



January 29, 2018

**VIA ONLINE PORTAL**

Laurie Day  
Chief, Initial Request Staff  
Office of Information Policy  
Department of Justice  
1425 New York Avenue NW  
Suite 11050  
Washington, DC 20530-0001  
Via FOIAOnline

**Re: Freedom of Information Act Request**

Dear Ms. Day:

Pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), 5 U.S.C. § 552, and the implementing regulations of the Department of Justice (DOJ), 28 C.F.R. Part 16, American Oversight makes the following request for records.

On January 4, 2018, *The Daily Beast* reported that DOJ officials would be reopening an investigation into former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton's use of a private email server.<sup>1</sup> This followed a tweet by President Donald Trump stating that Ms. Clinton's top aide, Ms. Huma Abedin, had "been accused of disregarding basic security protocols" and suggesting that she be jailed.<sup>2</sup>

In July and September of last year, Representative Bob Goodlatte and other Republican members of the House Committee on the Judiciary urged DOJ to appoint a second special counsel to investigate several matters connected to the 2016 election, including issues relating to Secretary Clinton's use of a private email server.<sup>3</sup> Then, in November of last year, Assistant Attorney

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<sup>1</sup> Betsy Woodruff, *Justice Department 'Looking Into' Hillary Clinton's Emails—Again*, THE DAILY BEAST (Jan. 4, 2018, 10:00 AM), <https://www.thedailybeast.com/justice-department-looking-into-hillary-clintons-emails-again>.

<sup>2</sup> See Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump), TWITTER (Jan. 2, 2018, 7:48 AM), [https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/948174033882927104?ref\\_src=twsrc%5Etfw](https://twitter.com/realDonaldTrump/status/948174033882927104?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw).

<sup>3</sup> See Letter from Bob Goodlatte, Chairman, Committee on the Judiciary, et al., to Jeff Sessions, Attorney General, et al. (July 27, 2017), [https://judiciary.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/072717\\_HJC-Letter-to-AG-DAG.pdf](https://judiciary.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/072717_HJC-Letter-to-AG-DAG.pdf); Letter from Bob Goodlatte, Chairman, Committee on the Judiciary, et al., to Jeff Sessions, Attorney General, et al. (Sept. 26, 2017), [https://judiciary.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/092617\\_Special-Counsel-Follow-Up-Letter.pdf](https://judiciary.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/092617_Special-Counsel-Follow-Up-Letter.pdf).



General Stephen Boyd responded to Mr. Goodlatte, stating that Attorney General Jeff Sessions had directed federal prosecutors to evaluate “certain issues” raised in letters from Rep. Goodlatte.

American Oversight seeks records to better understand DOJ’s motivation for reopening the investigation into Ms. Clinton’s emails.

### Requested Records

American Oversight requests that DOJ produce the following within twenty business days:

Records sufficient to identify the senior attorneys involved in the review of Hillary Clinton’s use of a private email server described in the January 4, 2018 article in *The Daily Beast*, available at <https://www.thedailybeast.com/justice-department-looking-into-hillary-clintons-emails-again>, attached hereto as Exhibit A.

In addition to the records requested above, American Oversight also requests records describing the processing of this request, including records sufficient to identify search terms used and locations and custodians searched and any tracking sheets used to track the processing of this request. If DOJ uses FOIA questionnaires or certifications completed by individual custodians or components to determine whether they possess responsive materials or to describe how they conducted searches, we also request any such records prepared in connection with the processing of this request.

American Oversight seeks all responsive records regardless of format, medium, or physical characteristics. In conducting your search, please understand the terms “record,” “document,” and “information” in their broadest sense, to include any written, typed, recorded, graphic, printed, or audio material of any kind. We seek records of any kind, including electronic records, audiotapes, videotapes, and photographs, as well as letters, emails, facsimiles, telephone messages, voice mail messages and transcripts, notes, or minutes of any meetings, telephone conversations or discussions. Our request includes any attachments to these records. **No category of material should be omitted from search, collection, and production.**

Please search all records regarding agency business. **You may not exclude searches of files or emails in the personal custody of your officials, such as personal email accounts.** Records of official business conducted using unofficial systems or stored outside of official files is subject to the Federal Records Act and FOIA.<sup>4</sup> **It is not adequate to rely on policies and procedures that require officials to move such information to official systems within a certain period of time; American Oversight has a right to records contained in those files even if material has not yet been moved to**

