

Sunshine Week 2019



Exposing Secrecy in the Trump Administration

The Trump Administration is engaged in an unprecedented level of stonewalling and secrecy. This week, Oversight Committee Democrats will highlight critical issues that warrant more transparency from this Administration.

- **Withholding Information on the Trump Administration's Child Separation Policy:** On February 26, 2019, after a bipartisan vote, the Committee [issued subpoenas](#) to Attorney General Barr, Secretary of Homeland Security Nielsen, and Secretary of Health and Human Services Azar for records they are withholding on the Trump Administration's child separation policy, including specific information about each separated child.
- **Withholding Documents on the Addition of the Citizenship Question to the Census:** The Department of Commerce and the Department of Justice are [refusing](#) to provide documents related to their decision to add the citizenship question that Census Bureau experts warned against. Two federal courts have now found that Secretary Wilbur Ross violated the law, yet they still refuse to provide the documents.
- **Withholding Documents on Decision to Move FBI Headquarters:** On March 6, 2019, Chairman Cummings, along with other House Committee and Subcommittee Chairs, sent letters to the [General Services Administration](#), the [Department of Justice](#), and the [Federal Bureau of Investigation](#) demanding documents being withheld by the Trump Administration on its abrupt decision to block the plan to relocate the FBI's headquarters—which would have allowed commercial developers to acquire the site and compete with the Trump Hotel across the street.
- **Withholding Information on Security Clearances:** Chairman Cummings [has sent several letters](#) to White House Counsel Pat Cipollone [seeking documents and witness interviews](#) in light of reports that President Trump pushed for his son-in-law and senior advisor, Jared Kushner, to receive a security clearance despite numerous red flags—directly contradicting the President's public denial just eight days after the Committee launched its investigation.
- **Violating Federal Law by Failing to Submit National Drug Control Strategy:** The White House violated federal law by failing to submit to Congress its national drug control strategy for two years. This year, they submitted a 23-page pamphlet that the Government Accountability Office (GAO) [testified](#) does not comply with the law.
- **Hiding Information About Efforts to Transfer Sensitive U.S. Nuclear Technology to Saudi Arabia:** On February 19, 2019, the Committee [issued an interim staff report](#) after multiple whistleblowers came forward to warn about efforts inside the White House to rush the transfer of highly sensitive U.S. nuclear technology to Saudi Arabia in potential violation of the Atomic Energy Act and without required review by Congress.

- **Keeping Communications Between President Trump and President Putin Secret:** On March 5, 2019, Chairman Cummings, Intelligence Committee Chairman Adam Schiff, and Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Eliot Engel sent letters to [Acting White House Chief of Staff Mick Mulvaney](#) and [Secretary of State Michael Pompeo](#) to request documents and interviews with officials from the White House and State Department relating to communications between President Trump and President Putin.
- **Withholding Information on “Hush Money” Payments Directed by the President:** On February 15, 2019, Chairman Cummings sent a [third round of letters](#) to the White House and the Trump Organization requesting documents related to President Trump's debts and payments to his personal attorney, Michael Cohen, to silence women before the election.
- **Obstructing the Government Accountability Office:** On March 6, 2019, the Committee held a [hearing](#) with the Comptroller General of the United States, who testified that the White House did not respond to any of GAO's inquiries.

Efforts to Promote Ethics and Transparency

- **Hearing on FOIA Compliance Under the Trump Administration:** On March 13, 2019, the Committee will hold a [hearing](#) to examine federal agency compliance with FOIA, including whether agencies have implemented the FOIA Improvement Act of 2016.
- **Letter to DOI Urging Reconsideration of Its Proposed FOIA Rulemaking:** On March 5, 2019, Chairman Cummings, joined by Senator Patrick Leahy, Senator Chuck Grassley, and Senator John Cornyn, sent a [bipartisan letter](#) to Acting Interior Department Secretary David Bernhardt expressing concern with the rule recently proposed concerning its FOIA procedures and noting that “the proposed rule would make the process more confusing and potentially expose it to politicization and unnecessary litigation.”
- **H.R. 1, The “For the People” Act:** Chairman Cummings introduced two bills that were included in H.R. 1 to improve accountability and transparency in the Executive Branch. The [Executive Branch Conflict of Interest Act](#) would ban senior officials from accepting “golden parachute” payments from private sector employers in exchange for their government service. The [Transition Team Ethics Improvement Act](#), introduced with Senators Elizabeth Warren and Tom Carper, would enhance the ethics requirements that govern presidential transitions.
- **Presidential Library Donation Reform Act:** On February 11, 2019, the House passed a bipartisan [bill](#) (H.R. 1063) introduced by Chairman Cummings and Rep. Mark Meadows to require information to be disclosed about donors to presidential libraries.
- **Electronic Message Preservation Act:** The House is poised to consider a bill introduced by Chairman Cummings, H.R. 1582, the Electronic Message Preservation Act, to require agencies and the White House to preserve electronic records electronically.