

United States Senate  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

December 30, 2025

The Honorable Harmeet Dhillon  
Assistant Attorney General  
Civil Rights Division  
U.S. Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue  
Washington, D.C. 20530

Dear Assistant Attorney General Dhillon,

On December 8, 2025, you announced that the U.S. Department of Justice's (DOJ) Civil Rights Division has established a new Second Amendment Section, which will enforce President Trump's Executive Order on the Second Amendment.<sup>1</sup> Since President Trump took office, you have decimated the Division's nonpartisan workforce and changed the Division's enforcement priorities to serve the President's agenda in lieu of our federal civil rights laws.<sup>2</sup> The creation of the Second Amendment Section is another example of this profound retreat from the core mission of the Civil Rights Division.

You have, in your own words, "cleaned house" since President Trump took office.<sup>3</sup> Approximately 368 employees have left the Division.<sup>4</sup> You have replaced nonpartisan career staff with individuals who hold questionable qualifications and views in conflict with the Division's enforcement obligations.<sup>5</sup>

You have also dropped a number of civil rights cases and initiated lawsuits to implement the personal priorities of the President.<sup>6</sup> For instance, you terminated a significant

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<sup>1</sup> See Harmeet Dhillon (@AAGDhillon), X (formerly Twitter) (Dec. 8, 2025) (online at <https://x.com/AAGDhillon/status/1998092389337227642?s=20>); Exec. Ord. No. 14206, 90 FR 9503 (Feb. 12, 2025).

<sup>2</sup> See Ryan Lucas, *70% of the DOJ's Civil Rights Division Lawyers are Leaving Because of Trump's Reshaping*, NPR (May 19, 2025), <https://www.npr.org/2025/05/19/g-s1-66906/trump-civil-rights-justice-exodus>; U.S. Senator Peter Welch, Supplemental Memo on Shifting Enforcement Priorities and Staffing Changes at the Civil Rights Division to Members of the Subcomm. on the Const., S. Judiciary Comm. (July 23, 2025).

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Assistant Attorney General Harmeet Dhillon, *Remarks at National Conservatism Conference* (Sept. 2, 2025), C-SPAN, at 10:54, available at <https://www.c-span.org/program/public-affairs-event/us-assistant-attorney-generalharmeet-dhillon-speaks-at-national-conservatism-conference/665006>.

<sup>4</sup> See Letter from Brian Nieves, Deputy Attorney General of the Department of Justice, to Senator Peter Welch, July 15, 2025 (U.S. Sen.).

<sup>5</sup> See Suzanne Monyak and Ben Penn, *DOJ Fires and Reassigns Civil Rights Lawyers as New Hires Arrive*, BLOOMBERG LAW (Aug. 25, 2025), <https://news.bloomberglaw.com/us-law-week/doj-fires-and-reassigns-civilrights-lawyers-as-new-hires-arrive>.

<sup>6</sup> See *Civil Rights Organizations Call for Oversight of DOJ Civil Rights Division*, LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE ON CIVIL AND HUMAN RIGHTS (June 17, 2025), <https://civilrights.org/resource/civil-rights-organizations-call-for-oversight-ofdoj-civil-rights-division/>.

settlement agreement DOJ had entered into with county and state health departments regarding wastewater treatment in Lowndes County, Alabama, baselessly calling the agreement to provide basic sanitation services “illegal DEI.”<sup>7</sup>

This new Section does not meet any statutory mandate under federal law. In your video announcing its creation, you stated the Section will focus on purported injustices related to high costs and delays related to obtaining concealed carry permits and jurisdictions that have outlawed certain firearms.<sup>8</sup> According to its website, that will encompass conducting “pattern or practice”<sup>9</sup> investigations under a statute Congress passed in the wake of the horrific beating of Rodney King at the hands of the Los Angeles Police Department.<sup>10</sup>

Consistent with congressional intent, the Division has historically used that statute to investigate law enforcement agencies for engaging in a pattern or practice of misconduct, including excessive force, racial profiling, or malicious prosecution.<sup>11</sup>

Just last week, the Second Amendment Section filed its first lawsuit, seeking to block the District of Columbia from enforcing its assault weapons ban.<sup>12</sup> Multiple appellate courts have upheld the constitutionality of assault weapons bans.<sup>13</sup> Earlier this year, the Supreme Court refused to hear a challenge to Maryland’s assault weapons ban, leaving in place the appellate court opinion upholding that state’s ban.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Madiba Dennie, *Trump DOJ: Providing Basic Sewer Services to Black People Is Actually “Illegal DEI”*, BALLS AND STRIKES (Apr. 21, 2025), <https://ballsandstrikes.org/law-politics/lowndes-county-trump-settlement-indoorplumbing-is-dei/>.

<sup>8</sup> See Harmeet Dhillon (@AAGDhillon), *supra* note 1.

<sup>9</sup> The Section’s website states: “[t]he mission of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment Section is to ensure that law-abiding American citizens may responsibly possess, carry, and use firearms. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment Section will work diligently to investigate law enforcement agencies that engage in a pattern or practice of infringing on law-abiding citizens’ 2<sup>nd</sup> Amendment rights, as well as be proactive in searching for litigation opportunities to secure such rights.” *Second Amendment Section*, C.R. DIV.: U.S. DEP’T OF JUST., <https://perma.cc/C2VL-ZEWV> (last visited Dec. 22, 2025).

<sup>10</sup> *What is a Pattern-or-Practice Investigation?*, NAACP LEGAL DEFENSE FUND, <https://www.naacpldf.org/police-pattern-practice-investigation/> (last visited Dec. 22, 2025).

<sup>11</sup> See generally 42 U.S.C. § 14141.

<sup>12</sup> Kwasi Gyamfi Asiedu, *Justice Department sues DC over block of semi-automatic guns*, BBC (Dec. 22, 2025), <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cy7v4pg2edno.amp>.

<sup>13</sup> See, e.g., *National Ass’n for Gun Rights v. Lamont*, 153 F.4th 213 (2d Cir. 2025) (upholding Connecticut’s ban on assault weapons); *Capen v. Campbell*, 134 F.4th 660 (1st Cir. 2025) (similarly upholding Massachusetts’s ban on assault weapons); *Bevis v. City of Naperville*, 85 F.4th 1175 (7th Cir. 2023), cert. denied, 144 S. Ct. 2491 (2024) (affirming the denial of a preliminary injunction to a challenge against Illinois’s ban on assault weapons).

<sup>14</sup> Lawrence Hurley, *Supreme Court denies challenges to bans on assault-style weapons and high-capacity magazines*, NBC NEWS (Jun. 2, 2025), <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/supreme-court/supreme-court-denies-challenges-state-laws-banning-assault-style-weapo-rcna187702>.

In order to better understand the Second Amendment Section and its intended priorities, please provide answers to the following questions by January 29, 2026.

1. What resources from the Civil Rights Division are being rerouted from civil rights work to the new Second Amendment Section?
2. What federal laws does the Section intend to enforce? Please provide specific statutes and not just policy priorities for the administration.
3. Have you, or any DOJ personnel, coordinated and/or communicated with any pro-Second Amendment lobbying groups prior to the creation of this Section?

Sincerely,



Peter Welch  
Ranking Member,  
Subcommittee on the  
Constitution  
U.S. Senate Committee on  
the Judiciary



Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator