

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE, SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY
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August 4th, 2026

The Honorable Todd Blanche
Acting Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20530

Dear Acting Attorney General Blanche,

On June 10th, 2026, Secretary of Energy Chris Wright testified before the House of Representatives Committee on Science, Space, and Technology (“the Committee”). During his appearance, a Member of the Committee questioned Secretary Wright about the Department of Energy’s (DOE) termination of more than \$7.5 billion dollars’ worth of financial awards in October 2025, and whether those terminations were motivated by a partisan desire to retaliate against “Blue States.” In response, Secretary Wright flatly denied that partisan politics lay behind the termination decisions. He testified that “no decisions, no decisions were made on politics” and that the award terminations “weren’t” based on how states had voted in the 2024 presidential election. But that was not true. In a federal lawsuit related to the same award terminations, DOE’s Principal Deputy General Counsel formally stipulated that “the inclusion of grants in the October notice tranche was based solely on the political identity of the grant recipient’s state, i.e., whether the recipient’s location and/or place of performance was in a Blue State or a non-Blue State.” DOE also stipulated that none of the October 2025 award terminations were “based on any programmatic, statutory, cost-reduction, or performance-based factor,” and that “the differential treatment resulting in the October 2025 termination of Blue State grants and the non-termination of non-Blue State grants was not based on a rational connection between the recipient’s location and/or place of performance and DOE’s past or current agency priorities.”

Secretary Wright lied to the Committee with his statements, which sought to prevent us from learning the truth: that the October award terminations were an act of political retaliation, “based solely” on whether recipients were located in Blue States. He lied to Congress. In doing so, he violated 18 USC §1001, which bars individuals from making “any materially false, fictitious, or fraudulent statement or representation” to Congress. We have no choice but to refer Secretary Wright to the Department of Justice for potential prosecution in this matter.

On October 1st, 2025, DOE announced the termination of hundreds of financial awards.¹ According to the Department's own analysis, the group of terminated awards was worth approximately \$7.56 billion in total.² The terminations were immediately criticized as a partisan attack, due to the fact that the "vast majority" of terminated awards were located in states that had voted for Vice President Kamala Harris in the 2024 presidential election and currently have two elected Democratic Senators.³ Secretary Wright publicly denied the accusations of political retaliation. For instance, during an appearance on CNN on October 2nd, 2025, he denied that DOE had acted to punish Blue States in its award terminations and claimed that DOE's decisions were "all based on facts."⁴ This remained DOE's public position throughout the fall of 2025 and the first half of 2026. Secretary Wright reiterated his denials during multiple congressional hearings after the award terminations, including as recently as April 2026 in appearances before the House Committee on Appropriations⁵, the House Committee on Energy and Commerce⁶, and the Senate Committee on Appropriations.⁷

Secretary Wright testified before the Committee on Science, Space, and Technology on June 10th, 2026.⁸ During his appearance, several Members of the Committee asked direct questions about the October 2025 award terminations. Under questioning by Representative Gabe Amo of Rhode Island, Secretary Wright issued an explicit and unqualified denial that politics played any role in the award termination decisions, and a similarly unqualified denial that the termination decisions were based on how states had voted in the 2024 presidential election. The exchanges between Representative Amo and Secretary Wright are transcribed below:

Secretary Wright: We did not involve politics in the decisions. What the –

Representative Amo: What about the outcomes, Mr. Secretary?

¹ *Energy Department Announces Termination of 223 Projects, Saving Over \$7.5 Billion*, U.S. Dept. of Energy (Oct. 1, 2025), <https://www.energy.gov/articles/energy-department-announces-termination-223-projects-saving-over-75-billion>.

² *Id.*

³ Brad Plumer & Maxine Joselow, *Energy Dept. Cancels \$7.5 Billion for Hundreds of Projects, Mostly in Blue States*, N.Y. TIMES (Oct. 2, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/10/02/climate/doe-clean-energy-programs-shutdown.html>.

⁴ *Secretary Wright Interview with Kaitlin Collins*, CNN, (Oct. 2, 2025), accessed here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qQl4jM_YkDo.

⁵ *Budget Hearing – Department of Energy: Hearing Before the Subcomm. on Energy and Water Development and Related Agencies of the H. Comm. on Appropriations*, 119th Cong. (Apr. 15, 2026), <https://appropriations.house.gov/schedule/hearings/budget-hearing-department-energy>.

⁶ *The Fiscal Year 2027 Department of Energy Budget: Hearing Before the Subcomm. on Energy of the H. Comm. on Energy & Commerce*, 119th Cong. (Apr. 16, 2026), <https://energycommerce.house.gov/events/energy-subcommittee-the-fiscal-year-2027-department-of-energy-budget>.

⁷ *A Review of the President's Fiscal Year 2027 Budget Request for the Department of Energy: Hearing Before the Subcomm. on Energy and Water Development of the S. Comm. on Appropriations*, 119th Cong. (Apr. 22, 2026), <https://www.appropriations.senate.gov/hearings/a-review-of-the-presidents-fiscal-year-2027-budget-request-for-the-department-of-energy>.

⁸ *An Overview of the Department of Energy's Fiscal Year 2027 Budget Request: Hearing Before the H. Comm. on Science, Space, and Technology*, 119th Cong. (June 10, 2026), <https://science.house.gov/2026/6/full-committee-hearing-doe-budget-hearing>.

Secretary Wright: The court ruling you read⁹ was a choice of announcements of some of the awards, the choice of the announcements, not made by our Department. No decisions, no decisions were made on politics. I keep hearing that charge.

Representative Amo: So –

Secretary Wright: It's bullshit. We're going to say it a million times –

Representative Amo: Mr. Secretary –

Secretary Wright: It's not true.

.....

Representative Amo: So my question for you, as my time is rapidly expiring, when will you restore these grants?

Secretary Wright: We work every day for – we've gone overboard for New England, for California, for blue states –

Representative Amo: That's not an answer. I'm reclaiming my clock –

Secretary Wright: Your assertions are incorrect.

Representative Amo: Mr. Secretary, I'm reclaiming my time. That's not an answer. Do you believe the federal grant decisions should be based in any way on how a state's voters cast their ballots in a presidential election?

Secretary Wright: They shouldn't, and they weren't.

Secretary Wright was very clear in his testimony. *No decisions* were based on politics. The award termination decisions should not have been based in any way on how a state voted in the 2024 presidential election, *and they weren't*. In the Secretary's own words, it was *bullshit* to suggest otherwise.

Secretary Wright lied.

⁹ Earlier in his questioning, Representative Amo had referenced a previous DOE stipulation in a separate lawsuit related to the October 2025 award terminations. Stipulation Regarding Consolidation Under Rule 65(a)(2), *City of Saint Paul, Minnesota, et al, v. Wright, et al*, No. 1:25-cv-03899-APM (D.D.C Filed Dec. 23, 2025). In that previous stipulation, DOE had conceded that “a primary reason for the selection of which DOE grant termination decisions were included in the October 2025 notice tranche was whether the grantee was located in a ‘Blue State.’” A federal judge subsequently ruled in favor of the plaintiffs in that lawsuit, finding that DOE had unconstitutionally violated their Fifth Amendment rights. Brad Plumer, *Trump Cuts to Energy Projects in Blue States Were Unlawful*, *Judge Rules*, N.Y. TIMES (Jan. 12, 2026) <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/01/12/climate/trump-energy-department-grant-cuts-unlawful.html>.

On June 4th, 2025, a group of plaintiffs based in California filed a lawsuit against DOE and other federal agencies.¹⁰ As the litigation proceeded under the name *Neeta Thakur, et al, v. Trump*, the plaintiffs broadened their claims to encompass DOE's actions in October 2025, alleging that DOE had illegally and unconstitutionally terminated their financial awards in an act of political retaliation against the state of California. DOE eventually agreed to a set of formal stipulations in exchange for the plaintiffs agreeing to forego the discovery process. Those stipulations were signed by DOE's attorneys on May 15th, 2026 – more than three weeks before Secretary Wright testified in front of the Committee – and filed to the court docket on July 15th, 2026.¹¹ Several relevant DOE stipulations are reproduced below, numbered as they appear in the court filing:

8. DOE accepts that neither the inclusion of the ARCHES grant nor any other grants in the October notice tranche was based on any programmatic, statutory, cost-reduction, or performance-based factor.

9. DOE accepts that the inclusion of grants in the October notice tranche was based solely on the political identity of the grant recipient's state, i.e., whether the recipient's location and/or place of performance was in a Blue State or a non-Blue State. DOE will not contend that it looked beyond the prime grantee(s) to consider the political identity or geographic distribution of downstream beneficiaries of the grant funds.

10. DOE accepts that the differential treatment resulting in the October 2025 termination of Blue State grants and the non-termination of non-Blue State grants was not based on a rational connection between the recipient's location and/or place of performance and DOE's past or current agency priorities.

On June 10th, in regards to DOE's October 2025 financial award terminations, Secretary Wright testified before the Committee that no award termination decisions were based on politics, and no award termination decisions were based on how states had voted in the 2024 presidential election. As noted above, on May 15th, nearly three weeks before Secretary Wright testified before the Committee, DOE signed stipulations that politics was the sole basis for the October 2025 award termination decisions, and that how a state had voted in the 2024 presidential election was the defining factor in the political identity that would determine whether it would experience award terminations or not. Secretary Wright's testimony to the Committee was unambiguously false and misleading.

¹⁰ Complaint, *Neeta Thakur, et al, v. Trump, et al*, No. 3:25-cv-4737 (N.D. Cal. filed June 4, 2025), <https://www.fbm.com/content/uploads/2025/06/Case-No.-325-cv-4737-Complaint.pdf>.

¹¹ Parties' Stipulations and Agreement to Obviate Discovery as to DoE and DoE's Stipulations of Fact and Agreement to Produce Grants Spreadsheet, *Neeta Thakur, et al, v. Trump, et al*, No. 3:25-cv-4737-RL (N.D. Cal. filed July 15, 2026), <https://storage.courtlistener.com/recap/gov.uscourts.cand.450653/gov.uscourts.cand.450653.211.6.pdf>. (In the filing, DOE defines a "Blue State" as the following: "A state that awarded its electoral votes to Kamala Harris in the 2024 election and has two Democratic-caucusing Senators." In the filing, DOE defines a "non-Blue State" as the following: "A state that awarded its electoral votes to President Trump in the 2024 election or has at least one Republican-caucusing Senator.")

