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Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY
2138 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515–6216
(202) 225–6906
judiciary.house.gov

August 11, 2026

The Honorable Doug Burgum
Secretary
U.S. Department of the Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

The Honorable Jeanine Pirro
U.S. Attorney for the District of Columbia
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530

Dear Secretary Burgum and U.S. Attorney Pirro:

On July 31, 2026, the Trump Administration admitted it had baselessly indicted and prosecuted an innocent American citizen based on trumped up charges of "vandalizing" the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool. In a court filing, U.S. Attorney Jeanine Pirro admitted that "the damage [to the Reflecting Pool] was the result of a botched installation and not vandalism as initially represented by DOI [Department of the Interior]."[1] Ms. Pirro moved to dismiss her indictment of David Hearn, who happens to be not only my constituent but a three-time Olympic canoeist who has taught canoeing and kayaking to generations of young people in my district.

How did this debacle happen? Why was Mr. Hearn charged with committing a felony punishable by up to 10 years in prison when the government knew he was innocent?[2]

Did the United States Attorney's Office for D.C. in fact maliciously prosecute an American citizen it knew to be innocent with a felony charge carrying a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison? Did the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) deliberately mislead prosecutors to cover up a "botched" renovation by a company awarded a dubious $15 million insider no-bid contract? Is it true that one of the businesses tied to the no-bid Reflecting Pool deals is owned by John J. Cafaro, a major political donor to and Palm Beach neighbor of President Donald Trump?[3] The conclusion seems inescapable that at least one, if not both, of you have misled the American public about the evidence and used it to corrupt and weaponize our justice system against an innocent 67-year-old American citizen.

President Trump made the renovation of the Reflecting Pool a centerpiece of his Administration's proposed unilateral and often illegal redesign of the capital city. In November 2025, he announced on Truth Social that his Administration planned to renovate the

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[1] Government's Motion to Dismiss the Indictment, *U.S. v. Hearn*, 26-10237, 1 (D.C. Super. Ct. filed July 31, 2026).

[2] *See* D.C. Code § 22-303.

[3] David Fahrenthold, *Firm Tied to Trump Donor Got No-Bid Contract to Clean Reflecting Pool*, N.Y. TIMES (June 18, 2026), https://www.nytimes.com/2026/06/18/us/politics/trump-donor-contract-reflecting-pool.html.

Pool. Next to a picture of the landmark, President Trump wrote, "This is the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool before Secretary of the Interior Doug Burgum and I fix it. Study it hard because you won't be seeing this Biden filth and incompetence much longer!"[4]

Several months later, DOI awarded a $15 million no-bid contract to Atlantic Industrial Coatings LLC (AIC) to "paint [the] Lincoln Reflecting Pool."[5] It remains unclear why DOI used a noncompetitive process to select AIC—a process intended for situations where there is "such an unusual and compelling urgency" that the Government would be "seriously injured" by following the normal competitive bid process.[6] Tellingly, DOI reportedly first approached another firm with prior Reflecting Pool renovation experience, but the company declined because the Trump Administration's July 4 completion deadline was "unfeasible."[7]

Throughout the spring of 2026, President Trump repeatedly gushed about the renovation's progress, framing it as proof of his Administration's competence. Labeling the pre-renovation Reflecting Pool a "leaking, smelling[] ode" to the Biden and Obama administrations, President Trump promised that he would "fix it ... for a 'tiny' fraction of the cost!"[8] After the pool reopened, the President bristled at media reports calling the renovation a "paint job," writing: "This was not a paint job. This was highly sophisticated material, industrial strength, that could last for 100 years."[9]

President Trump's "highly sophisticated" and slapdash paint job didn't even last 100 days, much less a century. On June 18, less than two weeks after reopening, media outlets reported that "some of the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting liner appears to be falling apart."[10] A photo taken that day shows "American Flag Blue liner" protruding from the Reflecting Pool's algae-infested water.[11]

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[4] Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump), TRUTH SOCIAL (Nov. 26, 2025), https://truthsocial.com/@realDonaldTrump/posts/115617052659110736.

[5] USA Spending, *Contract Summary*, https://www.usaspending.gov/award/CONT_AWD_140P2026C0028_1443_-NONE-_-NONE-.

[6] *See* Federal Acquisition Regulation 6.302-2.

[7] Abigail Roedersheimer et al., *Exclusive: Firm That Worked on Past Reflecting Pool Renovation Passed on Trump Project After Deeming It 'Unfeasible'*, CNN (June 25, 2026), https://www.cnn.com/2026/06/25/politics/reflecting-pool-firm-renovation-unfeasible.

[8] Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump), TRUTH SOCIAL (May 12, 2026), https://truthsocial.com/@realDonaldTrump/posts/116561201966385448.

