

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4305

August 13, 2025

The Honorable Pamela Jo Bondi
Attorney General
United States Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20530

Dear Attorney General Bondi,

I write to encourage the Department of Justice to open an investigation into potential violations of federal law committed by the Political Action Committees and special interest groups providing funding and assistance to members of the Texas House of Representatives who absconded from the state and violated their duties to the citizens of Texas.

On August 3, 2025, over 50 Texas legislators fled the State with the express purpose of preventing a quorum from meeting during the current special session, thus precluding the House from taking any legislative activity.¹ The legislation which these irresponsible members knowingly blocked includes assistance to victims of the Kerr County floods.² The special session will end in a matter of days, at which point, assistance to flood victims and other needed measures will go unaddressed.³ The absconding House members' dereliction of duty is truly shameful.

But the House members who fled did not randomly decide to leave on August 3rd. Their flight was pre-planned months in advance and coordinated with outside individuals, special interest groups, and politicians from other states.⁴ Their devious and deceitful plan to derail the special session included coordinating funding drives giving, at an absolute minimum, the appearance that a sinister quid pro quo was reached between the fleeing House members and outside interest groups.

¹ Gromer Jeffers Jr., *Texas House Democrats flee to Chicago to derail congressional redistricting bill*, DALLAS MORNING NEWS (Aug. 3, 2025), <https://www.dallasnews.com/news/politics/2025/08/03/texas-house-democrats-flee-to-chicago-to-derail-congressional-redistricting-bill/>.

² Kayla Guo and Eleanor Klibanoff, *Texas House Democrats flee the state in bid to block GOP's proposed congressional map*, TEXAS TRIBUNE (Aug. 3, 2025), <https://www.texastribune.org/2025/08/03/texas-democrats-quorum-break-redistricting-map/>.

³ Kayla Guo, *Texas Democrats know they may lose redistricting protest, but hope to spark a national fight*, TEXAS TRIBUNE (Aug. 8, 2025), <https://www.texastribune.org/2025/08/08/texas-democrats-legislature-redistricting-congressional-maps/>.

⁴ *Supra*, note 2; State of the Union with Jake Tapper, *Beto O'Rourke Speaks To CNN's Jake Tapper About Proposed Redistricting In Texas*, CNN (July 20, 2025), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dcTuuCcBm7A>.

Once they did flee Texas, many of the House members went to Illinois, Massachusetts, and New York⁵, with a large number traveling in luxurious private jets paid for by Beto O'Rourke's Political Action Committee.⁶ And since their arrivals in other states, not only have the House members' lavish food, lodging, and other expenses been covered by these special interest groups, but the groups are also paying the fines which House members are liable for under Texas House rules for ignoring their required duties and skipping the special session.⁷

The PACs, special interest, and political groups supporting the Texas legislators are not only funding the members' plush lifestyles, but they are also actively fundraising on the backs of the members' potentially illegal actions.⁸ For example, Powered By People, O'Rourke's Political Action Committee, dedicates a portion of its website to soliciting and accepting donations to continue supporting the legislators who fled.⁹

Earlier this week, I wrote a letter to the FBI encouraging the agency to help Texas locate the missing legislators. I'm grateful to Director Patel for his leadership and to the FBI for agreeing to that request. But I'm also very concerned that the outside funders assisting the improper and potentially illegal actions taken by Texas members are themselves either actively committing or are aiding and abetting federal crimes in furtherance of an illegal scheme to shut down the Texas House.

I write today to encourage an investigation of the entities funding this charade. News reports make clear that PACs tied to Beto O'Rourke and megadonors such as George Soros are supporting the legislators, along with other campaign entities. These outside groups appear to be acting in violation of federal public corruption and election laws.

