



January 27, 2025

Senator John Thune
Majority Leader
United States Senate
511 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Chuck Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

VOTE NO on the Confirmation of Pamela Bondi as Attorney General

Dear Senator,

On behalf of the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), a civil and human rights organization that has been working as a catalyst for racial justice in the South and beyond since 1971, we write to convey our strong opposition to the nomination of Pamela Bondi to serve as Attorney General of the United States. Ms. Bondi's record demonstrates that she is unfit to lead the Department of Justice – an agency that plays a leading and vital role in protecting our constitutional and civil rights. Her record is one of using her position as Florida's Attorney General to deprive people of their rights, rather than defend those rights. In addition, Ms. Bondi's blind loyalty to President Trump demonstrates that she will abet him in his declared intention to use the power of the Department of Justice to punish his opponents. Ms. Bondi's conflicts of interest also will prevent her from leading the agency in an impartial and independent manner.

The decision to confirm a nominee is a Senator's solemn responsibility which requires measured evaluation and consideration. The framers of the Constitution established the Senate's "Advice and Consent" role for a reason: to ensure that the public's interests—not those of any political party or president—are protected. The confirmation process thus serves as a crucial check on presidential power, protecting our nation by preventing the appointment of unqualified or unsuitable individuals to lead agencies that impact the everyday lives of millions of Americans.

Founded in Alabama to continue the work of the Civil Rights Movement across the Deep South and beyond, the SPLC uniquely understands the essential role the Department of Justice (DOJ) plays in safeguarding the rights and opportunities promised to all Americans. In the Deep South, the federal government has often been the last—and at times, the only—line of defense to protect



these rights and opportunities. When states denied or actively obstructed their Black, Brown, and poor residents' civil rights, it was often the DOJ—under both Republican and Democrat administrations—that stepped in to protect these rights and ensure justice was served. A strong DOJ is essential to ensure that the rights guaranteed by the Constitution are both protected and applied equally to all Americans.

When evaluating any nominee, it is important to not only assess their personal background, knowledge, and experience but also how their qualifications align with the mission of the agency and the role for which the person is being considered. In our letter to Senators of January 10, 2025,¹ the SPLC stressed the need to evaluate each presidential nominee based on their expertise, character, and commitment to upholding the law, including: a firm dedication to preserving the independence of their respective agency from partisan influence; a proven track record of supporting or vigorously enforcing federal law, particularly civil rights laws, as well as a commitment to guarding against the weaponization of agencies; a willingness to defend against any efforts to dilute or weaken federal laws; an abiding respect for the role of government and the critical contributions of career public servants; and a demonstrated commitment to advancing their respective agency's work in upholding our nation's promise of equality and justice for all. The DOJ, especially, must be led by someone who demonstrates a commitment to the Constitution and to properly balancing enforcement of criminal laws with vigorous protection of civil rights, voting rights, and civil liberties.

Ms. Bondi does not satisfy any of these criteria. Indeed, Ms. Bondi's professional record from her time as Attorney General of Florida and her subsequent roles in Trump-supporting organizations indicate that under her leadership the DOJ would not maintain independence or impartiality from President Trump, who has repeatedly vowed to weaponize it against perceived enemies or for corporate interests. In addition, she lacks impartiality regarding and independence from corporations from whom she has profited as a lobbyist. Moreover, Ms. Bondi's track record of fighting against established federal laws that protect voting rights and other civil rights, raises serious concerns that she will not use her role at the DOJ to uphold its legacy as the bulwark against attacks on civil rights, but will instead abandon laws and practices meant to protect society's most vulnerable. Indeed, as discussed below, Ms. Bondi has worked in her roles as Florida's Attorney General and/or in non-governmental organizations to restrict voting rights, deny humane treatment to migrants and criminal defendants, and elevate religion interests over the separation of church and state.

Ms. Bondi's professional entanglements raise alarming concerns about conflicts of interest, lack of independence, and abuse of power.

Ms. Bondi has demonstrated an alarming lack of independence from President Trump.

Ms. Bondi's extensive history of unabashed loyalty to President Trump indicates that she will not resist his well-established intentions to politicize the DOJ and other branches of government. President Trump has made clear that he believes those around him should be unflinchingly loyal, even to the extent of violating the Constitution and laws of our country. John Kelly, who served as the White House chief of staff from 2017 to 2019, revealed that Trump praised Adolph Hitler

¹ Letter from Margaret Huang and LaShawn Warren, January 10, 2025, <https://www.splcenter.org/resources/policies/letter-to-senators-urging-careful-evaluation-of-president-elect-trumps-administrative-nominees/>.



for achieving complete loyalty from senior Nazi officials, and that he was expecting the same from his Cabinet.² During his first term, President Trump also fired two Attorneys General for their perceived lack of loyalty, namely adhering to the law and Constitution.³ Ms. Bondi has given every indication that she will offer all the loyalty President Trump demands.

