

Sent via mail and online submission

October 16, 2026

Hamilton P. Fox III
Disciplinary Counsel
District of Columbia Court of Appeals
515 5th Street NW
Building A, Suite 117
Washington, DC 20001

Re: Request for Ethics Investigation into Jeremy D. London, Executive Partner of Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP

Dear Mr. Fox:

Free Speech For People¹ respectfully requests that you investigate Jeremy D. London, Executive Partner of Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP (“Skadden”), with a D.C. office located at 1440 New York Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20005, for violations of the D.C. Rules of Professional Conduct (the “Rules”) arising out of his leadership role in Skadden’s decision making process to enter into negotiations with and ultimately grant significant concessions to President Donald J. Trump and his associates in order to obtain political favor with the Trump administration and avoid becoming subject to a punitive and illegal executive order. Mr. London participated in agreeing to and satisfying the agreement with Trump, and in doing so, he likely violated Rule 8.4(b) (illegal conduct, including bribery and extortion), Rule 1.7 (conflicts of interest), and Rule 8.4(a) (violating the rules and inducing other attorneys to violate the rules).

I. BACKGROUND

The relevant facts summarized herein are based solely on publicly available information. Free Speech For People does not claim that the organization, or any individual associated with it, has personal or institutional knowledge of the facts in this matter.

¹ Free Speech For People is a national, non-partisan, nonprofit public interest organization dedicated to challenging government and corporate corruption, and protecting our country’s core democratic principles and our Constitution. Free Speech For People engages in legal advocacy, public education, and organizing in communities across the country. The organization has more than one million supporters nationwide.

A. Mr. London's Professional History

Mr. London has spent his entire legal career at Skadden, where he specializes in mergers and acquisitions, corporate finance, securities law, and general corporate matters.² He became executive partner in April 2024.³ He received a B.A. from the University of Michigan in 1993 and a J.D. from The George Washington University School of Law in 1997. He is admitted to practice law in California, New York, District of Columbia, Maryland, Virginia, and the United Kingdom.

B. Skadden's Deal with Trump

Early in his second term, Trump unlawfully began to subject large law firms to punitive orders and baseless agency investigations. On February 25, 2025, he suspended the security clearances of Covington & Burling, LLP employees and ordered government agencies to evaluate their contracts with the firm, because it had represented Jack Smith, who led federal investigations into Trump. Memorandum on Suspension of Security Clearances and Evaluation of Government Contracts, 2025 Daily Comp. Pres. Doc. 303 (Feb. 25, 2025).⁴ On March 6, 2025, Trump issued a blatantly unlawful executive order against Perkins Coie LLP that subjected the firm and its clients to punitive sanctions by the administration. Exec. Order 14230, 90 Fed. Reg. 11781 (Mar. 6, 2025). The executive order accused Perkins Coie of “dishonest and dangerous activity” for undertaking lawful legal actions, properly defending its clients in court, and committing to fair and diverse hiring practices. The executive order unlawfully ordered the suspension of firm attorneys’ security clearances, prohibited firm employees from entering government buildings, required all government contractors to disclose business with the firm, subjected their government contracts to agency review, prohibited agency officials from hiring employees of Perkins Coie, and ordered the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (“EEOC”) to investigate the firm, all in an effort to punish the firm, its attorneys, and its clients, and to undermine the firm’s business relationships.

Perkins Coie immediately challenged the order in court and won an early and decisive victory in less than a week, obtaining a temporary restraining order on March 12, 2025. Perkins Coie obtained a permanent injunction against the order

² Jeremy D. London, Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP, <https://www.skadden.com/professionals/l/london-jeremy-d> (last visited Oct. 16, 2026).

³ Press Release, Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP, Jeremy London Succeeds Eric Friedman as Executive Partner (Apr. 15, 2024), <https://www.skadden.com/about/news-and-rankings/news/2024/04/jeremy-london-succeeds-eric-friedman-as-executive-partner>.

