

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

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<http://oversight.house.gov>

April 11, 2016

The Honorable Jane Chu
Chairman
National Endowment for the Arts
400 7th Street, SW
Washington, D.C. 20506

Dear Chairman Chu:

The Committee recently learned that the Acting Inspector General (IG) for the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) received a memo terminating his detail from the Environmental Protection Agency Office of the Inspector General (EPA OIG) to serve as the NEA Acting IG. The Committee understands that Michael Binder is serving as the Acting IG for the NEA on a 120-day detail, pursuant to a memorandum of understanding between the EPA and the NEA. The detail expires on April 22, 2016. While the memorandum was subsequently withdrawn, the Committee would like to learn more about whether the NEA adhered to the appropriate process when issuing this termination.

Mr. Binder received a Memorandum from the NEA Chief of Staff on February 23, 2016, concluding Mr. Binder's detail on March 4, 2016.¹ The Memorandum states, "I would like to advise you that effective close of business Friday, March 4, 2016, your detail as Acting Inspector General with the NEA will conclude."²

According to the Inspector General Act of 1978 (IG Act), "Each Inspector General shall report to and be under the general supervision of the head of the designated Federal entity,³ but shall not report to, or be subject to supervision by, any other officer or employee of such designated Federal entity."⁴ As an Acting Inspector General, the Inspector General Act of 1978 fully applies to Mr. Binder. Thus, the NEA Chief of Staff's Memorandum to Mr. Binder seemingly lacks authority, as Mr. Binder is only subject to supervision from you, in your capacity as Chairman of the NEA.

Further, the IG Act states:

If an Inspector General is removed from office or is transferred to another position or location within a designated Federal entity, the head of the designated Federal entity shall communicate in writing the reasons for any such removal or transfer to both Houses of Congress, not later than 30 days before the removal or transfer.⁵

While the Interagency Agreement between NEA and EPA OIG has a provision for terminating the detail due to misconduct or poor performance, there is not provision to terminate the detail for any

¹ Memorandum from Chief of Staff, National Endowment for the Arts, *Conclusion of Detail (March 4, 2016)* (Feb. 23, 2016).

² *Id.*

³ 5 USC Appendix § 8G(a)(2) classifies the National Endowment for the Arts as a "designated Federal entity."

⁴ 5 USC Appendix § 8G(d)(1).

⁵ 5 USC Appendix § 8G(e)(2).

The Honorable Jane Chu

April 11, 2016

Page 2

other reason.⁶ Further, if you, in your capacity as Chairman of the NEA, wish to terminate Mr. Binder's detail for an appropriate reason, the termination must be preceded by a 30-day, written notice to Congress detailing the reasons for the termination in accordance with current law. The Committee is unaware of any written notice made to Congress from you indicating the reasons you would like to remove Mr. Binder as Acting IG.

Given that Congress may not have received any written notice from you, Mr. Binder's detail termination did not come directly from you, and Mr. Binder's detail termination may not have been related to issues of performance or misconduct, the Committee would like to better understand the process that was followed in originally attempting to terminate Mr. Binder's detail. Further, the Committee wishes to ensure that all actions were and are compliant with the IG Act. To this effort, please provide the following information:

- 1) An explanation for why Mr. Binder received a Memorandum from the NEA Chief of Staff and not you, as Chairman, terminating his detail.
- 2) An explanation for why the NEA Chief of Staff, presumably acting on behalf of the NEA, attempted to end Mr. Binder's detail.
- 3) All documents and communications related to the attempted termination of Mr. Binder's detail.

The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform is the principal oversight committee of the House of Representatives and may at "any time" investigate "any matter" as set forth in House Rule X. An attachment to this letter provides additional information about responding to the Committee's request.

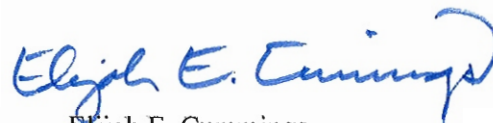
When producing documents to the Committee, please deliver production sets to the Majority staff in Room 2157 of the Rayburn House Office Building and the Minority staff in Room 2471 of the Rayburn House Office Building. The Committee prefers, if possible, to receive all documents in electronic format. An attachment to this letter provides additional information about responding to the Committee's request.