Ms. Bondi will not oppose President Trump's promised efforts to use the powers of the DOJ to bludgeon his perceived opposition.⁴ Ms. Bondi herself has called prosecutors who investigated President Trump part of the "deep state," and has suggested they will be prosecuted for these actions.⁵ During a Fox News appearance last year, she stated, "When Republicans take back the White House – and we will be back in there in 18 months or less—do you know what's going to happen? The Department of Justice, the prosecutors will be prosecuted – the bad ones—and the investigators will be investigated."⁶ In 2016, Bondi had also supported chants of "lock her up," referring to Hillary Clinton, simply because she was a political foe of Trump's.⁷

Both in her role as Attorney General of Florida and in other roles since leaving that office, Ms. Bondi has demonstrated her unflinching loyalty to Donald Trump. By 2013, Ms. Bondi's office had received numerous complaints from Floridians who reported that they were victims of fraudulent activities by Trump University.⁸ Ms. Bondi announced that she was considering joining a lawsuit against Trump University brought by New York Attorney General Eric Schneiderman. Four days after Bondi made this announcement, she received a \$25,000 campaign donation from Donald Trump.⁹ Soon after, Bondi announced there would be no formal investigation into Trump University.¹⁰

Ms. Bondi also showed blind allegiance to Trump in the aftermath of the 2020 election when, shortly after the election, she attempted to assist him in overturning the will of American voters. The day after the election, when votes were still being counted, Ms. Bondi traveled to Pennsylvania and falsely claimed Trump had won the election in that state, making untrue claims

² Tori Otten, *Trump Apparently Has a List of Things He Loves About Adolf Hitler*, The New Republic (Mar. 11, 2024), <https://newrepublic.com/post/179741/trump-praise-adolf-hitler-john-kelly>.

³ Katherine Doyle and Jonathan Allen, *Feeling betrayed, Trump wants a second administration stocked with loyalists*, National Broadcasting Company (Feb. 12, 2024), <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/donald-trump/betrayed-trump-second-administration-loyalists-loyalty-rcna136257>.

⁴ Lisa Lerer and Michael Gold, *Trump Escalates Threats to Political Opponents He Deems the 'Enemy'*, The New York Times (last updated Nov. 8, 2024), <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/10/15/us/politics/trump-opponents-enemy-within.html>.

⁵ David Rohde et al., *AG pick Pam Bondi's past vow: Prosecute the 'bad' prosecutors who indicted Trump*, National Broadcast Company (Nov. 23, 2024, 11:04 PM), <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/politics-news/pam-bondi-attorney-general-justice-department-rcna181493>.

⁶ Mark Berman and David Nakamura, *Pam Bondi, Trump's AG pick, said 'prosecutors will be prosecuted'*, The Washington Post, November 23, 2024, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2024/11/23/pam-bondi-doj-attorney-general-trump-pick/>.

⁷ Nick Gass, *'Lock her up' chant rules Republican convention*, Politico (last updated Jul. 20, 2016), <https://www.politico.com/story/2016/07/rnc-2016-lock-her-up-chant-hillary-clinton-225916>.

⁸ Eric Lipton, *Pam Bondi, a \$25,000 Donation and Trump University: Questions Remain*, November 22, 2024, <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/11/22/us/politics/pam-bondi-trump-university.html>

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ *Id.*



about cheating, fake ballots, and votes cast by dead people.¹¹ Pennsylvania courts ruled Mr. Trump's false claims that he won the election were without merit, noting that the "court has been presented with strained legal arguments without merit and speculative accusations."¹² But even now, Ms. Bondi continues to cling to these false claims. During her confirmation hearing before the Senate Judiciary Committee, Ms. Bondi was repeatedly asked about the 2020 election and continued to refuse to admit that former President Biden won.¹³

Ms. Bondi's work as the chief legal officer at America First Policy Institute (AFPI) – a "think tank established by former Trump administration staffers in anticipation of a second term"¹⁴ – has often involved boosting President Trump and his agenda and interests. Significantly, AFPI has represented President Trump in litigation alleging censorship by various social media platforms.¹⁵ Ms. Bondi also served as Mr. Trump's attorney during his first impeachment trial.¹⁶

Ms. Bondi has had substantial financial entanglements with Trump-supporting organizations. She led a Super PAC dedicated to Donald Trump and received significant compensation to head a related nonprofit.¹⁷ She was paid more than \$200,000 a year to lead Make America Great Again Policies Inc., a nonprofit that "didn't appear to do anything at all," and also served as chairwoman of the MAGAA! Super PAC.¹⁸