⁴ Covington did not litigate to block the order nor negotiate with Trump; the firm continued to represent Jack Smith. Kelsey Walsh, *Trump Signs Executive Action Targeting Law Firm Representing Former Special Counsel Jack Smith*, ABC News (Feb. 25, 2025), <https://abcnews.com/Politics/trump-signs-executive-action-targeting-law-firm-representing/story?id=119190846>.

against it on May 2, 2025.⁵ *Perkins Coie LLP v. U.S. Dep’t of Just.*, 783 F. Supp. 3d 105, 105 (D.D.C. 2025), *appeal docketed*, No. 25-5241 (D.C. Cir. July 2, 2025) [hereinafter *Perkins Coie D.D.C. Opinion*]; *Perkins Coie LLP v. U.S. Dep’t of Justice*, Order No. CV 25-716 (BAH) (Mar. 12, 2025) [hereinafter *Perkins Coie TRO Order*].

Despite the March 12 ruling, Trump continued to issue orders against other law firms. These include Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison LLP; Jenner & Block LLP; Wilmer Cutler Pickering Hale and Dorr LLP (“WilmerHale”); and Susman Godfrey LLP. *See* Exec. Order No. 14237, 90 Fed. Reg. 13039 (Mar. 14, 2025) (Addressing Risks from Paul Weiss); Exec. Order 14246, 90 Fed. Reg. 13997 (Mar. 25, 2025) (Addressing Risks from Jenner & Block); Exec. Order 14250, 90 Fed. Reg. 14549 (Mar. 27, 2025) (Addressing Risks from WilmerHale); Exec. Order 14263 90 Fed. Reg. 15615 (Apr. 9, 2025) (Addressing Risks from Susman Godfrey). He also threatened to issue more orders. *See Perkins Coie D.D.C. Opinion*, 783 F. Supp. 3d at 156.⁶ Jenner & Block, WilmerHale, and Susman Godfrey all sued, and like Perkins Coie, all three obtained swift court orders to block those orders.⁷ In fact, it took only two hours for Susman Godfrey attorneys to unanimously agree to fight the executive order in court.⁸ Meanwhile, Paul Weiss entered into negotiations with Trump and ultimately agreed on March 20, 2026, to provide Trump and his

⁵ In her May 2, 2025 ruling, Judge Beryl Howell of the District Court of the District of Columbia, issued a sharp rebuke of the Trump administration: “The importance of independent lawyers to ensuring the American judicial system’s fair and impartial administration of justice has been recognized in this country since its founding era. . . . The instant case presents an unprecedented attack on these foundational principles Using the powers of the federal government to target lawyers for their representation of clients and avowed progressive employment policies in an overt attempt to suppress and punish certain viewpoints . . . is contrary to the Constitution.” *Perkins Coie D.D.C. Opinion*, 783 F. Supp. 3d at 118.

⁶ Under Trump’s orders to look at law firm’s diversity, equity, and inclusion policies, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) also announced baseless investigations of twenty law firms. Press Release, U.S. Equal Emp’t Opportunity Comm’n, *EEOC Acting Chair Andrea Lucas Sends Letters to 20 Law Firms Requesting Information About DEI-Related Employment Practices* (Mar. 17, 2025), <https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/eeoc-acting-chair-andrea-lucas-sends-letters-20-law-firms-requesting-information-about-dei>.

⁷ Zach Montague, *Judge Strikes Down Trump Order Targeting Another Top Law Firm*, N.Y. Times (June 27, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/06/27/us/politics/trump-susan-godfrey-law-firm-order.html>. The Justice Department filed a motion to dismiss its appeal of the law firm cases, but then abruptly reversed itself. Josh Dawsey, C. Ryan Barber & Sadie Gurman, *Trump Ordered Justice Department Reversal on Law Firm Sanctions*, Wall St. J. (Mar. 11, 2026), <https://www.wsj.com/politics/policy/trump-ordered-justice-department-reversal-on-law-firm-sanctions-f137f164>. On March 16, 2026, the appeals court granted the Justice Department’s request to withdraw the motion, allowing the appeals to remain pending. Kaelan Deese, *Court Allows DOJ to Proceed with Appeal Over Law Firm Executive Orders*, Wash. Exam’r (Mar. 16, 2026), <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/news/justice/4493511/court-allows-doj-proceed-appeal-law-firm-executive-orders>.

