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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE,
AND TRANSPORTATION

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6125

WEBSITE: <https://commerce.senate.gov>

April 8, 2026

The Honorable Ted Cruz
Chairman
United States Senate Committee on
Commerce, Science, and Transportation
Washington D.C. 20510

Chairman Cruz:

I am calling on you to invite Commissioner Rebecca Slaughter and former Commissioner Alvaro Bedoya to the oversight hearing on the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) that you scheduled for April 15, 2026. Holding this hearing without these two witnesses—while pretending things are business as usual at the FTC—would conveniently sidestep one of the most pressing oversight issues impacting the Commission today: President Trump’s dangerous power grab at the expense of American consumers. Excluding Commissioner Slaughter and Bedoya from this hearing would serve only to obscure how this Administration’s illegal effort to undo the safeguards Congress built into the FTC’s structure will expose the American people to higher prices, increased fraud, more predatory scams, and less competition. This dramatic change also would invite unpredictable regulation that changes with every new Administration and potential corruption arising from “pay to play” treatment. The Commerce Committee should be shining a light on these dangerous risks—not acceding to them.

More than a century ago, Congress on a bipartisan basis created the FTC as an independent, multimember commission to protect Americans from harmful business practices.¹ In doing so, Congress made the deliberate decision to limit any president’s ability to fire a Commissioner without “cause”—that is, without a showing they engaged in “inefficiency, neglect of duty, or malfeasance in office.”² The reason for this structure is well documented: By insulating the FTC from the immediate impulses of any given president, Congress wanted the Commission to focus on long-term economic growth and protecting the public without fear of political retribution.³ Congress also believed this degree of independence would allow the FTC’s actions to be “more readily accepted as impartial and well considered” by the public.⁴ Given this Administration’s

¹ 15 U.S.C. § 41 et seq.

² *Id.*

³ See Brief of Amici 207 Members of Congress in Support of Respondents, *Trump v. Slaughter*, No. 25-332 (argued Dec. 8, 2025); https://www.supremecourt.gov/DocketPDF/25/25-332/384581/20251114152742598_25-332_bsac_207MembersofCongress.pdf.

⁴ Senate Report 63-597, “Federal Trade Commission,” 63rd Cong., 2d Session (Jun. 13, 1914); https://www.govinfo.gov/app/details/SERIALSET-06553_00_00-068-0597-0000.

demonstrated record of undermining public confidence in the neutrality of its actions,⁵ the wisdom of Congress’s vision for the FTC has only been validated over time.

And the Supreme Court has approved this design. Two decades after Congress created the FTC, the Supreme Court unanimously affirmed that a president cannot fire a Commissioner without legal cause.⁶ In reaching that conclusion, the Supreme Court found “it plain under the Constitution that illimitable power of removal is not possessed by the President.”⁷ Today, more than 90 years later, this remains the law of the land.

But despite Congress’s clear directive and the Supreme Court’s clear precedent, President Trump is trying to unravel the FTC and commandeer unfettered control over its operations. On March 18, 2025, Commissioner Slaughter and Commissioner Bedoya—the only two Democrats on the FTC—each received a message from the White House on President Trump’s behalf purporting to remove them as Commissioners because their continued service was “inconsistent with my Administration’s priorities.”⁸ That is the only justification the President offered for their purported removals—which is clearly insufficient under the law.⁹

Soon thereafter, a federal district court declared President Trump’s attempted termination of Commissioner Slaughter to be “unlawful and without legal effect” and ruled that she “remains a rightful member of the Federal Trade Commission until the expiration of her Senate-confirmed term.”¹⁰ The only reason the district court did not reach the same conclusion for Commissioner Bedoya is because President Trump’s illegal removal forced Bedoya to resign from the FTC so he could secure a replacement income to support his family.¹¹ The D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals denied the Trump Administration’s request to block the district court’s order, finding that the Administration’s position “would have to defy binding, on-point, and repeatedly preserved Supreme Court precedent.”¹² Although the Supreme Court later intervened to stay this order under its “shadow docket,”¹³ the district court remains the only court to rule on the merits of this case—and it ruled unequivocally that President Trump acted unlawfully.

The Supreme Court’s shadow-docket order does not constrain Congress’s constitutional oversight authority or otherwise limit this Committee’s ability to call appropriate witnesses to

⁵ See, e.g., “Trump’s Corrupt Transactions,” *Campaign Legal Center*, (Feb. 24, 2026);

https://campaignlegal.org/sites/default/files/2026-02/Trump_Transaction_Tracker_February_2026.pdf.

⁶ *Humphrey’s Executor v. United States*, 295 U.S. 602 (1935); <https://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/295/602/>

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ Maruf, Ramishah, “Fired Democratic FTC commissioners are suing Trump,” *CNN*, (Mar. 27, 2025);

<https://edition.cnn.com/2025/03/27/business/fired-ftc-commissioners-trump-lawsuit>.

⁹ See 15 U.S.C. § 41.

¹⁰ *Slaughter v. Trump*, 25-cv-00909 (D.D.C. July 17, 2025);

https://storage.courtlistener.com/recap/gov.uscourts.dcd.278902/gov.uscourts.dcd.278902.51.0_1.pdf; see also Order, *Slaughter v. Trump*, 25-cv-00909 (D.D.C. July 17, 2025);

https://storage.courtlistener.com/recap/gov.uscourts.dcd.278902/gov.uscourts.dcd.278902.52.0_1.pdf.

¹¹ Supplemental Declaration of Alvaro M. Bedoya, *Slaughter v. Trump*, 25-cv-00909 (D.D.C. Jun. 9, 2025);

<https://www.courtlistener.com/docket/69801190/46/1/slaughter-v-trump/>.

¹² Order, *Slaughter v. Trump*, No. 25-5261 (D.C. Cir. Sept. 2, 2025);

<https://media.cadc.uscourts.gov/orders/docs/2025/09/25-5261LDSN2.pdf>.

¹³ See “Supreme Court Abuse of the Shadow Docket Under Trump,” *Brennan Center for Justice*, (Mar. 3, 2026);

<https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/analysis-opinion/supreme-court-abuse-shadow-docket-under-trump>.

testify on matters under its jurisdiction. To the contrary, given President Trump’s ongoing effort to undo the structural protections Congress built into the FTC, we must conduct oversight over how these unprecedented actions undermine the FTC’s ability to advance the interests of the American people—from combatting the skyrocketing costs of gas and groceries, to protecting the public from online scammers and other predatory fraudsters. Moreover, the issue of the proper structure of the FTC is one for Congress, starting in this Committee. We cannot fully meet our oversight responsibility at this pivotal moment for the FTC without hearing from Commissioner Slaughter and Bedoya.

This Committee needs to stand up against the Trump Administration’s power grabs and put American consumers first.¹⁴ Inviting the unlawfully removed FTC Commissioners to join their colleagues at this oversight hearing is a good—and necessary—first step. I urge you to do so.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Maria Cantwell". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Maria" being larger and more prominent than the last name "Cantwell".

Maria Cantwell
Ranking Member

¹⁴ Cf. Press Release, “Commerce Committee Democrats Strongly Oppose Proposed Nomination Hearing on Trump’s Replacement for Illegally Removed NTSB Vice Chair Alvin Brown,” *U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation*, (Oct. 29, 2025); <https://www.commerce.senate.gov/press/dem/release/commerce-committee-democrats-strongly-oppose-proposed-nomination-hearing-on-trumps-replacement-for-illegally-removed-ntsb-vice-chair-alvin-brown/>.