Ironically, although Ms. Bondi does not acknowledge that her unrelenting efforts to shield and advance President Trump's interests raise serious doubts about her suitability to serve as Attorney General, she did use her position at AFPI to accuse Fulton County, Georgia District Attorney Fani Willis of having a disqualifying conflict of interest in prosecuting a criminal case against Trump. In an AFPI press release calling the case a "sham witch hunt," Ms. Bondi is quoted as saying the failure of an impartial judge to disqualify Ms. Willis "proves there is no law,

¹¹ U.S. Senate Committee on the Judiciary, *Election Denier Pam Bondi Won't Protect Our Sacred Right To Vote*, January 15, 2025, <https://www.judiciary.senate.gov/press/dem/releases/election-denier-pam-bondi-wont-protect-our-sacred-right-to-vote>

¹² Anthony Zurcher, *US election: Trump camp's lawsuit struck down in Pennsylvania*, November 22, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/election-us-2020-55030617>

¹³ Ms. Bondi stated: "President Biden is the President of the United States. He was duly sworn in, and he is the President of the United States. There was a peaceful transition in power. President Trump left office and was overwhelmingly elected in 2024." She continued, "I was an advocate for the campaign and I was on the ground in Pennsylvania and I saw many things there." (Bloomberg Government transcript, January 15, 2025, page 18).

¹⁴ Michelle L. Price and Colleen Long, *What to Know About Pam Bondi, Trump's New Pick for Attorney General*, Associated Press (updated Nov. 25, 2024, 8:56 PM), <https://apnews.com/article/things-to-know-pam-bondi-eecl1d16075c7debda62223b475e3977d>.

¹⁵ E.g., *Brief For Donald J. Trump As Amicus Curiae in Support Of Petitioners*, No. 22-277 in the United States Supreme Court, https://www.supremecourt.gov/DocketPDF/22/22-277/298465/20240123135713292_240107a%20AC%20Brief%20for%20efiling.pdf; America First Policy Institute, *Statement from Pam Bondi on President Trump's Lawsuit Against Big Tech*, <https://americafirstpolicy.com/issues/clp-case-update-president-donald-j-trumps-lawsuit-against-big-tech>.

¹⁶ Alanna Durkin Richer, *Who is Trump's attorney general pick Pam Bondi? The former prosecutor is a close Trump ally*, January 15, 2025, <https://apnews.com/article/pam-bondi-justice-department-trump-attorney-general-4b94c094cfcabf606e4883fe709ab55a>

¹⁷ Max Greenwood, *New Trump super PAC formed after accusations of misconduct*, October 5, 2021,

<https://thehill.com/homenews/campaign/575314-new-trump-super-pac-formed-after-accusations-of-misconduct/>

¹⁸ Roger Sollenberger, *Even Trump Can't Make Sense of His Own Dark-Money Maze*, *The Daily Beast* (May 12, 2022), <https://www.thedailybeast.com/even-donald-trump-cant-make-sense-of-his-own-dark-money-maze/>.



code of conduct, or professional responsibility the Left won't discard in their obsession to 'get Trump.' To ensure confidence in the process, Fani Willis must be removed from this case."¹⁹

Ms. Bondi's complete fealty to President Trump – an "obvious conflict of interest" that the Senate must not ignore – makes her unfit to serve as the highest law enforcement official in the nation.

Ms. Bondi's close ties with organizations that are being or may be investigated by the DOJ raise serious doubts about her independence and impartiality.

Ms. Bondi's decision not to pursue a case against Trump University after receiving a large campaign donation from Donald Trump is not the only example of her having dropped an investigation after receiving money from a business. As the newly elected Attorney General of Florida, Ms. Bondi egregiously abused her authority by ordering two attorneys within the Economic Crimes division – who were vigorously investigating and exposing predatory foreclosure practices by Lender Processing Services – to "lay low."²⁰ They were instructed not to take any other investigatory actions or speak to others about the cases and were ultimately fired. During her campaign for that office, Ms. Bondi accepted thousands in donations from Lender Processing Services and its affiliates.²¹

There are similarly serious concerns about Ms. Bondi's lack of impartiality regarding large corporations that are either under current investigation or are potential subjects of future investigation by the DOJ. Bondi was registered to lobby the federal government between 2019 and 2024 for 30 different clients, some of which are currently being investigated by DOJ or have been the subject of previous DOJ investigations.²² She and her firm have received tens of thousands of dollars from each of these corporations.

