

Congress of the United States
U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Small Business
2361 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-6515

February 20, 2024

Mr. James P. Rubin
Special Envoy and Coordinator
Global Engagement Center
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Ms. Naz Durakoğlu
Assistant Secretary
Bureau of Legislative Affairs
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Mr. Rubin and Ms. Durakoğlu:

The Committee on Small Business, Subcommittee on Oversight, Investigations, and Regulations (Committee) writes in response to the U.S. Department of State's (State) February 14, 2024 letter in which you expressed concern that redacted copies of unclassified documents produced to this Committee appeared in a news article.¹ The letter concludes with a veiled threat to further impede this investigation by allowing this Committee to only view documents in-camera. Not only is this an impermissible standard, but it improperly hinders congressional oversight.

In order to update members of this Committee on its investigation into the Administration's censorship and revenue interference of American small businesses by proxy, Committee staff drafted a memo to its members on January 5, 2024, including copies of State's incomplete December 3, 2023 production. In heeding State's concerns over the "sensitive nature" of the information- despite the fact that much of it is publicly available on USAspending.gov- Committee staff redacted all award numbers and applicable countries from the material prior to sending. No classified information was shared (either by State with the Committee or by Committee staff with its members), nor does the Committee need to ask State's permission before distributing information to its members.

This Committee originally wrote to you about this investigation on June 7, 2023.² When no response came from State, despite repeated attempts to reach your staff for an update, the Committee sent a follow-up letter on July 24, 2023 reiterating its narrow request.³ It was not until December 3, 2023, nearly six months after the original June 21, 2023 due date had passed,

¹ Letter from Naz Durakoğlu, Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Leg. Affairs, U.S. Dept. of State, to Roger Williams, Chairman, H. Comm. on Small Bus. (Feb. 14, 2024).

² Letter from Roger Williams, *et al.*, Chairman, H. Comm. on Small Bus., to James P. Rubin, Special Envoy and Coordinator, Global Engagement Center, U.S. Dep't of State (Jun. 7, 2023).

³ Letter from Roger Williams, *et al.*, Chairman, H. Comm. on Small Bus., to James P. Rubin, Special Envoy and Coordinator, Global Engagement Center, U.S. Dep't of State (Jul. 24, 2023).

that State provided partial production to the Committee.⁴ State produced a five-page spreadsheet that only partially adhered to the Committee's requests. Despite State's claims that the Department had been working around the clock to produce this information to the Committee, it is clear the partial production was a weak attempt to placate this Committee's request, omitting approximately one hundred cooperative agreements and completely failing to produce information on other grants, including project grants, altogether. This omission is evidenced by the fact that many of the awards State omitted appear online at USAspending.gov.

The original requested documents were due back to the Committee no later than June 21, 2023. The first document request was intentionally narrowly tailored to enable a quick response. Instead, State took nearly one month per page of production that did not fully satisfy the request. However, the nature of that information prompted this Committee to expand its request in a subsequent letter on January 8, 2024, asking that all project grants, cooperative agreements, and other awards be produced. In order to ensure that award recipients were not serving as pass-through entities to companies carrying out nefarious activities, the Committee also requested information on subawardees.⁵ As we had not heard back, the Committee requested, in the interim, a briefing from a grant officer and grant officer representative in order to understand the procedure behind administering these awards. We have yet to hear back from State on that request.

This Committee will not be deterred by State's hedging, threats, or other impediments to its investigation. Today we write to reiterate our previous requests and formalize our request for a briefing. As the January 22, 2024 due date for the below has passed, the Committee expects a response as soon as possible and would appreciate your prompt, thorough reply:

1. Unredacted list of all GEC grant recipients and associated award numbers from FY 2019 – present, in addition to any other awards, project grants, or cooperative agreements that were omitted from the December 3 partial production.
2. Unredacted copies of all contracts and related documentation (including communications describing scope of work) for every GEC award, project grant, and cooperative agreement from FY 2018 – present.
3. A list of all subawardees/subgrantees and any pertinent contracts for FY 2018 – present.
4. A description of GEC's process for screening, approving, and overseeing subawardees/subgrantees.
5. A list of all GEC contractors for FY 2018 – present and unredacted copies of all associated contracts.

⁴ On file with the Committee.

⁵ Letter from Roger Williams, *et al.*, Chairman, H. Comm. on Small Bus., to James P. Rubin, Special Envoy and Coordinator, Global Engagement Center, U.S. Dep't of State (Jan. 8, 2024).

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6. A list of all GEC subcontractors for FY 2018 – present.
7. A copy of GEC's internal file named "2023.02.14 GEC-GDI-BLACKLIST.docx."
8. A briefing with a grant officer and grant officer representative responsible for Global Engagement Center awards.

To schedule the delivery of your response or ask any related follow-up questions, please contact the Committee on Small Business Staff at (202) 225-5821. The Committee on Small Business has broad authority to investigate "problems of all types of small business" under House Rule X. Thank you in advance for your cooperation with this inquiry.

In God We Trust,



Roger Williams
Chairman
Committee on Small Business



Beth Van Duyne
Chairman
Subcommittee on Oversight,
Investigations, and Regulations