



Trump Administration's Antisemitism Task Force Under Fire

Blogs

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The Trump administration's Task Force to Combat Antisemitism ("the Task Force") is under fire as a Department of Justice attorney and other federal employees filed a whistleblower claim with the House Judiciary Committee. The claim alleges that the Task Force pursued university antisemitism investigations with predetermined outcomes, with political appointees overruling career investigators and proceeding despite weak or nonexistent evidence.

The Authority of the Task Force

The Task Force investigates claims of antisemitism under Title VI of the [Civil Rights Act of 1964](#), which bars discrimination on the basis of race, color, or national origin in any program or activity that receives federal money, including colleges and universities. Discrimination against Jewish, Muslim, and other students can fall within Title VI when it targets their shared ancestry or ethnic characteristics – a theory, long used by the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights, under which such discrimination is treated as race or national-origin discrimination.

What the Whistleblowers Allege

The complaint was filed by a DOJ attorney and other federal employees assigned to the Task Force. They-allege that the administration threatened to withhold large amounts of federal funding to pressure major universities into unwarranted settlements.

Specific allegations include:

- **Brown University.** A temporary freeze of more than \$500 million, followed by a settlement requiring \$50 million toward state workforce-development organizations, despite no finding of any civil-rights violation.
- **Columbia University.** A case that allegedly relied heavily on false statements and constitutionally protected speech.

Representative Jamie Raskin, ranking member of the House Judiciary Committee, has called for an investigation into the allegations. He reiterated that antisemitism is a real problem that must be taken seriously, but argued that the Task Force falls far short of that standard, describing its actions as a politically motivated “pre-baked frame up operation.”

Deja Vu

This is not the first time the administration has faced accusations of abusing its authority through the Task Force. In 2025, news outlets reported that the Task Force pressured its lawyers to “find” evidence that UCLA tolerated antisemitism, citing DOJ investigators who considered the investigation “problematic” and “ethically dubious.” Separately, a federal judge dismissed the government’s lawsuit against Harvard University, finding that the government’s examples of antisemitism were “too isolated and episodic” to support a Title VI violation.

Key Takeaways for Colleges and Universities

The allegations remain unproven. Regardless of how they resolve, institutions can take practical steps now to prepare for, and defend against, federal Title VI inquiries.

Before an Inquiry

- **Centralize your investigation response:** Pre-designate a small response team with a written playbook, clear decision rights, and rapid document-hold procedures.
- **Build a “Title VI-ready” evidentiary record:** Maintain contemporaneous documentation of (a) complaint intake and resolution, (b) anti-harassment policies, (c) training, (d) incident response timelines, (e) discipline outcomes, and (f) steps taken to prevent recurrence—so you can rebut “predetermined” narratives quickly with facts.
- **Brief leadership and the board in advance:** Set escalation triggers (funding freeze, subpoena, OCR/DOJ referral), approval thresholds, and communications guardrails before a crisis hits.
- **Seek external validation:** Periodically audit your Title VI and anti-harassment processes, and campus-climate response, and keep the audit trail. Credible third-party reviews can deter overreach and strengthen your negotiating posture.

During an Inquiry

- **Separate protected speech from actionable harassment:** Train investigators and student-conduct staff on the line between constitutionally protected expression and discriminatory harassment under Title VI, and document that analysis in each matter.
- **Run privileged internal investigations early:** When a federal inquiry is threatened, promptly conduct a privileged fact investigation (using outside counsel where appropriate), identify weaknesses, and remediate—while preserving defenses and avoiding unnecessary admissions.



- **Demand process and specificity in writing:** In agency interactions, push for written allegations, the legal theory, the evidentiary basis, and the procedural posture. Memorialize calls in follow-up letters and emails to build an administrative record.
- **Treat funding threats as a parallel workstream:** Map federal funding dependencies by agency, program, and principal investigator; identify mission-critical grants; and prepare contingency plans. Coordinate with investigators and sponsored-research offices so operational panic does not drive settlement.

If Settlement Looms

- **Exercise settlement discipline:** If settlement is unavoidable, negotiate (a) clear “no admission” language where appropriate, (b) narrow, measurable obligations tied to Title VI compliance rather than unrelated spending, (c) realistic timelines, (d) confidentiality and FOIA strategy, and (e) defined termination and exit criteria.
- **Adopt a communications strategy that does not concede liability:** Prepare templated statements emphasizing safety, nondiscrimination, and due process, and avoid public messaging that can be reframed as an admission or as retaliation.

We will continue to monitor developments in this complaint and in other matters related to Title VI investigations.

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