

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 3, 2026

Secretary Doug Burgum
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington DC 20240

Dear Secretary Burgum:

We write seeking full transparency from the Department of Interior regarding the allocation of at least \$100 million in taxpayer funds to Freedom 250, a private entity operating separately from the congressionally appropriated commission established to plan a nonpartisan, civic-focused commemoration of the 250th anniversary of the nation's founding.¹ To date, we have not received a response to our request for information from the White House regarding these matters.² The American people deserve a clear accounting of why and on what basis the Department of Interior decided to direct funds to a private entity that is unaccountable to the American people. We also seek clarity regarding the National Park Foundation's role in supporting this effort and whether Freedom 250 is commingling federal taxpayer dollars, including from the Department of Interior, with privately raised funds and money potentially raised from foreign sources.

As the federal agency responsible for allocating congressionally appropriated funds for the nation's semiquincentennial, the Department has an obligation to ensure that taxpayer dollars are spent consistently with appropriations law, transparency requirements, and the intent of Congress.³ However, funds appear to have been directed from the official framework set forth by the *United States Semiquincentennial Commission Act of 2016* to Freedom 250, raising serious questions about the Department's legal authority to allocate those funds and the process by which those decisions were made.⁴ Furthermore, public reports indicate that the Department has directed staff to use the Freedom 250 logo, colors, and tagline "for all new materials, websites, social media and event collateral related to the 250th anniversary," seeking to align all semiquincentennial programming with the Administration's politicized messaging rather than the bipartisan commission established by Congress.⁵

Members of the bipartisan U.S. Semiquincentennial Commission have already expressed concerns that up to \$100 million in taxpayer dollars intended by Congress to fund civics education, volunteering initiatives, and restore historical monuments has been redirected to Freedom 250 by the Trump-Vance Administration.⁶ Additionally, the Commission's most recent Quarterly Report to Congress asserts that Commission-approved programming has "yet to

¹ Public Law 119-74; Public Law 119-21, Sec. 50305; Smith, Ben. *Inside the scramble to keep a divided America's 250th birthday on track.* *Semafor* (January 12, 2026), <https://www.semafor.com/article/01/12/2026/inside-the-scramble-to-keep-a-divided-americas-250th-birthday-on-track>.

² Letter from Senator Schiff and colleagues to Susie Wiles on Freedom 250 Fundraising (February 11, 2026), <https://www.schiff.senate.gov/news/press-releases/news-senator-schiff-colleagues-launch-probe-into-new-private-entity-offering-millionaire-trump-donors-access-to-white-house-semiquincentennial-events/>.

³ Public Law 119-21, Sec. 50305.

⁴ Public Law 114-196.

⁵ Richard, Heathers. *Interior rebrands its 250th anniversary celebrations.* E&E News by Politico (January 9, 2026), <https://www.eenews.net/articles/interior-rebrands-its-250th-anniversary-celebrations/>.

receive the funding expected from the One Big Beautiful Bill Act (OBBBA) signed into law on July 4, 2025 to support the U.S. Semiquincentennial Commission as submitted to Congress.”⁷

To date, at least \$10 million has been publicly confirmed to have been allocated to Freedom 250. In December 2025, a grant for \$10,142,920 was provided to the National Park Foundation to be used by Freedom250 – described as a “wholly owned subsidiary of the National Park Foundation” – to “tell the story of America’s founding” through six mobile exhibits.⁸ These exhibits are being created in partnership with PragerU and Hillsdale College, two major and well-established sources of far-right and Christian nationalist content.⁹

Recent testimony warned Congress of significant risks involving Freedom 250’s opaque financial disclosures, its funding structure, and the potential interaction between taxpayer funds and privately raised contributions.¹⁰ We are gravely concerned by accounts indicating that Department employees have been instructed by agency leadership to display Freedom 250 logos and links in their official email signatures, a practice that could implicate the Hatch Act and constitutional protections against compelled speech.¹¹

We are additionally concerned with recent solicitations of foreign donations for the Administration’s official or quasi-official semiquincentennial activities. In delivered remarks at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Freedom 250 CEO Keith Krach made direct appeals to international leaders and foreign-linked entities to make financial contributions to shape the United States’ 250th anniversary celebrations. Mr. Krach framed the anniversary not merely as a commemorative event, but as an opportunity for foreign actors to “shape a moment that will influence American leadership for the next generation,” and promoted what he described as partnership “toolkits for countries, states, and companies.”¹²

Furthermore, recent reporting has uncovered that U.S. embassies and consulates in Singapore, Japan, Hong Kong, and other foreign posts are soliciting corporate contributions to underwrite celebration activities for the semiquincentennial, with some posts seeking tens of millions in

⁶ Kenneth P. Vogel, Lisa Friedman, and David A. Fahrenthold, *For \$1 Million, Donors to U.S.A. Birthday Group Offered Access to Trump*, The New York Times (February 8, 2026), <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/02/08/us/politics/freedom-250-trump-donors.html>; Smith, Ben. *Inside the scramble to keep a divided America’s 250th birthday on track.* *Semafor* (January 12, 2026), <https://www.semafor.com/article/01/12/2026/inside-the-scramble-to-keep-a-divided-americas-250th-birthday-on-track>.