If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact Alexa Armstrong or Chris D'Angelo of the Majority staff at (202) 225-5074 or Mark Stephenson of the Minority Staff at 202-225-5051. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Jason Chaffetz
Chairman



Elijah E. Cummings
Ranking Member

Enclosure

⁶ Interagency Agreement between the Office of Inspector General, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and the National Endowment for the Arts (Dec. 2015).

Responding to Committee Document Requests

1. In complying with this request, you are required to produce all responsive documents that are in your possession, custody, or control, whether held by you or your past or present agents, employees, and representatives acting on your behalf. You should also produce documents that you have a legal right to obtain, that you have a right to copy or to which you have access, as well as documents that you have placed in the temporary possession, custody, or control of any third party. Requested records, documents, data or information should not be destroyed, modified, removed, transferred or otherwise made inaccessible to the Committee.
2. In the event that any entity, organization or individual denoted in this request has been, or is also known by any other name than that herein denoted, the request shall be read also to include that alternative identification.
3. The Committee's preference is to receive documents in electronic form (i.e., CD, memory stick, or thumb drive) in lieu of paper productions.
4. Documents produced in electronic format should also be organized, identified, and indexed electronically.
5. Electronic document productions should be prepared according to the following standards:
 - (a) The production should consist of single page Tagged Image File ("TIF"), files accompanied by a Concordance-format load file, an Opticon reference file, and a file defining the fields and character lengths of the load file.
 - (b) Document numbers in the load file should match document Bates numbers and TIF file names.
 - (c) If the production is completed through a series of multiple partial productions, field names and file order in all load files should match.
 - (d) All electronic documents produced to the Committee should include the following fields of metadata specific to each document:

BEGDOC, ENDDOC, TEXT, BEGATTACH, ENDATTACH,
PAGECOUNT, CUSTODIAN, RECORDTYPE, DATE, TIME, SENTDATE,
SENTHOUR, BEGINDATE, BEGINTIME, ENDDATE, ENDTIME, AUTHOR, FROM,
CC, TO, BCC, SUBJECT, TITLE, FILENAME, FILEEXT, FILESIZE,
DATECREATED, TIMECREATED, DATELASTMOD, TIMELASTMOD,
INTMSGID, INTMSGHEADER, NATIVELINK, INTFILPATH, EXCEPTION,
BEGATTACH.
6. Documents produced to the Committee should include an index describing the contents of the production. To the extent more than one CD, hard drive, memory stick, thumb drive, box or folder is produced, each CD, hard drive, memory stick, thumb drive, box or folder should contain an index describing its contents.

7. Documents produced in response to this request shall be produced together with copies of file labels, dividers or identifying markers with which they were associated when the request was served.
8. When you produce documents, you should identify the paragraph in the Committee's schedule to which the documents respond.
9. It shall not be a basis for refusal to produce documents that any other person or entity also possesses non-identical or identical copies of the same documents.
10. If any of the requested information is only reasonably available in machine-readable form (such as on a computer server, hard drive, or computer backup tape), you should consult with the Committee staff to determine the appropriate format in which to produce the information.
11. If compliance with the request cannot be made in full by the specified return date, compliance shall be made to the extent possible by that date. An explanation of why full compliance is not possible shall be provided along with any partial production.
12. In the event that a document is withheld on the basis of privilege, provide a privilege log containing the following information concerning any such document: (a) the privilege asserted; (b) the type of document; (c) the general subject matter; (d) the date, author and addressee; and (e) the relationship of the author and addressee to each other.
13. If any document responsive to this request was, but no longer is, in your possession, custody, or control, identify the document (stating its date, author, subject and recipients) and explain the circumstances under which the document ceased to be in your possession, custody, or control.
14. If a date or other descriptive detail set forth in this request referring to a document is inaccurate, but the actual date or other descriptive detail is known to you or is otherwise apparent from the context of the request, you are required to produce all documents which would be responsive as if the date or other descriptive detail were correct.
15. Unless otherwise specified, the time period covered by this request is from January 1, 2009 to the present.
16. This request is continuing in nature and applies to any newly-discovered information. Any record, document, compilation of data or information, not produced because it has not been located or discovered by the return date, shall be produced immediately upon subsequent location or discovery.
17. All documents shall be Bates-stamped sequentially and produced sequentially.
18. Two sets of documents shall be delivered, one set to the Majority Staff and one set to the Minority Staff. When documents are produced to the Committee, production sets shall be delivered to the Majority Staff in Room 2157 of the Rayburn House Office Building and the Minority Staff in Room 2471 of the Rayburn House Office Building.