⁸ Jack Newsham & Jacob Shamsian, *Donald Trump Went After One of America’s Top Law Firms. Its Decision to Fight Back Took Just Two Hours.*, Bus. Insider (Apr. 27, 2025), <https://www.businessinsider.com/donald-trump-big-law-executive-orders-decisions-damage-2025-4>.

allies with valuable services and made significant concessions regarding the firm's practices in order to obtain rescission of the order.⁹

The executive orders are blatantly unconstitutional. The four federal district court judges who have ruled on the four lawsuits brought by law firms against Trump have unanimously held that the executive orders violated the First Amendment protections against retaliation for protected expression and viewpoint discrimination.¹⁰ The executive orders were also variably found to violate the First Amendment freedom of association and the right to petition the government;¹¹ the Fifth Amendment's right to procedural due process¹² and equal protection,¹³ prohibition against vague laws,¹⁴ and right to counsel;¹⁵ the Sixth Amendment's right to counsel;¹⁶ and the separation of powers embedded in the structure of the Constitution.¹⁷

These executive orders were not the only means by which Trump attempted to punish or undermine law firms. On March 17, 2025, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) initiated a sweeping investigation into twenty law firms, including Skadden.¹⁸ The EEOC demanded personal information about

⁹ Daniel Barnes, *White House Strikes Deal with Major Law Firm to Lift Sanctions*, Politico (Mar. 20, 2025), <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/03/20/white-house-law-firm-sanctions-026866>;

¹⁰ *Perkins Coie* D.D.C. Opinion, 783 F. Supp. 3d at 150-65; *Susman Godfrey LLP v. Exec. Off. of President*, 789 F. Supp. 3d 15, 41-48 (D.D.C. 2025), *appeal docketed*, No. 25-5310 (D.C. Cir. Aug. 26, 2025) [hereinafter *Susman Godfrey* D.D.C. Opinion]; *Wilmer Cutler Pickering Hale & Dorr LLP v. Exec. Off. of President*, 784 F. Supp. 3d 127, 150-52 (D.D.C. 2025), *amended sub nom. Wilmer Cutler Pickering Hale & Dorr LLP v. Exec. Off. of the President*, No. CV 25-917 (RJL), 2025 WL 2105262 (D.D.C. June 26, 2025), *appeal docketed*, No. 25-5277 (D.C. Cir. July 28, 2025) [hereinafter *WilmerHale* D.D.C. Opinion]; *Jenner & Block LLP v. U.S. Dep't of Just.*, 784 F. Supp. 3d 76, 93-113 (D.D.C. 2025), *appeal docketed*, No. 25-5265 (D.C. Cir. July 22, 2025).

¹¹ *Perkins Coie* D.D.C. Opinion, 783 F. Supp. 3d at 165-66, 171-74; *Susman Godfrey* D.D.C. Opinion, 789 F. Supp. 3d at 48-49; *WilmerHale* D.D.C. Opinion, 784 F. Supp. 3d at 155-59.

¹² *Perkins Coie* D.D.C. Opinion, 783 F. Supp. 3d at 171-74; *Susman Godfrey* D.D.C. Opinion, 789 F. Supp. 3d at 49-51; *WilmerHale* D.D.C. Opinion, 784 F. Supp. 3d at 163-64.

¹³ *Perkins Coie* D.D.C. Opinion, 783 F. Supp. 3d at 166-68; *Susman Godfrey* D.D.C. Opinion, 789 F. Supp. 3d at 52-53; *contra WilmerHale* D.D.C. Opinion, 784 F. Supp. 3d at 166-67.