⁷ The U.S. Semiquincentennial Commission, “Quarterly Report to the United States Congress Committees on Appropriations,” (January 31, 2026).

⁸ Institute of Museum and Library Services Grant to National Park Foundation. USAspending.gov, U.S. Department of the Treasury, www.usaspending.gov/award/ASST_NON_LG-259279-OLS-25A_474.

⁹ PragerU, “America at 250,” [https://www.instagram.com/reel/DT_OcwkkIKv/](https://www.prageru.com/america250?utm_source=facebook&utm_medium=post&utm_campaign=america_250&fbclid=IwY2xjawQELqpleHRuA2F1bOIXMABicmlkETJLU01LdlAwa3VITTFvMFdBc3J0YwZhcHBfaWQQMjlyMDM5MTc4ODIwMDg5MgABHgTJLcTBj6mKvjK_OtevVJTmtuwlvivOkJrbjZVr02YwiZfyGy8_46WAOqY_U_aem_s98_MauNGa1rvPXmKj5-Gwth;@prageru, Instagram (January 26, 2026), <a href=).

¹⁰ Whitehouse, Tim. Testimony for the Record Submitted to the U.S. House of Representatives Natural Resources Committee Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations, “All in for America250: Public-Private Partnerships Supporting America’s Semiquincentennial on our Public Lands,” (February 10, 2026), <https://docs.house.gov/meetings/II/II15/20260210/118873/HHRG-119-II15-Wstate-WhitehouseT-20260210.pdf>.

¹¹ *Id.*

¹² USA House Davos, *USA House Davos Live Stream*, YouTube (January 19, 2026), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ulZDH0Y1d4Q>.

foreign-linked donations for events abroad.¹³ U.S. ambassadors have reportedly urged foreign executives to contribute to the international anniversary campaign, associating some fundraising efforts with Freedom 250 branding or linked events.¹⁴

While Freedom 250 has denied acceptance of foreign funds, these overt diplomatic fundraising activities raise serious questions regarding whether and how foreign contributions are being solicited or accepted in connection with semiquincentennial events, how the Department and Freedom 250 will ensure compliance with federal law and longstanding safeguards against foreign influence, and whether foreign donors could gain preferential access or influence through contributions associated with the Administration's official or quasi-official activities.

In order to carry out our oversight responsibilities and provide transparency to the American public, we request the following information by March 13, 2026:

1. Provide a complete accounting of all federal funds provided to Freedom 250 to your knowledge, including any obligated and disbursed amounts.
 - a. Provide a complete accounting of the award mechanisms by which these funds were provided to Freedom 250.
 - b. Was the U.S. Semiquincentennial Commission aware or involved in any providing of federal funds to Freedom 250?
2. Identify the authority under which the Department has transferred, obligated, or otherwise made federal funds available to Freedom 250.
 - a. Provide any legal memoranda, opinions, or other analyses addressing the Department's authority to direct funds appropriated for the Department, National Park Foundation, America250, or any other semiquincentennial activities to Freedom 250.
 - b. Provide all documentation of communications from the Department to the White House, U.S. Semiquincentennial Commission, America250, or Freedom 250 personnel regarding any funds transferred, obligated, or otherwise made available to Freedom 250.
 - c. Was Congress notified of any direction of funds? If so, provide copies of all notifications.
3. Describe the financial relationship, if any, between Freedom 250 and the National Park Foundation, including the basis for characterizing Freedom 250 as a "wholly owned subsidiary."

¹³ Stevenson, Alexandra, River Akira Davis and Kenneth P. Vogel, *Like Trump, U.S. Embassies Are Raising Cash for Laish July Fourth Parties*, The New York Times (February 15, 2026), <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/02/15/business/trump-july-fourth-singapore-japan.html>.

¹⁴ *Id.*

- a. Provide copies of all agreements involving America250, the National Park Foundation, and Freedom 250 related to the December 2025 grant transfer.
4. Identify all non-monetary federal resources used, or intended, to support Freedom 250 activities, including staff time, facilities, website infrastructure, and administrative support.
5. Provide the Department's justification for directing employees to use Freedom 250 branding across federal materials, websites, and communications platforms.
 - a. Provide all documentation of agency leadership directing employees to use Freedom 250 branding across federal materials, websites, and communications platforms.
 - b. Describe what ethics guidance, if any, was sought or received prior to issuing such guidance to Department employees. Provide any records of communication between the Department and/or Freedom 250 leadership and the Office of Government Ethics or White House designated agency officials.
6. Describe what role, if any, the Department played in coordinating, authorizing, or advising on foreign fundraising efforts associated with semiquincentennial activities.
 - a. Provide any Department guidance issued regarding the solicitation or acceptance of foreign donations connected to Freedom 250 or related programs.
 - b. Identify any safeguards implemented to prevent acceptance of prohibited foreign contributions, conflicts of interest, or preferential access tied to foreign donations.

We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Adam B. Schiff
United States Senator



Gary C. Peters
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Angela D. Alsobrooks
United States Senator



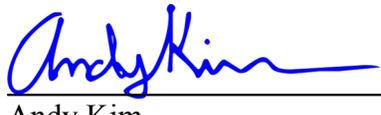
Peter Welch
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



Andy Kim
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator