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United States Senate
COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6025
<http://appropriations.senate.gov>

September 24, 2025

The Honorable Pam Bondi
Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20530

Dear Attorney General Bondi:

This letter follows my preliminary letter, dated June 13, 2025, which was sent in response to the May 30, 2025, Department of Justice (the Department) fiscal year 2025 spend plan. That spend plan was submitted to the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies (the Committee) pursuant to Division A, Title I, Section 1113, and Title III of the Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025 (Public Law 119-4). In my initial spend plan response, I specifically objected to the Section 205/505 transfer notification proposing to transfer up to \$10 million from INTERPOL Washington to the U.S. Marshals Service (USMS) in addition to any efforts to terminate INTERPOL Washington as a standalone component at the Department. Despite my clear objection, the Department executed the transfer and fully dismantled INTERPOL Washington and absorbed what was left into USMS.

Given the complexity of the spend plan proposals, I also noted in my June 13 letter that I needed to continue my review of the proposals and thus did not approve of any of the Department's fiscal year 2025 spend plan proposals, including reprogramming and transfer requests. Despite the clear lack of approval, the Department executed many controversial spend plan proposals anyway.

This is not normal. The Committee and the Department had, until this year, maintained a tradition of comity in which controversial spend plan proposals would result in a meaningful discourse between the Department and Congress. Most often, the interested parties would find an agreeable path forward. Instead, this Department has made clear that a notification is simply that—a notice of actions to be taken after 15 days have elapsed, regardless of the law and clear Congressional intent to do otherwise.

I am disappointed by the deterioration of this relationship. I continue to urge the Department to engage with Congress on these spending plan proposals that seek to fundamentally change the makeup of this nation's agency charged with upholding the rule of law. I remind you that when the Department ignored the Committee's direction in the past, the outcome did not turn out well for the Department.

I respectfully note my objections to this Department's actions as articulated in the FY 2025 spend plan, transmitted May 30, 2025. In particular, I find these changes to the Department most objectionable:

1. Merging INTERPOL Washington into USMS—As stated above, the Department notified the Committee of its plan to eliminate INTERPOL Washington as a standalone component and transfer its responsibilities to the U.S. Marshals Service. I sent a letter objecting to that proposal on June 13. My office later received, confidentially, a USMS memo dated July 7, 2025, announcing that INTERPOL offices would be fully moving into USMS Headquarters in Crystal City starting that week. Despite my objection, the Department moved forward with this proposal, and worse, did not bother to engage my office about its intentions until after the move had already been executed. I note that both the Senate and House CJS FY 2026 marks keep INTERPOL Washington as a standalone component and provide no funding for it under USMS—a clear indication that neither the Senate nor the House approve of the Department's proposal or actions.
2. "Scrivener's Error" \$50 million cuts to grants—Due to an error in the FY 2025 Continuing Resolution, drafted alone by House Republicans, that appropriated \$50 million less for State and Local Law Enforcement Agency (SLLEA) grants, DOJ was forced to "find" a missing \$50 million from the numbered line-item carve outs within the SLLEA appropriation. The Department chose to zero out or greatly reduce critical grant programs related to hate crime prevention, in addition to law enforcement grants related to white collar crime, residential substance abuse treatment, and grants that prevent violence in communities.
3. Dissolution of Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Forces (OCDETF)—The Department in recent months has moved forward with its plans to completely shutter the OCDETF, a program with broad bipartisan support that has existed the last 40 years. OCDETF is a coordinated multi-agency, prosecutor-led law enforcement operation that attacks and reduces the supply of illegal drugs in the United States and diminishes the violence and other criminal activity associated with the drug trade. I understand that by the end of this fiscal year, the Department will "transition select resources" to newly-established Homeland Security Task Forces (HSTFs), run through the Department of Homeland Security. Until this time, OCDETF funds provided critical staffing funding for many of the Department's law enforcement components, who are now left in limbo with no guarantees that the funding will continue under this new HSTFs structure. The Department seems to have relinquished its role as the agency leading the country's fight against illicit narcotics trafficking and the worst of the worst cartels and organized crime syndicates.

4. Reorganization of Litigating Components, including the Tax Division—I understand that most of the reorganization proposals have been executed. Most notably, the Department has eliminated three critical offices, all moves to which I object: 1.) the Tax Division as a standalone component, transferring its civil enforcement work to the Civil Division and its criminal enforcement work to the Criminal Division; 2.) the Office for Access to Justice, and 3.) Community Relations Service, which has been existence for over 60 years and is funded in the fiscal year 2026 Senate mark.

A separate issue has arisen since the spend plan proposals were originally transmitted. The original notification contained a Section 205/505 notification that proposed to transfer nearly \$179 million from grant programs to the Bureau of Prisons (\$138.8 million) in order to maintain solvency, in addition to a transfer to the Environment and Natural Resources Division (\$10.8 million) and a transfer for a vaguely-described pot of money (\$28.6 million) that will allow the Department to pay for “costs that arise as part of the proposed realignments.” Realignments, I may add, that were made under the guise of efficiency and actually *saving*, not spending more, taxpayer dollars.

Thankfully, the Department found alternative sources for the Bureau of Prisons shortfall. However, despite alleviating the most pressing shortfall, the Department inexplicably decided to continue pursuing its plan to reduce grants. In a notification dated August 27, 2025, the Department proposed reducing fiscal year 2025 grants by \$163 million. The list of “funding requirements,” which look more like the Department’s funding wish list, has notable inclusions such as \$25 million to effectuate the absorption of INTERPOL Washington in USMS; \$18 million to reimburse FBI, DEA, USMS, and ATF for expenses related to agents sent to Washington D.C. under this Administration’s manufactured crime emergency, a city in which violent crime levels are actually at a 30-year low; \$13 million for an Operations Command Center System that, when pressed by staff, no one at the Department could articulate the specific reason the money was requested; and nearly \$7 million to pay out lump sum leave balances for employees in litigating components either eliminated or significantly decreased under this Administration. None of these “funding requirements” are necessary expenditures of resources, and to be clear, the decision to cut critical funding from grant programs has typically been and should continue to be a solution of last resort. Grant funds should not be used as slush funds to cover the Administration’s political pet projects.

But this is not the first time this Administration has attacked critical grant programs. This Administration is proposing to transfer \$163 million in grants *in addition to* the \$811 million in grant funding terminations made by the Department in April, and the \$50 million cut from certain grants due to a “scrivener’s error.” Earlier this week, the Department notified my staff that it had decided to reinstate \$31.1 million of the \$163 million proposed for cuts in grant funding, but I maintain that every penny should be sent back to the intended grant recipients.

Enough is enough—the Department needs to stop its relentless raid on grant funding that is serving state and local law enforcement and victims of crime.

I respectfully note my continuing objections to the fiscal year 2025 Department of Justice Spending Plan and subsequent transfer proposal. I strongly urge you to drop these unnecessary transfer, reprogramming, and reorganizing proposals—which are also rejected in both the fiscal year 2026 Senate and House CJS Appropriations bills—and work with congressional leaders through regular order to restore transparency and confidence in the Department of Justice.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Chris Van Hollen", is positioned above the printed name.

Chris Van Hollen
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Commerce,
Justice, Science, and Related Agencies