¹⁴ *Perkins Coie* D.D.C. Opinion, 783 F. Supp. 3d at 174-77; *Susman Godfrey* D.D.C. Opinion, 789 F. Supp. 3d at 51-52; *WilmerHale* D.D.C. Opinion, 784 F. Supp. 3d at 164-66.

¹⁵ *Perkins Coie* D.D.C. Opinion, 783 F. Supp. 3d at 168-71; *Susman Godfrey* D.D.C. Opinion, 789 F. Supp. 3d at 53-54; *contra WilmerHale* D.D.C. Opinion, 784 F. Supp. 3d at 167-68.

¹⁶ *Perkins Coie* D.D.C. Opinion, at 783 F. Supp. 3d 168-71; *WilmerHale* D.D.C. Opinion, 784 F. Supp. 3d at 169-170.

¹⁷ *Susman Godfrey* D.D.C. Opinion, 789 F. Supp. 3d at 54-55; *WilmerHale* D.D.C. Opinion, 784 F. Supp. 3d at 159-61.

¹⁸ Press Release, U.S. Equal Emp't Opportunity Comm'n, *EEOC Acting Chair Andrea Lucas Sends Letters to 20 Law Firms Requesting Information About DEI-Related Employment Practices* (Mar. 17, 2025), <https://www.eeoc.gov/newsroom/eeoc-acting-chair-andrea-lucas-sends-letters-20-law-firms-requesting-information-about-dei>. Several law students sued to block the investigations, which concluded with a settlement in February 2026, in which the EEOC conceded that its requests for information were "voluntary, that compliance was not mandatory, and that most law firms did not provide any of the requested information." Stipulation of Dismissal, at 1, *Doe 1 v. Equal Emp't*

each firm’s employees and job applicants, along with detailed information about each firm’s clients.¹⁹ And on March 22, 2025, Trump ordered then-Attorney General Pam Bondi to “review conduct” by and pursue sanctions and disciplinary actions against attorneys who bring lawsuits against his administration.²⁰

Trump never issued an executive order targeting Skadden. However, according to a firm-wide email sent by Mr. London, the firm learned in late March that Trump intended to issue an order.²¹ By that time, the Perkins Coie executive order had already been temporarily enjoined.

Despite this ruling, which established the unconstitutionality and illegality of the orders and blocked them from going into effect, Skadden, under Mr. London’s leadership, decided to *preemptively* negotiate with Trump, directly or by and through his advisors and negotiators, becoming the first law firm to do so.²² It retained two close Trump allies as lobbyists—specifically top Trump fundraiser Jeff Miller and Stefan Passantino, who served as deputy White House counsel during President Trump’s first term.²³ On March 28, 2025—the same day that the Jenner & Block and WilmerHale filed legal challenges and obtained same-day temporary injunctions to block their orders—Trump announced that he reached an agreement with Skadden. In exchange for the administration not taking official government action in the form of an executive order subjecting the firm to punishing sanctions (however illegal that order was likely to be), Skadden agreed to:

- provide the equivalent of \$100 million in free legal work to causes and clients approved by Trump, to be disbursed “during the Trump Administration and beyond”;

Opportunity Comm’n, No. 1:25-cv-01124-RBW (D.D.C. Feb. 9, 2026), Doc. 43; *see also*, Emilie Shumway, *Legal Group Claims Victory After EEOC ‘Retreated’ on Law Firm DEI Letters*, HR Dive (Feb. 10, 2026), <https://www.hrdive.com/news/eeoc-law-firms-end-lawsuit-dei-practices/811860>.

¹⁹ Letter from William E. White & William J.F. Roll III, Co-US General Counsels of A&O Shearman, to Rep. Yassamin Ansari (AZ-03) et al. (May 8, 2025), available at <https://abovethelaw.com/2025/05/trumps-biglaw-bootlickers-letters-to-congress/2> (“The EEOC inquiry posited that prevailing historical law firm DEI practices may have violated federal anti-discrimination laws and sought extensive information related to those practices. The EEOC’s demands also included detailed personal information regarding the Firm’s employees and applicants for attorney roles at the Firm, as well as extensive information related to the Firm’s clients.”).

²⁰ Tatyana Monnay, *Trump’s New Attack on Attorneys Draws Rebuke From Two Law Firms*, Bloomberg Law (Mar. 24, 2025), <https://news.bloomberglaw.com/business-and-practice/trumps-new-attack-on-attorneys-draws-rebuke-from-two-law-firms>.

²¹ Daniel Barnes, *Major Law Firm Strikes Preemptive Deal with White House*, Politico (Mar. 28, 2025), <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/03/28/skadden-arps-trump-law-deal-028324>; Exec. Order 14244, 90 Fed. Reg. 13685 (Mar. 21, 2025).

²² Barnes, *supra* note 21.

²³ Caitlin Oprysko, *More Institutions Under Fire Add Trump-Tied Firms*, Politico (Apr. 14, 2025), <https://www.politico.com/newsletters/politico-influence/2025/04/14/more-institutions-under-fire-add-trump-tied-firms-00290319>.

- to fund no fewer than five Skadden Fellows to work on causes in line with the administration’s priorities, including what Trump termed “conservative ideals”;
- to change its pro bono policies to require all pro bono to “be done in the Firm name” and to be subject to a pro bono Committee to ensure that “pro bono activities represent the full political spectrum”;
- to change its hiring, retention, and promotion practices—specifically to stop considering diversity and inclusion in its employment decisions—and subject itself to advice of outside counsel;
- to not deny representation to clients, including in a pro bono capacity, who purportedly have been denied legal representation from major law firms and whose positions are antithetical to the “personal political views of individual lawyers.”²⁴

The purpose of the deal was clear: in exchange for these concessions, Trump would not issue a Skadden-targeted executive order—at least for the time being.²⁵

As executive partner of Skadden, Mr. London necessarily would have been involved in the decision to negotiate with Trump, the negotiations themselves, and Skadden’s defense of the deal after it became public. As Mr. London admitted in a firm-wide letter, the firm, under his leadership, “chose to engage proactively and constructively with the Administration to align on a productive path forward without the issuance of an executive order.”²⁶

In the aftermath of the deal, Kathleen Rubenstein, the executive director of the fellowship foundation, chose to resign “rather than endorse actions that I believe will undermine its mission.”²⁷ Other attorneys also left the firm;²⁸ and more

²⁴ Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump), Truth Social (Mar. 28, 2025, at 1:57 PM ET), <https://truthsocial.com/@realDonaldTrump/posts/114241348699704594>; Barnes, *supra* note 21.

²⁵ Trump may have arranged for the EEOC to stop its investigation into Skadden. It was a term of deals that Trump reached with other firms in similar circumstances. *See* Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump), Truth Social (Apr. 11, 2025 at 12:21PM), <https://truthsocial.com/@realDonaldTrump/posts/114320245355397433>, Donald J. Trump (@realDonaldTrump), Truth Social (Apr. 11, 2025 at 12:21PM), <https://truthsocial.com/@realDonaldTrump/posts/114320244770957852>.

²⁶ Barnes, *supra* note 21.

²⁷ David Thomas, *Skadden Foundation Leader Resigns Following Trump Deal*, Reuters (June 5, 2025), <https://www.reuters.com/legal/government/skadden-foundation-leader-resigns-following-trump-deal-2025-06-04>.