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<sup>4</sup> See *Competitive Enter. Inst. v. Office of Sci. & Tech. Policy*, 827 F.3d 145, 149–50 (D.C. Cir. 2016); cf. *Judicial Watch, Inc. v. Kerry*, 844 F.3d 952, 955–56 (D.C. Cir. 2016).

official systems or if officials have, through negligence or willfulness, failed to meet their obligations.<sup>5</sup>

In addition, please note that in conducting a “reasonable search” as required by law, you must employ the most up-to-date technologies and tools available, in addition to searches by individual custodians likely to have responsive information. Recent technology may have rendered DOJ’s prior FOIA practices unreasonable. **In light of the government-wide requirements to manage information electronically by the end of 2016, it is no longer reasonable to rely exclusively on custodian-driven searches.**<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, agencies that have adopted the National Archives and Records Agency (NARA) Capstone program, or similar policies, now maintain emails in a form that is reasonably likely to be more complete than individual custodians’ files. For example, a custodian may have deleted a responsive email from his or her email program, but DOJ’s archiving tools would capture that email under Capstone. Accordingly, American Oversight insists that DOJ use the most up-to-date technologies to search for responsive information and take steps to ensure that the most complete repositories of information are searched. American Oversight is available to work with you to craft appropriate search terms. **However, custodian searches are still required; agencies may not have direct access to files stored in .PST files, outside of network drives, in paper format, or in personal email accounts.**

Under the FOIA Improvement Act of 2016, agencies must adopt a presumption of disclosure, withholding information “only if . . . disclosure would harm an interest protected by an exemption” or “disclosure is prohibited by law.”<sup>7</sup> If it is your position that any portion of the requested records is exempt from disclosure, American Oversight requests that you provide an index of those documents as required under *Vaughn v. Rosen*, 484 F.2d 820 (D.C. Cir. 1973), *cert. denied*, 415 U.S. 977 (1974). As you are aware, a *Vaughn* index must describe each document claimed as exempt with sufficient specificity “to permit a reasoned judgment as to whether the material is

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<sup>5</sup> See *Competitive Enter. Inst. v. Office of Sci. & Tech. Policy*, No. 14-cv-765, slip op. at 8 (D.D.C. Dec. 12, 2016) (“The Government argues that because the agency had a policy requiring [the official] to forward all of his emails from his [personal] account to his business email, the [personal] account only contains duplicate agency records at best. Therefore, the Government claims that any hypothetical deletion of the [personal account] emails would still leave a copy of those records intact in [the official’s] work email. However, policies are rarely followed to perfection by anyone. At this stage of the case, the Court cannot assume that each and every work related email in the [personal] account was duplicated in [the official’s] work email account.” (citations omitted)).

<sup>6</sup> Presidential Memorandum—Managing Government Records, 76 Fed. Reg. 75,423 (Nov. 28, 2011), <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/the-press-office/2011/11/28/presidential-memorandum-managing-government-records>; Office of Mgmt. & Budget, Exec. Office of the President, Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments & Independent Agencies, “Managing Government Records Directive,” M-12-18 (Aug. 24, 2012), <https://www.archives.gov/files/records-mgmt/m-12-18.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> FOIA Improvement Act of 2016 § 2 (Pub. L. No. 114-185).

actually exempt under FOIA.”<sup>8</sup> Moreover, the *Vaughn* index “must describe *each* document or portion thereof withheld, and for *each* withholding it must discuss the consequences of disclosing the sought-after information.”<sup>9</sup> Further, “the withholding agency must supply ‘a relatively detailed justification, specifically identifying the reasons why a particular exemption is relevant and correlating those claims with the particular part of a withheld document to which they apply.’”<sup>10</sup>

In the event some portions of the requested records are properly exempt from disclosure, please disclose any reasonably segregable non-exempt portions of the requested records. If it is your position that a document contains non-exempt segments, but that those non-exempt segments are so dispersed throughout the document as to make segregation impossible, please state what portion of the document is non-exempt, and how the material is dispersed throughout the document.<sup>11</sup> Claims of nonsegregability must be made with the same degree of detail as required for claims of exemptions in a *Vaughn* index. If a request is denied in whole, please state specifically that it is not reasonable to segregate portions of the record for release.

**You should institute a preservation hold on information responsive to this request.** American Oversight intends to pursue all legal avenues to enforce its right of access under FOIA, including litigation if necessary. Accordingly, DOJ is on notice that litigation is reasonably foreseeable.

To ensure that this request is properly construed, that searches are conducted in an adequate but efficient manner, and that extraneous costs are not incurred, American Oversight welcomes an opportunity to discuss its request with you before you undertake your search or incur search or duplication costs. By working together at the outset, American Oversight and DOJ can decrease the likelihood of costly and time-consuming litigation in the future.

Where possible, please provide responsive material in electronic format by email or in PDF or TIF format on a USB drive. Please send any responsive material being sent by mail to American Oversight, 1030 15<sup>th</sup> Street NW, Suite B255, Washington, DC 20005. If it will accelerate release of responsive records to American Oversight, please also provide responsive material on a rolling basis.

### **Fee Waiver Request**

In accordance with 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(A)(iii) and 28 C.F.R. § 16.10(k), American Oversight requests a waiver of fees associated with processing this request for records. The subject of this request concerns the operations of the federal government, and the disclosures will likely contribute to a better understanding of relevant government procedures by the general public in a

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<sup>8</sup> *Founding Church of Scientology v. Bell*, 603 F.2d 945, 949 (D.C. Cir. 1979).

<sup>9</sup> *King v. U.S. Dep’t of Justice*, 830 F.2d 210, 223–24 (D.C. Cir. 1987) (emphasis in original).

<sup>10</sup> *Id.* at 224 (citing *Mead Data Central, Inc. v. U.S. Dep’t of the Air Force*, 566 F.2d 242, 251 (D.C. Cir. 1977)).

<sup>11</sup> *Mead Data Central*, 566 F.2d at 261.

significant way.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, the request is primarily and fundamentally for non-commercial purposes.<sup>13</sup>

American Oversight requests a waiver of fees because disclosure of the requested information is “in the public interest because it is likely to contribute significantly to public understanding” of government operations and activities.<sup>14</sup> There is significant public interest in the many ongoing investigations into various issues relating to the 2016 election, including the FBI’s handling of its investigation into Ms. Clinton’s use of a private email server. Even the president himself has attracted significant attention to this issue by tweeting that Ms. Clinton’s aide, Huma Abedin, may have engaged in misconduct requiring further investigation (and even possibly jail time). The public deserves to know whether and how the DOJ is handling any ongoing investigation into those issues, including whether letters from congressional Republicans or tweets from the president influenced the Department’s decision to undertake any such investigation.

This request is primarily and fundamentally for non-commercial purposes.<sup>15</sup> As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, American Oversight does not have a commercial purpose and the release of the information requested is not in American Oversight’s financial interest. American Oversight’s mission is to promote transparency in government, to educate the public about government activities, and to ensure the accountability of government officials. American Oversight uses the information gathered, and its analysis of it, to educate the public through reports, press releases, or other media. American Oversight also makes materials it gathers available on its public website and promotes their availability on social media platforms, such as Facebook and Twitter.<sup>16</sup> American Oversight has demonstrated its commitment to the public disclosure of documents and creation of editorial content. For example, after receiving records regarding an ethics waiver received by a senior DOJ attorney,<sup>17</sup> American Oversight promptly posted the records to its website and published an analysis of what the records reflected about DOJ’s process for ethics waivers.<sup>18</sup> As another example, American Oversight has a project called “Audit the Wall,” where the organization is gathering and analyzing information and commenting on public releases of

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<sup>12</sup> 28 C.F.R. § 16.10(k)(1).

<sup>13</sup> *Id.*

<sup>14</sup> 28 C.F.R. § 16.10(k)(1), (2)(i)-(ii).

<sup>15</sup> 28 C.F.R. § 16.10(k)(1), (2)(iii).

<sup>16</sup> American Oversight currently has approximately 11,800 page likes on Facebook and 39,200 followers on Twitter. American Oversight, FACEBOOK, <https://www.facebook.com/weareoversight/> (last visited Jan. 19, 2018); American Oversight (@weareoversight), TWITTER, <https://twitter.com/weareoversight> (last visited Jan. 19, 2018).

<sup>17</sup> *DOJ Civil Division Response Noel Francisco Compliance*, AMERICAN OVERSIGHT, <https://www.americanoversight.org/document/doj-civil-division-response-noel-francisco-compliance>.

<sup>18</sup> *Francisco & the Travel Ban: What We Learned from the DOJ Documents*, AMERICAN OVERSIGHT, <https://www.americanoversight.org/francisco-the-travel-ban-what-we-learned-from-the-doj-documents>.

information related to the administration's proposed construction of a barrier along the U.S.-Mexico border.<sup>19</sup>

Accordingly, American Oversight qualifies for a fee waiver.

### Conclusion

We share a common mission to promote transparency in government. American Oversight looks forward to working with DOJ on this request. If you do not understand any part of this request, have any questions, or foresee any problems in fully releasing the requested records, please contact Sara Creighton at [foia@americanoversight.org](mailto:foia@americanoversight.org) or 202.869.5245. Also, if American Oversight's request for a fee waiver is not granted in full, please contact us immediately upon making such a determination.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Austin R. Evers". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the left.

Austin R. Evers  
Executive Director  
American Oversight

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<sup>19</sup> *Audit the Wall*, AMERICAN OVERSIGHT, [www.auditthewall.org](http://www.auditthewall.org).

# Exhibit A

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**REWIND**

# Justice Department 'Looking Into' Hillary Clinton's Emails— Again

It's the most scrutinized email server of all time. But the president is demanding it get scrutinized again. And DOJ is taking a fresh look.



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PHOTO ILLUSTRATION BY LYNE LUCIEN/THE DAILY BEAST

Justice Department officials are taking a fresh look at Hillary Clinton's use of a private email server while she served as secretary of State, The Daily Beast has learned.

An ally of Attorney General Jeff Sessions who is familiar with the thinking at the Justice Department's Washington headquarters described it as an effort to gather new details on how Clinton and her aides handled classified material. Officials' questions include how much classified information was sent over Clinton's server; who put that information into an unclassified environment, and how; and which investigators knew about these matters and when. The Sessions ally also said officials have questions about immunity agreements that Clinton aides may have made.

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A former senior DOJ official familiar with department leadership's thinking said officials there are acutely aware of demands from President Donald Trump that they look into Clinton's use of a private email server while secretary of State—and that they lock up her top aide, Huma Abedin.

For instance, Trump tweeted on Dec. 2, “Many people in our Country are asking what the ‘Justice’ Department is going to do about the fact that totally Crooked Hillary, AFTER receiving a subpoena from the United States Congress, deleted and ‘acid washed’ 33,000 Emails? No justice!”



**“If the White House asks you to look into it...  
The answer is to tell the White House to stay  
out of investigations and prosecutions,  
especially when it comes to your political  
opponents.”**

— Matt Miller

The former official said tweets like this present two challenges for department leadership: looking into the matter in a way consistent with normal Justice Department approaches, and trying to avoid the appearance that they are trying “to put Huma in jail.”

A spokesperson for the Justice Department declined to comment for this story.

It's an open question as to whether Justice Department officials would have the same level of interest in Clinton's server without a political directive from the White House, the former

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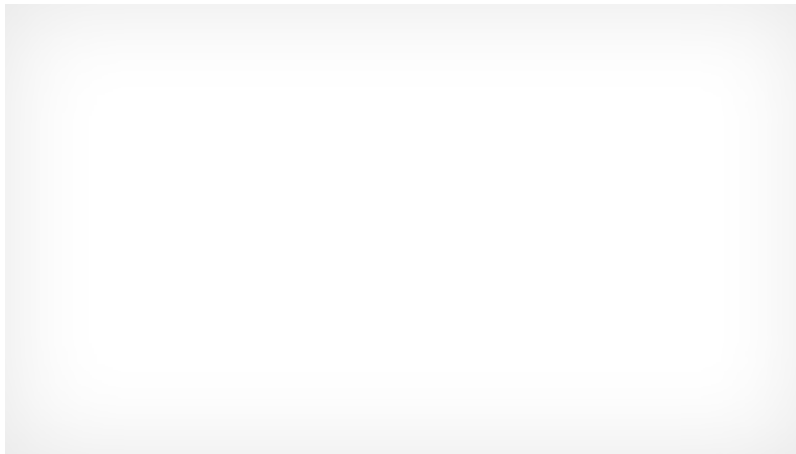
FBI Scrambling to Get More Info on Explosive Nunes Memo



The Worst Thing Donald Trump Says in Michael Wolff's Book

Last week, the State Department released emails, in response to a lawsuit from [the conservative group Judicial Watch](#), showing that classified material was on the computer of Abedin's then-husband Anthony Weiner. Sources told The Daily Beast that Justice Department officials were looking into the Clinton emails before those documents were released.