For example, if money, gifts, or other assistance which the absconding House members were not entitled to—such as flights, meals, and hotel lodgings—were accepted in return for the members using their official positions to prevent a quorum from meeting, then the legislators may have committed honest services fraud, in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1346, or Hobbs Act extortion under color of official right, in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 1951. Moreover, because the legislators crossed state lines, if they did so with the intent to break either federal *or* state laws, they may have violated the Interstate and Foreign Travel in Aid of Racketeering Enterprises statute, also known

⁵ Karen Brooks Harper and Aarón Torres, *Texas House Democrats stymie redistricting effort amid protests, arrest threats*, DALLAS MORNING NEWS (Aug. 4, 2025), <https://www.dallasnews.com/news/politics/2025/08/04/texas-democrats-flee-republicans-redistricting-map-greg-abbott/>.

⁶ Owen Dalhkamp, *Beto O'Rourke's political group is a top funder for Texas Democrats' exodus to block GOP congressional map*, TEXAS TRIBUNE (Aug. 5, 2025), <https://www.texastribune.org/2025/08/05/texas-democrats-quorum-break-beto-orourke-illinois-funding/>.

⁷ Anders Hagstron, *George Soros, Beto O'Rourke behind funding for Dems fleeing Texas over GOP congressional map*, FOX NEWS (Aug. 6, 2025), <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/george-soros-beto-orourke-behind-funding-dems-fleeing-texas-over-gop-congressional-map>.

⁸ Taylor Goldenstein, *Democrats who fled Texas are racking up a huge bill. Who is paying the tab?*, HOUSTON CHRONICLE (Aug. 5, 2025), <https://www.houstonchronicle.com/politics/texas/article/democrats-redistricting-funding-20802647.php>.

⁹ *Powered By People*, last accessed Aug. 8, 2025, <https://poweredxpeople.org/>.

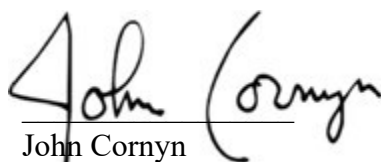
as the Travel Act, 18 U.S.C. § 1952. At a minimum, it appears likely that Texas state bribery and corruption laws may have been broken by both (1) the legislators who accepted benefits such as travel, food, and lodging expenses in return for absconding, *see* Tex. Pen. Code 36.02, and (2) the funders who provided these corrupt funds, *see* Tex. Pen. Code 36.02, 36.03, making these parties subject to the provisions of the Travel Act. And even if only the absconding Texas House members violated federal law, then the persons, PACs, and special interest groups assisting their criminal acts still may face liability since they either aided and abetted the criminal activity, 18 U.S.C. § 2, or are co-conspirators to it, *e.g.*, 18 U.S.C. § 371.

Further, by using Political Action Committee funds to pay for personal expenses unrelated to elections or campaigns, the entities funding the members may have violated campaign finance laws. For example, O'Rourke's Powered By People PAC is a "Carey Committee" or Hybrid PAC subject to certain reporting requirements and spending prohibitions under the Federal Election Campaign Act, 52 U.S.C. § 30101, *et seq*, including prohibitions on expenditures being made for individuals' personal use, which would include food, lodging, and travel unrelated to electioneering activities. Indeed, Powered By People's website makes clear that donations to it are for political, not personal, expenditures, since donations are submitted through Act Blue, a political fundraising platform and PAC aligned with a single political party.¹⁰

While the Federal Election Commission is responsible for civil enforcement of federal campaign finance law and regulation, the agency may refer cases of suspected knowing violations to the Attorney General for criminal prosecution. 52 U.S.C. § 30109(a)(5)(C). I therefore request that you also work with the FEC to examine both the sources of funding for the special interest groups and PACs funding the House members' dereliction of duty and how those funds have been spent to ensure compliance with all federal laws and regulations.

The Texas legislators are behaving in a destructive manner. I encourage the Department to take necessary investigative steps to protect our democracy from illegal and foreign efforts to harm it.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Cornyn". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style. The first name "John" is written with a large, looped "J" and the last name "Cornyn" follows in a similar cursive script.

John Cornyn
United States Senator

¹⁰ *See, e.g.*, Act Blue, FEC Form 1, Statement of Organization (last accessed Aug. 11, 2025), <https://docquery.fec.gov/pdf/849/202407299665755849/202407299665755849.pdf>.