²⁸ Debra Cassen Weiss, *Second, Third Associate Quit Skadden After Firm Reaches Settlement to Avoid Becoming Trump Target*, ABA Law Journal (Mar. 31, 2025), https://www.abajournal.com/news/article/another-associate-quits-skadden-after-firm-reaches-settlement-to-avoid-becoming-a-trump-target#google_vignette; Matthew Goldstein, Jessica Silver-Greenberg & Michael S. Schmidt, *Inside Elite Law Firms, Protests and Quitting After Trump Deals*, N.Y. Times (Apr. 2, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/04/02/business/trump-law-firms-skadden-paul-weiss.html>; The Daily: *Why One Lawyer Resigned When His Firm Caved to Trump: An Update*

than eighty alumni of the firm sent a letter to the firm to express “deep outrage” over the settlement. In this letter, they noted that “[a]s one of the country’s most powerful and most profitable law firms, Skadden’s influence over the legal professional cannot be understated. In light of Skadden’s position, it is outrageous and self-interested that rather than fulfilling the legal profession’s oath and standing in solidarity with fellow law firms that were fighting to uphold the Constitution, Skadden caved to bullying tactics instead.”²⁹

When employees expressed their dissatisfaction to one another and to firm leadership, the firm responded by attempting to curtail employees’ ability to organize and communicate with one another. In a complaint submitted to the U.S. National Labor Relations Board on April 24, 2025, the National Institute for Workers’ Rights accused Skadden of curtailing their employees’ access to firm distribution lists, which employees were using to discuss the deal and to “plan coordinated rejections of recruitment activities, and express concerns about the impact on what they do, with whom they work, and their ethical obligations... in order to suppress employee discussions about the firm’s policy changes.”³⁰

Before, during, and after the deal, Skadden was and remains a powerful and lucrative law firm. Courts had *already* paused a substantially similar executive order against Perkin Coie. See, *Perkins Coie* TRO Order. All four firms that sued quickly have succeeded in halting the executive orders, and none suffered significant losses to their profit or docket.³¹ In fact, Jenner & Block even successfully recruited a high-profile partner away from Paul Weiss—another firm that reached a settlement with Trump—in the aftermath of its deal: Damian Williams, former U.S. attorney for the Southern District of New York.³²

(N.Y. Times, Dec. 29, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/12/29/podcasts/the-daily/skadden-lawyer-resigned-trump.html>.

²⁹ Letter from Skadden Alumni to Jeremy London, Chairman of Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP (Apr. 3, 2025), available at <https://www.commoncause.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/Skadden-Alumni-Letter-Finalv2.pdf>; see also Sam Levine, *More Than 80 Ex-Staffers of Top Law Firm Express ‘Deep Outrage’ Over Trump Deal*, Guardian (Apr. 4, 2025), <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/apr/04/skadden-staffers-letter-trump>.

³⁰ Charge Against Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom LLP by National Institute for Workers’ Rights, U.S. National Labor Relations Board, filed Apr. 24, 2025, available at https://fingfx.thomsonreuters.com/gfx/legaldocs/egpbleonjpg/EMPLOYMENT_SKADDEN_NLRB_charge.pdf; Letter from National Institute for Workers’ Rights to John D. Doyle, Regional Director, National Labor Relations Board, Apr. 23, 2025, available at <https://niwr.org/2025/04/23/niwr-nlr-charge-skadden>; see also Goldstein, Silver-Greenberg & Schmidt, *supra* note 28.

³¹ Zach Montague, *Judge Strikes Down Trump Order Targeting Another Top Law Firm*, N.Y. Times (June 27, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/06/27/us/politics/trump-susan-godfrey-law-firm-order.html>.

³² Matthew Goldstein & Jessica Silver-Greenberg, *Paul Weiss Loses Another Prominent Lawyer in Wake of Trump Deal*, N.Y. Times (June 6, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/06/06/business/paul-weiss-trump-law-firms-damian-williams.html>.