19. Upon completion of the document production, you should submit a written certification, signed by you or your counsel, stating that: (1) a diligent search has been completed of all documents in your possession, custody, or control which reasonably could contain responsive documents; and (2) all documents located during the search that are responsive have been produced to the Committee.

Definitions

1. The term “document” means any written, recorded, or graphic matter of any nature whatsoever, regardless of how recorded, and whether original or copy, including, but not limited to, the following: memoranda, reports, expense reports, books, manuals, instructions, financial reports, working papers, records, notes, letters, notices, confirmations, telegrams, receipts, appraisals, pamphlets, magazines, newspapers, prospectuses, inter-office and intra-office communications, electronic mail (e-mail), contracts, cables, notations of any type of conversation, telephone call, meeting or other communication, bulletins, printed matter, computer printouts, teletypes, invoices, transcripts, diaries, analyses, returns, summaries, minutes, bills, accounts, estimates, projections, comparisons, messages, correspondence, press releases, circulars, financial statements, reviews, opinions, offers, studies and investigations, questionnaires and surveys, and work sheets (and all drafts, preliminary versions, alterations, modifications, revisions, changes, and amendments of any of the foregoing, as well as any attachments or appendices thereto), and graphic or oral records or representations of any kind (including without limitation, photographs, charts, graphs, microfiche, microfilm, videotape, recordings and motion pictures), and electronic, mechanical, and electric records or representations of any kind (including, without limitation, tapes, cassettes, disks, and recordings) and other written, printed, typed, or other graphic or recorded matter of any kind or nature, however produced or reproduced, and whether preserved in writing, film, tape, disk, videotape or otherwise. A document bearing any notation not a part of the original text is to be considered a separate document. A draft or non-identical copy is a separate document within the meaning of this term.
2. The term “communication” means each manner or means of disclosure or exchange of information, regardless of means utilized, whether oral, electronic, by document or otherwise, and whether in a meeting, by telephone, facsimile, email (desktop or mobile device), text message, instant message, MMS or SMS message, regular mail, telexes, releases, or otherwise.
3. The terms “and” and “or” shall be construed broadly and either conjunctively or disjunctively to bring within the scope of this request any information which might otherwise be construed to be outside its scope. The singular includes plural number, and vice versa. The masculine includes the feminine and neuter genders.
4. The terms “person” or “persons” mean natural persons, firms, partnerships, associations, corporations, subsidiaries, divisions, departments, joint ventures, proprietorships, syndicates, or other legal, business or government entities, and all subsidiaries, affiliates, divisions, departments, branches, or other units thereof.

5. The term “identify,” when used in a question about individuals, means to provide the following information: (a) the individual's complete name and title; and (b) the individual's business address and phone number.
6. The term “referring or relating,” with respect to any given subject, means anything that constitutes, contains, embodies, reflects, identifies, states, refers to, deals with or is pertinent to that subject in any manner whatsoever.
7. The term “employee” means agent, borrowed employee, casual employee, consultant, contractor, de facto employee, independent contractor, joint adventurer, loaned employee, part-time employee, permanent employee, provisional employee, subcontractor, or any other type of service provider.