

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE, SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY

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December 9, 2025

Dr. Neil Jacobs
Administrator
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
1401 Constitution Ave. N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20230

Dear Administrator Jacobs:

The House Committee on Science, Space, and Technology has recently received disturbing reports regarding potential obstructionism within agencies' Offices of Civil Rights (OCRs). As stewards of taxpayer resources and overseers of agency operations, we are alarmed that OCRs' leadership may be delaying investigations and failing to uphold their statutory responsibilities, thereby undermining the fundamental statutory purpose of these offices. The Committee aims to determine the scope of this obstructionism and develop appropriate oversight measures.

While differing slightly in structure across agencies, OCRs play a critical role in ensuring that agencies and their funding recipients comply with federal civil rights law. Such laws include Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, and, more recently, Executive Order 14151 ("Ending Radical and Wasteful Government DEI Programs And Preferencing") and Executive Order 14173 ("Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity").¹ Any pattern of internal resistance to civil rights enforcement, suppression of whistleblower complaints, or obstruction of legitimate inquiries, whether internal or external, warrants immediate scrutiny.

We are particularly troubled by allegations that certain OCR leaders have actively discouraged career staff from pursuing investigations into civil rights violations involving federal

¹ See, e.g., 15 C.F.R. pt. 8 (granting the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, through the U.S. Department of Commerce, the authority to enforce civil rights law).

grant programs. The Committee's preliminary review suggests that this leadership may be falsely claiming that they lack the authority to conduct statutorily mandated oversight.

These reports suggest a potentially troubling pattern that could compromise the integrity of civil rights enforcement across federal agencies. To properly assess the extent of these issues and understand how your agency is addressing or preventing such problems, we ask that you respond to the following questions.

1. What substantive civil rights enforcement activities has OCR completed since January 20, 2025?
 - a. Please provide specific enforcement activities related to grants complying with Justice40.
 - b. If few or none, what factors are preventing OCR from initiating or completing statutorily mandated investigations?
2. Has OCR conducted reviews of programs enacted under the previous administration for compliance with the Civil Rights Act?
3. Has OCR conducted reviews of programs enacted under the previous administration for compliance with Executive Order 14151 ("Ending Radical and Wasteful Government DEI Programs And Preferencing")?
4. Has OCR conducted reviews of programs enacted under the previous administration for compliance with Executive Order 14173 ("Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity")?
5. Has any OCR staff member faced adverse personnel actions after raising concerns about the need to conduct relevant investigations?
6. Does your OCR require special approval from agency leadership to initiate or conduct statutorily mandated investigations or compliance reviews?
7. What oversight and accountability mechanisms are currently in place to ensure OCR leadership fulfills its statutory obligations?
 - a. How are these mechanisms monitored for effectiveness?

8. Are you aware of any complaints, formal or informal, regarding OCR leadership's handling of civil rights enforcement responsibilities since January 20, 2025?

Please respond to these questions, in numbered order, no later than December 19, 2025. We appreciate your attention to this important matter and look forward to working collaboratively to ensure the integrity, transparency, and functionality of your agency's OCR. If you have any questions, please contact the Committee's majority staff at (202) 225-6371.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Brian Babin in black ink, with the initials "M.C." printed below it.

Brian Babin
Chairman
House Committee on Science,
Space, and Technology

Handwritten signature of Rich McCormick in black ink.

Rich McCormick
Chairman
Subcommittee on
Investigations and Oversight
House Committee on Science,
Space, and Technology

cc: Zoe Lofgren, Ranking Member, Committee on Science, Space, and Technology;
Emilia Sykes, Ranking Member, Committee on Science, Space, and Technology,
Subcommittee on Investigations and Oversight; Sarah Nelson, Acting Inspector General, U.S.
Department of Energy