[9] Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump), TRUTH SOCIAL (June 5, 2026), https://truthsocial.com/@realDonaldTrump/posts/116698196665878804.

[10] Jonathan Karl, *Some of the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool Liner Appears to Be Falling Apart*, ABC NEWS (June 18, 2026), https://abcnews.com/Politics/lincoln-memorial-reflecting-pool-liner-appears-falling-apart/story?id=134002251.

[11] *Id*.

On June 19, a day after well-publicized reports that President Trump's liner was coming undone, Mr. Hearn stopped at the Reflecting Pool while on a bicycle ride.[12] According to public court filings, Mr. Hearn briefly touched a detached piece of liner and then released it when he was asked to do so by a National Park Service employee.[13] He was arrested on the spot by National Park Police, charged with misdemeanor destruction of government property, and detained for nearly five hours before being released after 9 p.m.[14]

That same night, President Trump posted on Truth Social blaming "real problems" with the Reflecting Pool on "Vandalism" and "Radical Left Lunatics, most likely Dumocats [sic]."[15] The following day, President Trump shared a link publicizing Mr. Hearn's arrest[16] and continued to spread conspiracy theories about a wave of violent attackers responsible for the damage.[17]

Interior Secretary Burgum dutifully parroted President Trump's delusional ravings. On *Fox & Friends*, Secretary Burgum described vandalism of the Reflecting Pool as an "attack on our country," and threatened to prosecute President Trump's imaginary box cutter-wielding bandits "to the full extent of the law."[18] Soon thereafter, U.S. Attorney Pirro's office charged Mr. Hearn with a far more serious felony than the misdemeanor for which he had been arrested. During a press conference, U.S. Attorney Pirro emphasized that the case against Mr. Hearn was a "priority for the president," vowing, "The evidence shows and we will prove beyond a reasonable doubt, that Hearn willfully destroyed property."[19]

On July 31, 2026, that criminal case fell apart. In a stunning reversal, the U.S. Attorney's Office moved to dismiss the vindictive, arbitrary, and political indictment against Mr. Hearn and blamed DOI for withholding key exculpatory evidence, admitting prosecutors relied on incomplete information provided by DOI officials before deciding to charge Mr. Hearn with a

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[12] *See* Defendant's Motion to Dismiss the Indictment for the Government's Failure to Preserve Material Exculpatory Evidence, *U.S. v. Hearn*, 26-10237, 4 (D.C. Super. Ct. filed July 16, 2026).

[13] *Id*.

[14] David Lynch & Aaron Schaffer, *Cyclist Arrested at Reflecting Pool is Former Olympian Who Denies Vandalism Claims,* WASH. POST (June 20, 2026), https://www.washingtonpost.com/nation/2026/06/20/cyclist-arrested-reflecting-pool-denies-trump-vandalism-claims/.

[15] Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump), TRUTH SOCIAL (June 19, 2026), https://truthsocial.com/@realDonaldTrump/posts/116779961376108129.

[16] Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump), TRUTH SOCIAL (June 20, 2026), https://truthsocial.com/@realDonaldTrump/posts/116784267172845354.

[17] *See* Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump), TRUTH SOCIAL (June 20, 2026), https://truthsocial.com/@realDonaldTrump/posts/116785296448420208.

[18] Taylor Penley, *Burgum Vows 'Full' Prosecution After Vandals Carved 350-Foot Gash into Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool*, FOX NEWS (June 28, 2026), https://www.foxnews.com/media/burgum-vows-full-prosecution-after-vandals-carved-350-foot-gash-lincoln-memorial-reflecting-pool.

[19] Tyler Pager et al., *Inside the Oval Office Showdown Between Trump and Jeanine Pirro*, N.Y. TIMES (Aug. 4, 2026), https://www.nytimes.com/2026/08/04/us/politics/trump-jeanine-pirro-showdown.html; Amna Nawaz & Jonah Anderson, *Reflecting Pool Case Highlights Disconnect Between Trump's Claims and Court Record*, PBS NEWSHOUR (Aug. 4, 2026), https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/reflecting-pool-case-highlights-disconnect-between-trumps-claims-and-court-record.

felony.[20] Even more jaw-dropping, Interior officials wrote to the contractor as early as June 11—more than a week before Mr. Hearn's arrest—complaining that the pool liner was already peeling but did not turn over this key email to prosecutors until after Mr. Hearn was indicted.[21] The Department of Justice (DOJ) was forced to state the obvious conclusion: the work on the Reflecting Pool was **"botched"** and the damage was **"the result of flawed installation by the contractor, Atlantic Industrial Coatings [], and the rush to complete the project prior to events associated with the America 250 celebration in the weeks surrounding Independence Day 2026**."[22]