Federal law forbids such materially false statements. The federal false statements statute, 18 United States Code §1001, is violated when “whoever, in any matter within the jurisdiction of the executive, legislative, or judicial branch of the Government of the United States, knowingly and willfully (1) falsifies, conceals, or covers up by any trick, scheme, or device a material fact; [or] (2) makes any materially false, fictitious, or fraudulent statement or representation [. . .] [in] any investigation or review, conducted pursuant to the authority of any committee, subcommittee, commission or office of the Congress, consistent with applicable rules of the House or Senate.”¹² The aforementioned facts establish that Secretary Wright willfully and knowingly made materially false statements and representations during his testimony before the Committee.

According to the Department of Justice, whether a false statement is criminal under 18 U.S.C §1001 “depends on whether there is an affirmative response to each of the following questions:

1. Was the act or statement material?
2. Was the act within the jurisdiction of a department or agency of the United States?
3. Was the act done knowingly and willfully?”¹³

Satisfying the first element requires that the act or statement be material. Materiality is understood as a matter of importance or consequence. Secretary Wright offered his false statements in response to a direct inquiry by a Member of Congress as to whether grant decisions were based on political considerations and presidential election results. He explicitly and falsely denied that any decisions were based on these factors. The Supreme Court of the United States recently affirmed the high degree of materiality of this type of exchange.¹⁴ The materiality element is affirmatively met.

Satisfying the second element requires that the act or statement lie within “the jurisdiction of the executive, legislative, or judicial branch of the Government of the United States.” Secretary Wright’s statement occurred in the course of a Congressional hearing conducted under the authority of House Rule X(3)(k), which is well recognized as applicable to the statute.¹⁵ The jurisdictional element is affirmatively met.

Satisfying the third element requires that the act or statement be done knowingly and willfully. Courts have previously held that “in general, ‘knowingly’ requires the government to prove that a criminal defendant had knowledge of the facts that constitute the offense [...] willfully [...]

¹² 18 U.S.C §1001 (2006).

¹³ Department of Justice Criminal Resource Manual, “908. ELEMENTS OF 18 U.S.C. § 1001,” Department of Justice, (last accessed on July 24, 2026), available at <https://www.justice.gov/archives/jm/criminal-resource-manual-908-elements-18-usc-1001>.

¹⁴ *Trump v. Mazars USA, LLP*, 591 U.S. 848, 862 (2020) (Congress has a “broad and indispensable” power to conduct oversight that “encompasses inquiries into the administration of existing laws [] [...]”).

¹⁵ *United States v. Bowser*, 964 F.3d 26, 31 (D.C. Cir. 2020), cert. denied, 141 S. Ct. 1390 (2021) (“[T]he False Statements Act applies to ‘any investigation or review, conducted pursuant to the authority of any committee, subcommittee, commission or office of the Congress.’ 18 U.S.C. § 1001(c)(2).”).

usually requires the government to prove that the defendant acted not merely voluntarily, but with a bad purpose, that is, with knowledge that his conduct was, in some general sense, unlawful.”¹⁶ DOE’s July 15th stipulation set forth that the grant decisions in question were based on politics. The stipulation of facts was signed by DOE’s attorneys on May 15th, 2026, more than three weeks before Secretary Wright made his false statements to the Committee. Either Secretary Wright made the false statements despite knowing the facts in the stipulation, or he remained deliberately ignorant of them in order to plead a lack of positive knowledge, which amounts in law to the same thing.¹⁷ Secretary Wright had testified repeatedly about the October 2025 award terminations during multiple prior congressional hearings. He made his denials to the Committee on June 10th with a full understanding of the expectation of truthfulness that accompanied his testimony, while nevertheless voluntarily offering materially false statements related to this matter. The final “knowingly and willfully” element is affirmatively met.

Referring a Cabinet Secretary for potential prosecution is not a step we take lightly. It is a weighty thing to assert that a Cabinet Secretary lied to Congress. We do not treat that assertion as a trivial matter, and we do not use those words carelessly. But the facts of the situation are clear and undeniable. As those facts have met the criminal elements of 18 U.S.C §1001, we refer this matter to the Department of Justice. We request that DOJ review this matter expeditiously and with the utmost seriousness, and if warranted, seek to bring criminal charges against Secretary Wright.

If you have any questions regarding this referral, please contact Andrew Rubin, the General Counsel for the Minority Staff of the House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology, at (202) 225-6375. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Zoe Lofgren
Ranking Member
Committee on Science, Space, and Technology



Gabe Amo
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Environment

CC: Chairman Brian Babin
Committee on Science, Space, and Technology

¹⁶ *United States v. Starnes*, 583 F.3d 196, 210 (3d Cir. 2009).

¹⁷ *United States v. Ricard*, 922 F.3d 639, 655 (5th Cir. 2019).