Perhaps most concerning is Ms. Bondi's work for GEO Group, which runs private detention centers. GEO Group made over \$1 billion in revenue from ICE contracts in 2022 alone.²³ GEO Group stands to profit immensely from the Trump administration's plan to conduct massive deportation efforts, including a dramatic step up in mandatory detention of migrants.²⁴ Furthermore, on his first day in office, Trump rescinded President Biden's Executive Order 14006, which sought to eliminate the federal use of private prisons. In anticipation of these actions, GEO Group's stock value doubled in the week after it was announced that Trump won

¹⁹ America First Policy Institute, *Obvious Conflict of Interest Ignored in Fani Willis Decision*, March 15, 2024, <https://americafirstpolicy.com/issues/obvious-conflict-of-interest-ignored-in-fani-willis-decision>.

²⁰ David Dayen, *When Pam Bondi Protected Foreclosure Fraudsters*, The American Prospect (Nov. 22, 2024), <https://prospect.org/justice/2024-11-22-when-pam-bondi-protected-foreclosure-fraudsters/>.

²¹ *Id.*

²² Jon Golinger, *U.S. Attorney General-Nominee Pam Bondi's Problematic Corporate Lobbying Clients*, Public Citizen (Jan. 8, 2025), https://www.citizen.org/article/conflicted-justice/#_ftn40.

²³ Eunice Hyunhye Cho, *Unchecked Growth: Private Prison Corporations and Immigration Detention, Three Years Into the Biden Administration*, American Civil Liberties Union (Aug. 7, 2023), <https://www.aclu.org/news/immigrants-rights/unchecked-growth-private-prison-corporations-and-immigration-detention-three-years-into-the-biden-administration>

²⁴ Department of Homeland Security, *Finding of Mass Influx of Aliens* (requiring mandatory detentions at border), January 23, 2025, https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/2025-01/25_0123_finding-of-mass-influx-of-aliens.pdf.



the 2024 presidential election,²⁵ and has continued to increase.²⁶ As a report from the DOJ's own Office of Inspector General makes clear, private prisons and detention facilities are notorious for unsafe conditions.²⁷ As a result, GEO Group has rightfully been the subject of DOJ investigations.²⁸ Given her close ties with GEO Group, Ms. Bondi cannot be relied upon to continue or initiate necessary investigations into its practices if she is confirmed, especially given that GEO Group has spent huge amounts of money supporting President Trump's election campaign and even filling the coffers of his private businesses.²⁹ The news that the Trump administration has suspended much of the work of DOJ's Civil Rights Division³⁰ is likely to further enrich GEO Group and those associated with it.

Ms. Bondi and her firm were also paid more than \$140,000 for lobbying by Amazon, which is currently under investigation by the DOJ for workplace safety and other issues at its warehouses.³¹ In 2023, Amazon entered into a settlement with the DOJ for \$25 million over child privacy concerns.³² Other lobbying clients of Ms. Bondi previously investigated by the DOJ include Uber and Republic Services.³³

Ms. Bondi's close ties with such businesses raise serious concerns about her ability to impartially lead the DOJ in conducting important investigations and litigation on matters of national concern. This is particularly true in light of her earlier conduct in ending investigations of organizations from which she received campaign donations.

Ms. Bondi has a damning anti-civil rights record and has actively worked to undermine civil rights laws. The Attorney General plays a vital role in the enforcement of our nation's civil rights laws. As such, the office of the Attorney General demands respect for and a commitment to the rule of law, independence from political influence from the White House or elsewhere, and the highest level of impartiality. Ms. Bondi's record shows that she lacks these critical attributes.

²⁵ Hormaz Fatakia, *These two 'Jail stocks' have nearly doubled in value since Trump's election win*, Consumer News and Business Channel (Nov. 12, 2024), <https://www.cnbc.tv/18.com/market/us-election-result-jail-stocks-corecivic-geo-group-share-price-nearly-doubles-trump-win-trade-19507900.htm>.

²⁶ NASDAQ, GEO Group Market Activity, accessed January 25, 2025, <https://www.nasdaq.com/market-activity/stocks/geo>.

²⁷ *Review of the Federal Bureau of Prisons' Monitoring of Contract Prisons*, Office of the Inspector General, United States Department of Justice (Aug. 2016), <https://oig.justice.gov/reports/2016/e1606.pdf#page=2>.

²⁸ E.g., U.S. Department of Justice, *Department of Justice Releases Investigative Findings on the Walnut Grove Youth Correctional Facility in Mississippi*, March 21, 2012, <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/departments-justice-releases-investigative-findings-walnut-grove-youth-correctional-facility>.