After DOJ's filing, President Trump went off the deep end of the Reflecting Pool, you might say. He refused to accept that his own Administration's incompetence caused the Reflecting Pool fiasco, stating, "I disagree 100% with Jeanine Pirro ... on the Reflecting Pool. I don't know what she was thinking? ... There may have been some contractor difficulty, but the major damage was caused by VANDALS!"[23] That same day, Secretary Burgum regurgitated President Trump's preferred reality, posting on X, "The evidence is clear, vandals have repeatedly caused damage to the Reflecting Pool."[24]

Unfortunately for the Trump Administration, the evidence *is* clear. Mr. Hearn was not responsible for the damage to the Reflecting Pool. And despite DOJ's attempt to point the finger at DOI, recent filings show that Ms. Pirro's team of prosecutors was perfectly aware of Mr. Hearn's likely innocence before they charged him with a felony. Indeed, a "Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool Damage Assessment" dated two days *before* Mr. Hearn's indictment, shows systemic failure and peeling of the liner around the area where Mr. Hearn's alleged vandalism occurred.[25] Furthermore, despite Ms. Pirro's claims that she had the evidence to prove Mr. Hearn's guilt beyond a reasonable doubt, grand jury materials show that the prosecution's own expert on damages testified that the existing damage to the liner was so extensive that no additional cost could be attributed to any actions of Mr. Hearn.[26]

DOJ's abrupt abandonment of its prosecution, paired with President Trump's and Secretary Burgum's decision to circle the wagons around their debunked and ridiculous conspiracy theories, raise a host of profoundly troubling questions. Why didn't your factual assertions about the case hold water? Did DOJ prosecutors knowingly bring a bogus indictment? Did DOI withhold key evidence to blame the disastrous pool renovation on an innocent man?

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[20] *See* Government's Motion to Dismiss the Indictment, *U.S. v. Hearn*, 26-10237 (D.C. Super. Ct. filed July 31, 2026).

[21] *Id*.

[22] *Id.* at 1.

[23] Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump), TRUTH SOCIAL (Aug. 1, 2026), https://truthsocial.com/@realDonaldTrump/posts/117021677968973217.

[24] Secretary Doug Burgum (@SecretaryBurgum), X (Aug. 1, 2026), https://x.com/SecretaryBurgum/status/2083614772847653242.

[25] *See* Defendant's Response to Government's Motion to Dismiss the Indictment, 26-10236, 5 (D.C. Sup. Ct. filed Aug. 4, 2026).

[26] *Id.* at 4.

Did President Trump pressure or influence either Department to retaliate against and scapegoat an American citizen? At a minimum, it appears that members of the Trump Administration were ready and willing to imprison an innocent American for a decade in a desperate effort to soothe an ex-landlord's wounded ego about a terrible paint job and wasteful contract. We must get to the bottom of these murky waters to rid our justice system of any and all residual contamination.

In the interim, if the Secretary of the Interior and the United States Attorney for the District of Columbia are still on speaking terms and remain truly interested in criminal vandalism and destruction of federal property in the District of Columbia, I want to alert you to real crimes of profoundly greater magnitude than the ones you just maliciously invented with respect to an innocent citizen.

Specifically, we have information that a Florida man living temporarily in Washington, D.C., may have illegally bulldozed and destroyed the East Wing of the White House, causing hundreds of millions of dollars of damage there. This suspect, who we emphasize is only a suspect at this point, had no congressional authorization for this unilateral destruction of precious federal property.

Although this is on a lesser scale, we also have evidence to suggest this same vandal may have illegally affixed his name to the front of the Kennedy Center, clearly defacing the property and causing significant damage and the necessity of tens of thousands of dollars in repair work.

Now that you have dropped the fraudulent charges against Olympian David Hearn, we would suggest you use your freed-up time and resources to investigate these eminently solvable local vandalism crimes.

Meantime, pursuant to the House Judiciary Committee's jurisdiction over law enforcement, corruption, and the fair and impartial administration of justice, we—on behalf of an outraged American people—ask that you please provide the following documents no later than 5:00 p.m. on August 25, 2026:

1. All documents related to the decision to prosecute Mr. Hearn, including the decision to charge Mr. Hearn with a felony rather than a misdemeanor;

2. All communications between DOJ, DOI, and the White House related to the prosecution; and

3. All evidence presented to the Grand Jury in connection with the indictment of Mr. Hearn.

Additionally, we request that the DOJ make available for transcribed interviews the individuals whose testimony was relied upon to secure the indictment against Mr. Hearn, including, but not limited to, the individuals identified in grand jury materials as "M.F." and "M.R."

Thank you for your prompt attention to this important matter.

Very truly yours,

Jamie Raskin
Ranking Member

cc: The Honorable Jim Jordan, Chairman