Skadden was the first law firm to preemptively reach a deal with Trump in exchange a promise that he would not issue an executive order against the firm. The terms included \$100 million in free legal services and significant concessions regarding the firm's speech, and they ceded control of the firm's fellowship selections, client selection, and pro bono choices. Much like his deal with Paul Weiss, Trump and his associates used the Skadden deal as a template to pressure more law firms into reaching similar deals, leveraging the same threats of punishing executive orders, onerous investigations, and the revelation of employee information to a hostile administration. *See Perkins Coie D.D.C. Opinion*, at 156 ("What is clear is that the Trump White House has publicly touted . . . that those deal-making firms have been spared, or had revoked, an Executive Order targeting them."). These firms included Allen Overy Shearman Sterling LLP; Kirkland & Ellis LLP; Latham & Watkins LLP; Milbank LLP; Simpson Thacher & Bartlett LLP; and Willkie Farr & Gallagher LLP. In total, the capitulating law firms pledged nearly \$1 billion in legal services towards Trump's preferred causes in return for safe harbor against the unconstitutional punitive measures that other firms continued to face.³³

Though Trump claimed the deal "was essentially a settlement,"³⁴ these funds were not and will not be disbursed to the government—they were not fines or formal remedies and indeed they could not be: none of the firms' disfavored conduct warranted sanction and the orders themselves were blatantly unconstitutional. Trump himself later stated that these firms had done "nothing wrong."³⁵ Instead, these were tailored offerings of service to Trump and his allies, providing Trump with political and personal benefits in order to extract specific government action and favor. Trump has made it clear that the firms will be expected to do his bidding, including by defending police officers who are accused of abusing civilians.³⁶ His understanding of what type of "pro bono" the firms would provide him included

³³ Sam Baker, *Law Firms Pledge Almost \$1 Billion in Free Work to Trump*, Axios (Apr. 12, 2025), <https://www.axios.com/2025/04/12/big-law-pro-bono-legal-work-trump>; Jeffrey Toobin, *Trump's Next Move After the Law Firms Surrender*, N.Y. Times (May 19, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/05/19/opinion/trump-law-firms.html>; Rebecca Beitsch, *Law Firms Divided Over Response to Trump Orders*, Hill (Mar. 25, 2025), <https://thehill.com/regulation/court-battles/5211686-trump-administration-targets-law-firms>; Barnes, *supra* note 21.

³⁴ Dan Mangan, *Trump Says Skadden, Arps Law Firm Will Provide \$100 Million in Pro Bono Legal Services, Avoiding Executive Order*, CNBC (Mar. 28, 2025), <https://www.cnbc.com/2025/03/28/trump-skadden-law-firm-executive-order.html>.

³⁵ Associated Press, *LIVE: Trump Signs Executive Orders Aimed at Boosting Coal*, YouTube (Apr. 8, 2025), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k66iBAeQwEk> (at 31:40).

³⁶ Jessica Silver-Greenberg et al., *Trump Allies Look to Benefit from Pro Bono Promises by Elite Law Firms*, N.Y. Times (May 25, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/05/25/business/trump-law-firms-pro-bono.html>.

representing the administration on trade deals and representing him in a personal capacity.³⁷

It appears that Skadden, under Mr. London's leadership, has taken specific steps to satisfy the terms of the agreement. The firm has been reported to be providing free legal work to the Commerce Department.³⁸ Mr. London has failed to answer direct questions from leading U.S. Senate and House Democrats regarding Skadden's work for the government and compensation for that work.³⁹ Skadden has also been criticized in a shareholder suit against Intel for Skadden's role in negotiating an agreement to give the Commerce Department an \$11 billion stake in the company worth 9.9 percent of Intel's equity.⁴⁰ The shareholder complaint alleged that this Intel deal was made "for no meaningful consideration in response to extortionary threats by the government" and despite Skadden's conflict of interest as legal advisor due to its own pro bono relationship with Trump and his administration.⁴¹

More broadly, law firms that reached deals with Trump have been subject to demands for free legal representation from Trump's allies and conservative, partisan organizations.⁴² It is not yet known what other clients the firm has taken on in satisfaction of its promise of \$100 million in legal services, nor what attorneys have been negatively affected by its revised hiring practices, nor what clients it has declined to take on to satisfy the full terms of the deal.