²⁹ Robert McGuire and Lauren White, *Private prison behemoth is first corporation to max out to Trump*, Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW), July 3, 2024, <https://www.citizensforethics.org/reports-investigations/crew-investigations/private-prison-behemoth-is-first-corporation-to-max-out-to-trump/>.

³⁰ Alanna Durkin Richer, *Trump's new Justice Department leadership orders a freeze on civil rights cases*, Associated Press, January 22, 2025, <https://apnews.com/article/civil-rights-division-justice-department-trump-2dcb45cca7c9c9cdaea78282d4279c35>.

³¹ *Southern District of New York Amazon Warehouse Investigation* [webform], United States Attorney's Office, Southern District of New York (last updated Jan. 22, 2025), <https://www.justice.gov/usao-sdny/webform/sdny-amazon-warehouse-investigation>.

³² Natasha Singer, *Amazon to Pay \$25 Million to Settle Children's Privacy Charges*, The New York Times (May 31, 2023), <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/05/31/technology/amazon-25-million-childrens-privacy.html>.

³³ Jon Golinger, *U.S. Attorney General-Nominee Pam Bondi's Problematic Corporate Lobbying Clients*, Public Citizen (Jan. 8, 2025), https://www.citizen.org/article/conflicted-justice/#_ftn40.



Ms. Bondi has actively worked against the exercise of the right to vote by eligible voters.

The DOJ's Civil Rights Division is charged with the enforcement of federal laws that protect the right to vote. For decades, the DOJ has vigorously fulfilled this role, conducting investigations and filing lawsuits to vindicate the rights of Black and Brown people and communities against state and local government efforts to prevent them from voting and to suppress their ability to elect representatives of their choice. As Attorney General of Florida and in her capacity at AFPI, Ms. Bondi has consistently worked to undermine the enforcement of federal voting rights laws and other civil rights advancements.

For example, Ms. Bondi worked to restrict the voting rights of formerly incarcerated Floridians. In 2007, then-Florida Governor Charlie Christ passed rule changes that made it easier for people with nonviolent criminal convictions to have their rights restored after completing their sentences, including the right to vote, serve on a jury, hold public office, and take the Florida bar. In 2011, Bondi sought to undo the rules as a member of Florida's four-member Board of Executive Clemency, by drafting a new rule that required even nonviolent offenders to wait five years after the conclusion of their sentences to apply for the chance to have their civil rights restored.³⁴ In describing her rationale for the new rule, Ms. Bondi stated:

I fundamentally and philosophically oppose the concept of the automatic restoration of civil rights. I believe that every convicted felon must actively apply for the restoration of his or her civil rights and that there should be a mandatory waiting period before applying. The restoration of civil rights for any felon must be earned, it is not an entitlement.³⁵

Bondi's efforts to undo Crist's reforms were initially successful,³⁶ stripping 1.7 million Floridians of their right to vote and making Florida the harshest state in the nation on voting rights restoration.³⁷ The new rule drafted by Ms. Bondi was ultimately found to be unconstitutional. The appellate court in the case expressly chastised Bondi and others for flouting the rule of law: "Rather than comply with the requirements of the United States Constitution, defendants continue to insist they can do whatever they want with hundreds of thousands of Floridians' voting rights and absolutely zero standards."³⁸ Clearly, Ms. Bondi allows her personal views, which are hostile to civil rights, to drive her performance of her official duties – even to the extent of actively working to undermine and overturn federal civil rights law.

³⁴ Peter Wallsten, *Fla. Republicans make it harder for ex-felons to vote*, March 11, 2011, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2011/03/08/AR2011030806672.html>

³⁵ Staff Writer - Sarasota Herald-Tribune, *Wrong way on rights restoration*, February 27, 2011, <https://www.heraldtribune.com/story/news/2001/02/28/wrong-way-on-rights-restoration/28998499007/>

³⁶ Peter Wallsten, *Fla. Republicans make it harder for ex-felons to vote*, Washington Post (Mar. 9, 2011, 2:20 PM), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2011/03/08/AR2011030806672.html>.

³⁷ Annika Hammerschlag, *Estimated 1.7 million Floridians lost right to vote*, Naples Daily (Nov. 4, 2016), <https://www.naplesnews.com/story/news/politics/elections/2016/11/04/suppression-floridas-felon-vote-might-have-huge-impact-tuesdays-election/93136996/>.

³⁸ Dara Kam, *Felons' Lawyers Accuse Scott and Cabinet of Foot-Dragging Over Judge's Rights-Restoration Order*, Flagler Live (Apr. 15, 2018), <https://flaglerlive.com/felons-lawyers-accuse-scott-and-cabinet-of-foot-dragging-over-judges-rights-restoration-order/>.