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Stephen Boyd, who heads the Justice Department's Office of Legislative Affairs, appeared to hint at the department's interest in [Clinton's emails in a letter](#) to House Judiciary Committee Chairman Bob Goodlatte on Nov. 13. In the letter, Boyd wrote that that Sessions "directed senior federal prosecutors to evaluate certain issues" the chairman was concerned about. He also wrote that those prosecutors would "make recommendations as to whether any matters not currently under investigation should be opened," and that they would send those recommendations directly to the attorney general and his top deputy, Rod Rosenstein.

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and his allies something to talk about and point to, and something to give Fox News to devote segments to.”

“I think that even that is extremely dangerous, and that the Justice Department should not be opening itself up to the perception that it is bending to political pressures from the White House,” Fallon continued. “The Justice Department is supposed to operate independently of the White House, and even if this is just a perfunctory step that they’re taking to try to appease the president, that in and of itself is an abuse of the DOJ authority.”

Nick Merrill, Secretary Clinton’s communications director, had this to say:

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“As Trump begins the new year with Steve Bannon calling his campaign treasonous and indictments and guilty pleas piling up, he resorts to diversion and distraction like clockwork, with the help of his attorney general. Few matters have been more scrutinized than emails, and it was determined that there was no wrongdoing. Trump’s behavior shows a profound disrespect for the rule of law and an unprecedented abuse of power—with his attorney general following suit at every turn. It tarnishes our justice system, and should be deeply troubling to all Americans.”

Clinton’s use of a private email server—which the FBI previously investigated, and declined to recommend for criminal prosecution—became a huge issue on the campaign trail. Trump mentioned it at just about every campaign rally, frequently followed by chants of “Lock her up!” from his supporters. On July 5, then-FBI Director James Comey made an unprecedented public statement blasting Clinton’s use of the server, but then explained why the bureau wouldn’t recommend she or any of her associates be prosecuted.

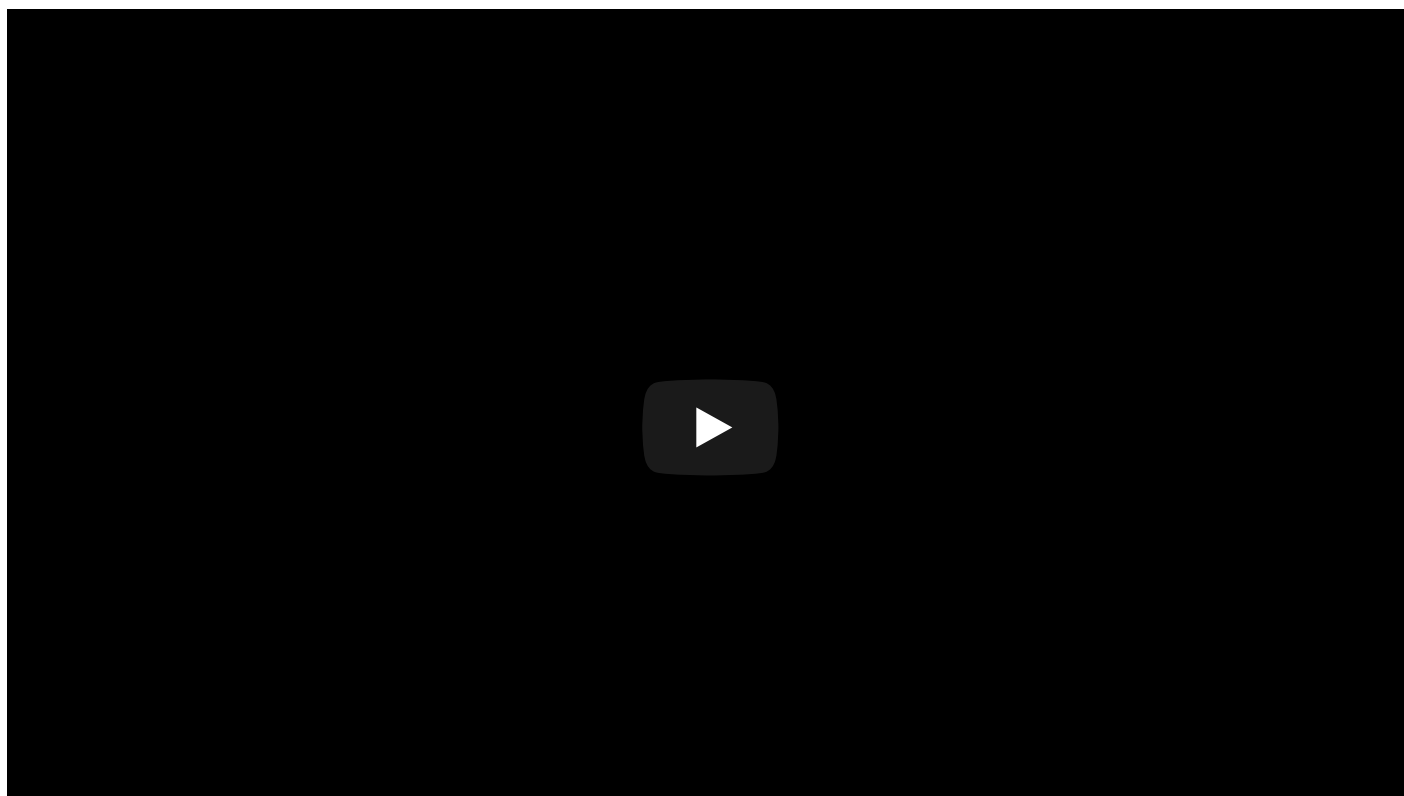
Over the summer, Trump made the email story a central campaign narrative. And at the Oct. 9 presidential debate, he threatened to incarcerate Clinton if he won the election.

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so much deception.”

“It’s just awfully good that someone with the temperament of Donald Trump is not in charge of the law in our country,” she replied.

“Because you’d be in jail,” he retorted.



In the weeks after that exchange, the email story dominated the news; on Oct. 28, Comey sent a letter to Capitol Hill—which promptly leaked—saying the investigation was reopened. Then, on Nov. 6, two days before the election, Comey followed up with another letter explaining that he actually hadn’t found new information in additional emails. Republicans were irate that Comey backtracked. Clinton’s camp was irate that he’d said anything at all. In less than two weeks, the FBI director had pulled off a vanishingly rare Washington feat: upsetting everyone.

And though Trump (obviously) became president, many conservatives still argue the Justice Department didn’t adequately investigate Clinton. The president himself, with lots of encouragement from the crew at *Fox & Friends*, has lobbed a host of critical tweets at the Justice Department on the issue.



the hands of foreign agents. Remember sailors pictures on submarine? Jail! Deep State Justice Dept must finally act? Also on Comey & others.”

Conservatives said the revelation that Justice Department officials are looking at Clinton’s email server comes as a relief.

“Clearly, that’s the least they can be doing, is asking some of these questions,” said Tom Fitton, who heads Judicial Watch. “I think there’s enough there to re-initiate an investigation.”

“It’s certainly a positive development,” added Fitton, whose organization sued for the release of thousands of Clinton emails and deposed her top aides. “It’s part of what we’ve been demanding.”



**“It’s about time they’re doing a review of this whole mess.”**

— Mark Corallo

Mark Corallo—a former spokesperson for Trump’s legal team and the John Ashcroft-era Justice Department—also said it’s a good sign.

“People should be encouraged that the new leadership at the Justice Department is actually interested in a nonpartisan, above-board Justice Department that treats every citizen equally,” he said. “And we can hope that this means they are dedicating themselves to cleaning up the Justice Department and the FBI, sanctioning any FBI agents or DOJ lawyers who are found to have violated their ethical and legal responsibilities, and restoring the trust of the American people.”

“It’s about time they’re doing a review of this whole mess,” he added.

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Justice Department.

“The president’s ongoing campaign to tear down the wall between the Justice Department and the White House seems to be working,” he said.

“If the White House asks you to look into it, the answer is not to look into it for the sake of looking into it,” he continued. “The answer is to tell the White House to stay out of investigations and prosecutions, especially when it comes to your political opponents. You’re just encouraging a bully. If you encourage him to do that, he’ll just keep bullying you.”

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