner Shana M. Broussard
Commissioner Allen Dickerson
Commissioner Dara Lindenbaum
1050 First Street NE
Washington, D.C. 20463

Dear Vice Chairman Trainor, and Commissioners Broussard, Dickerson, and Lindenbaum:

We write today to express our alarm over President Trump’s February 18 Executive Order (EO) “Ensuring Accountability for All Agencies” and the dangerous impact it may have on the work of the Federal Election Commission (FEC). This Order quickly followed the President’s unprecedented firing of Chair Ellen Weintraub and serves as another example of this Administration’s disregard for the laws and procedures that ensure federal agencies work as Congress intended. The FEC was created over 50 years ago in the wake of the Watergate Scandal when Congress took steps to weed out political corruption by creating an agency independent of the politicians it would regulate. That the President would fire Chair Weintraub, hampering the efficiency and efficacy of the FEC at a time when the agency is reviewing several open matters against his campaign and his close associates, suggests the President is seeking to disrupt any investigation into his potentially corrupt campaign finance practices.

Today, as the nation again faces a staggering surge of money in politics and billionaires in government, we urge you to follow the law as enacted by Congress in the face of these unprecedented attempts at political interference in the FEC’s mission. As you know, the law cannot be superseded by an EO which attempts to place the bipartisan FEC under the control of the Trump White House - cutting against its founding principles. This unprecedented EO makes clear that the President seeks to illegally misuse the FEC and other regulatory agencies as a tool for his agenda - opening the door to the very corruption this agency was designed to combat.

We oppose plans by the Commission to take action in response to this EO and have great concerns that there is no clear way for the FEC to reach decisions on these matters given its bipartisan and independent structure. If it were to be implemented, the FEC would lose safeguards against the President directing the Commission to pursue enforcement actions against particular candidates, individuals or organizations. By submitting regulatory actions to the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), the White House would also gain influence over the Commission’s bipartisan regulatory agenda, impacting the ability to respond to petitions and undertake rulemakings in a fair and bipartisan manner.

Further, it would be unacceptable for a Chair – or Vice Chair – to submit a strategic plan alone, with a new Chair submitting a new plan each year. If implemented, the EO would also seem to mandate Commissioners hire “White House Liaison” staff from the opposing party and allow access for the U.S. DOGE Service to gain access to the Commission’s office, systems and make decisions about its operations. Finally, it would completely subvert the mission of the FEC if the

OMB Director were able to adjust its budget to advance the President's priorities, layoff staff, and limit the ability to enforce campaign finance laws or the FEC were to be required to ask permission of the Attorney General before the release of any advisory opinion.

Sincerely,



Alex Padilla
United States Senator
Ranking Member, Committee
on Rules and Administration



Joseph D. Morelle
Member of Congress
Ranking Member, Committee
on House Administration