During a period when the State of Florida was increasing restrictions on voting rights and taking steps to intimidate voters and election workers,³⁹ Ms. Bondi publicly pressured law enforcement to open investigations into politically motivated allegations of voter fraud.⁴⁰ Bondi's effort to promote the unneeded investigations came amid a mid-term election recount during which GOP candidate Rick Scott was clinging to a narrow lead and was claiming that Democrats were trying to "steal" the election from him.⁴¹

Ms. Bondi has continued to devote her energies to efforts to thwart voting rights in various roles as a private citizen. As chair of AFPI's Center for Litigation and co-chair of its Center for Law and Justice,⁴² Ms. Bondi oversaw numerous lawsuits attacking voting rights and election officials, several of which sought to hinder voting access or disenfranchise specific groups of voters.⁴³ Rather than advancing policies that would remove barriers to eligible voters being able to cast their votes, as Congress intended under the Help America Vote Act and the National Voter Registration Act,⁴⁴ she opposed President Biden's Executive Order that encouraged federal agencies to integrate voter registration opportunities into their services, spreading false claims that the EO was a "weaponize[d]" and "partisan" scheme to register noncitizens to vote for Democratic candidates.⁴⁵

Ms. Bondi opposes and has worked against criminal justice reforms.

Ms. Bondi's disdain for the rights and humanity of people involved in the criminal legal system is troubling. As Florida's Attorney General, Ms. Bondi's office issued an opinion in 2013 suggesting that a prior court case allowed for a law enforcement officer to enter a residence during pursuit of a suspect for a misdemeanor charge if the misdemeanor charge was punishable by a jail sentence, in spite of the Fourth Amendment and state law mandating that an officer was only allowed to enter a residence when in possession of a warrant or when the suspect was

³⁹ Brennan Center, Restrictive Voting Laws 2011-2018, available at <https://stateofblackamerica.org/sites/default/files/2023-12/Restrictive%20Voting%20Laws%20Report.pdf>; Mark Joseph Stern, *Florida's Legislature Votes to Nullify Popular Ballot Amendment Enfranchising Former Felons*, May 3, 2019, <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2019/05/florida-republican-senate-ron-desantis-amendment-4-felon-voting-rights.html>.

⁴⁰ CBS News Miami, *Florida Attorney General Pam Bondi Rips FDLE Over Elections Investigation*, November 12, 2018, <https://www.cbsnews.com/miami/news/bondi-rips-fdle-elections-investigation/>.

⁴¹ Matt Dixon, *GOP's hunt for Florida voter fraud sparks law enforcement clash*, Politico, November 13, 2018, <https://www.politico.com/states/florida/story/2018/11/13/gops-hunt-for-florida-voter-fraud-sparks-law-enforcement-clash-694016>.

⁴² AFPI has an outsized influence on the second-term agenda of the Trump administration. As of October 2024, AFPI had developed a staffing plan and policy agenda for each federal agency that prioritized loyalty to Trump, in addition to drafting nearly 300 executive orders for Trump ahead of his election. *The Honorable Pam Bondi, Chair, Center for Litigation and Co-Chair, Center for Law and Justice*, America First Policy Institute, <https://americafirstpolicy.com/team/pambondi> (last visited Jan. 22, 2025); America First Transition Project, <https://americafirstpolicy.com/centers/america-first-transition-project>.

⁴³ Robert Hogan, *Pam Bondi's Recent History Is Troubling for the DOJ*, Brennan Center for Justice (Dec. 26, 2024), <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/pam-bondis-recent-history-troubling-doj>.

⁴⁴ Robert Hogan, *Pam Bondi's Recent History Is Troubling for the DOJ*, Brennan Center for Justice (Dec. 26, 2024), <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/pam-bondis-recent-history-troubling-doj>.

⁴⁴ Help America Vote Act, 52 U.S.C. §§20901 *et seq.*; National Voter Registration Act, 52 U.S.C. 20501, *et seq.* (1993).

⁴⁵ *Id.*



charged with a felony.⁴⁶ In 2011, her office issued an opinion holding that law enforcement officers were authorized to perform “a limited frisk for weapons” on a minor taken into custody even if there was no reasonable suspicion that the minor possessed a weapon.⁴⁷ Bondi went on to suggest that police departments should “consider implementing standardized policies” on limited pat-down searches for “anyone being transported in a police vehicle,” including minors or truants. To support her opinion, Bondi cited numerous cases in which a minor or truant was searched by a police officer before being transported and revealed to be in possession of drugs. Bondi also justified her opinion based on “the increased threat to officer safety involved in transporting offenders in a patrol vehicle.”⁴⁸

Ms. Bondi’s actions as Florida’s Attorney General in cases involving people of color also raise alarming questions about whether DOJ’s criminal prosecutions and civil rights investigations would be handled in a racially biased manner under her leadership. For example, in 2012, Ms. Bondi joined an amicus brief in support of Arizona’s newly adopted anti-immigrant law legalizing racial profiling. The ACLU of Florida’s statement⁴⁹ decried her position, noting that “if Attorney General Bondi’s argument prevails and the Supreme Court upholds Arizona’s law, all states – including Florida – will be given the authority to pass similar laws by which local law enforcement officials would be empowered to stop and demand the papers of anyone, based on nothing more than how they look or speak. These law enforcement practices open the door for wrongful arrests, harassment and other abuses.”

In 2016, a lawyer for Terrence Phillips, a Black man sentenced to death in Florida, filed a motion with the Florida Supreme Court to investigate allegations of racism against the sentencing judge, Circuit Judge Mark Hulsey. The motion came after the state Judicial Qualifications Commission filed a notice of formal charges against Hulsey for alleged racist and sexist comments. Bondi’s office called Phillips’s request a “fishing expedition” and asked the Florida Supreme Court to reject it.⁵⁰

Ms. Bondi’s hostility to civil rights makes her unfit to oversee the work of the DOJ’s Civil Rights Division.

The DOJ’s Civil Rights Division’s investigations and litigation frequently lead to settlements and orders that increase transparency, require more effective law enforcement training, reduce discriminatory policing, and require independent oversight of agencies that have an immense impact on civil and human rights, particularly the rights of Black and Brown people and communities. The DOJ often acts as a backstop when state and local officials fail to address

⁴⁶ Andrew Solender, *Pam Bondi, Hope Hicks Among Latest Trump Loyalists Given Prestigious Government Board Positions*, December 20, 2020, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/andrewsolender/2020/12/22/pam-bondi-hope-hicks-among-latest-trump-loyalists-given-prestigious-government-board-positions/>

⁴⁷ State of Florida, Office of the Attorney General, Opinion No. AGO-2011-08, April 201, 2011, <https://www.myfloridalegal.com/ag-opinions/truants-pat-down-prior-to-transporting>.

⁴⁸ *Id.*

⁴⁹ ACLU of Florida, ACLU STATEMENT ON A.G. PAM BONDI’S SUPPORT FOR ARIZONA RACIAL PROFILING LAW, <https://www.aclufl.org/en/press-releases/aclu-statement-ag-pam-bondis-support-arizona-racial-profiling-law>.

⁵⁰ Jacksonville Daily Record, *Pam Bondi asks Florida Supreme Court to reject racism investigation into Circuit Judge Mark Halsey*, August 19, 2016, <https://www.jaxdailyrecord.com/news/2016/aug/19/pam-bondi-asks-florida-supreme-court-reject-racism-investigation-circuit-judge-mark-hulsey/>.



serious violations of the rights of their residents. For example, the DOJ brought charges against the law enforcement officers who killed Breonna Taylor after local authorities failed to act.⁵¹ Its investigation of the Louisville Police Department ultimately led to findings of a pattern or practice of unconstitutional policing,⁵² leading to an agreement in principle with the DOJ.⁵³ This is the type of agreement vital to reining in abusive law enforcement practices against people and communities of color that the DOJ is now set to “reconsider” under President Trump’s order, freezing most activities of the Civil Rights Division. That order states that “the new administration may wish to reconsider settlements and consent decrees negotiated and approved during the prior administration.”⁵⁴ Similarly, the DOJ has pursued charges in the police beating deaths of George Floyd, and Tyre Nichols, the vigilante murder of Ahmaud Arbery, and the episodes of racial violence perpetrated by a gang of lawless Mississippi police officers who called themselves the “goon squad.” Ms. Bondi, meanwhile, publicly voiced her sympathy for Kyle Rittenhouse, the 17-year-old who fatally shot two men and wounded a third with an AR-15-style rifle during demonstrations in Kenosha, Wisconsin prompted by the police shooting of Jacob Blake, a Black man. During an appearance on Fox News, Ms. Bondi defended Rittenhouse – a vigilante who was from Indiana and had traveled a long distance with his weapon – as “a little boy out there trying to protect his community.”⁵⁵

For generations, the DOJ has used federal laws such as the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 and Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which forbid discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, or national origin by agencies receiving federal funds, and the Violent Crime Control and Law Enforcement Act of 1994, which allows the DOJ to review the practices of law enforcement agencies suspected of violating people’s federal rights, to protect people and communities against unchecked violations of their rights by state and local authorities. This work is particularly crucial in the Deep South, which maintains a long legacy of violating the rights of Black and Brown people. It is vital that the nonpartisan career prosecutors who work on these cases and investigations, which often take years to conclude, are allowed to continue this work. During the first Trump administration, then-Attorney General Sessions issued instructions to career prosecutors to seek settlements without consent decrees, which would result in no court oversight – a crucial part of the enforcement mechanism.⁵⁶ Considering both Ms.

⁵¹ Fabiola Cineas, *Why the Justice Department made a move in the police killing of Breonna Taylor*, Vox (Aug. 5, 2022), <https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/23293923/breonna-taylor-police-charged-justice-department>.

⁵² *Justice Department Finds Civil Rights Violations by the Louisville Metro Police Department and Louisville/Jefferson County Metro Government*, Office of Public Affairs, United States Department of Justice (Mar. 8, 2023), <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/justice-department-finds-civil-rights-violations-louisville-metro-police-department-and>.

⁵³ Agreement in Principle [dated Mar. 8, 2023], Among the United States and Louisville/Jefferson County Metro Government and the Louisville Metro Police Department, United States Department of Justice, <https://www.justice.gov/opa/press-release/file/1573016/dl> (last visited Jan. 22, 2025).

⁵⁴ Glen Thrush, *Justice Department Orders a Halt to Civil Rights Work*, (January, 22, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/01/22/us/politics/justice-department-civil-rights-work.html>

⁵⁵ Video of Ms. Bondi’s remarks available here: https://x.com/ndrew_lawrence/status/1308586199448256512?s=20.

⁵⁶ Jessica Huseman and Annie Waldman, *Trump Administration Quietly Rolls Back Civil Rights Efforts Across Federal Government*, ProPublica (Jun. 15, 2017, 8:00 AM), <https://www.propublica.org/article/trump-administration-rolls-back-civil-rights-efforts-federal-government>.



Bondi's well-established lack of independence from President Trump and her reputed bias in favor of law enforcement,⁵⁷ she will likely seek to hamper this important work.

Ms. Bondi supports weaponizing law enforcement against disfavored groups.

During his election campaign, and since his election, President Trump has frequently threatened to use the powers of the federal government, including law enforcement, to silence dissent. Ms. Bondi's remarks about protest movements with which she disagrees raise concerns that she would use the role of Attorney General to punish opponents of the Trump Administration. For example, she has suggested that student protestors should be deported or at least investigated by the FBI. In 2023, Bondi told *Newsmax* she was troubled by student protestors at universities raising concerns about the war in Gaza and suggested they should be punished: "the thing that's really the most troubling to me [are] these students in universities in our country, whether they're here as Americans or if they're here on student visas, and they're out there saying 'I support Hamas.' [...] Frankly they need to be taken out of our country, or the FBI needs to be interviewing them right away."⁵⁸

Conclusion.

The Attorney General of the United States represents the U.S. government – and ultimately the American people – and is not the personal lawyer for the President, nor for corporate special-interests.⁵⁹ Ms. Bondi's lack of independence from both makes her unfit for confirmation. Her track record also raises serious concerns that she will not uphold the mission and legacy of the DOJ to vigorously protect civil rights. Instead, she appears likely to abandon that work and to support President Trump's vow to use the DOJ to target perceived foes.

For these reasons, the SPLC urges you to vote NO on the confirmation of Pamela Bondi as the next Attorney General for the Department of Justice.

If we can answer any questions or be a resource in any way, please do not hesitate to reach out to Aiden Cotter, Senior Policy Counsel for Decarceration and Decriminalization at the Southern Poverty Law Center, at aiden.cotter@splcenter.org.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "LaShawn G. Warren".

LaShawn Warren
Chief Policy Officer

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sakira Cook".

Sakira Cook
Federal Policy Director

⁵⁷ Full statement from witness Nicholas Cox was "Pam loves law enforcement. I mean, let's not kid each other. We all love law enforcement and everybody and everything they stand for." Special emphasis by Mr. Cox was put on the word "love" in the statement "Pam loves law enforcement." (Bloomberg Government transcript January 16, 2025, page 28)

⁵⁸ Meghan Blonder, *Trump AG Pick Pam Bondi Slams 'Ignorant' Hamas Sympathizers: 'Frankly, They Need To Be Taken Out of Our Country'*, The Washington Free Beacon (Nov. 22, 2024), <https://freebeacon.com/politics/watch-trump-ag-pick-pam-bondi-slams-ignorant-hamas-sympathizers-frankly-they-need-to-be-taken-out-of-our-country/>.

⁵⁹ Katherine Brewer, *Is the Attorney General the President's Lawyer or America's Lawyer?*, Boston University Radio (Jun. 15, 2017), <https://www.wbur.org/freakout/2017/06/15/sessions-attorney-general-palmer-raids>.