³⁷ Michael S. Schmidt & Maggie Haberman, *Law Firms That Settled With Trump Are Asked to Help on Trade Deals*, N.Y. Times (Aug. 13, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/08/13/us/politics/trump-law-firms-trade-deals.html>; Michael S. Schmidt, Matthew Goldstein & Maggie Haberman, *Two Big Law Firms Said to be Doing Free Work for Trump Administration*, N.Y. Times (Aug. 20, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/08/20/us/politics/law-firms-free-work-trump-administration.html>.

³⁸ Schmidt, Goldstein & Haberman, *supra* note 37.

³⁹ David Thomas, *Three US Law Firms Sidestep Lawmakers' Queries on Trump-Related Deals*, Reuters (Oct. 10, 2025), <https://www.reuters.com/legal/government/three-us-law-firms-sidestep-lawmakers-queries-trump-related-deals-2025-10-10/>.

⁴⁰ Kathryn Rubino, *Skadden Said Its Trump Deal Raised No Ethical Issues. Intel's Shareholders Disagree.*, Above the Law (July 21, 2026), <https://abovethelaw.com/2026/07/skadden-said-its-trump-deal-raised-no-ethical-issues-intels-shareholders-disagree>.

⁴¹ *Verified Stockholder Derivative Complaint, Paisner v. Tan*, C.A. No. 2026-0307-PAF, 2 (Del. Ch. Mar. 5, 2026), available at https://www.dandodiary.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/893/2026/03/2452000-2452009-https-cl-de_chancery-78689748-101631075.pdf; <https://www.reuters.com/legal/government/democratic-lawmakers-press-skadden-trump-agreement-citing-work-intel-equity-2026-07-21>; David Thomas, *Democratic Lawmakers Press Skadden on Trump Agreement, Citing Work on Intel Equity Stake Sale*, Reuters (July 21, 2026), <https://www.reuters.com/legal/government/democratic-lawmakers-press-skadden-trump-agreement-citing-work-intel-equity-2026-07-21>.

⁴² Silver-Greenberg et al., *supra* note 36; Justin Henry, *Heritage-Linked Group Says Big Law Replying to Its Pro Bono Asks*, Bloomberg Law (May 14, 2025), <https://news.bloomberglaw.com/business-and-practice/heritage-linked-group-says-big-law-replying-to-its-pro-bono-asks>.

To date, neither Skadden nor Mr. London have released any public statement disavowing the deal with Trump.

II. VIOLATIONS OF THE D.C. RULES OF PROFESSIONAL CONDUCT

D.C. Rules of Professional Conduct govern all attorneys who are licensed in D.C., as Mr. London is. These ethical requirements stand as a cornerstone of the profession, inextricably linked to justice and the rule of law. These violations have not only had wide-ranging consequences for Skadden attorneys, clients, and potential clients, but also for the practices of large law firms in this country. Reporting suggests that law firms across the board have changed their practices and agendas in the aftermath of the executive orders and the subsequent deals.⁴³ Individual lawyers left the firm after Skadden reached its deal with Trump.⁴⁴ The deal also served as a blueprint for other law firms' concessionary agreements with the Trump administration.

The conduct of Mr. London in negotiating and then satisfying the terms of Skadden's deal with Trump appears to have violated several Rules.

A. Rule 8.4(b)—Illegal Conduct

Rule 8.4, which governs attorney misconduct, states that it is professional misconduct for a lawyer to “(b) [c]ommit a criminal act that reflects adversely on the lawyer's honesty, trustworthiness, or fitness as a lawyer.” The first comment to the rule elaborates that “a lawyer should be professionally answerable only for offenses that indicate lack of those characteristics relevant to law practice,” citing “dishonesty, breach of trust, or serious interference with the administration of justice” as example instances of such offenses. D.C. R. Pro. Conduct 8.4, cmt. 1.

A criminal conviction or trial outside of disciplinary proceedings is not required in order to find that an attorney violated their ethical obligations under Rule 8.4; attorneys have received discipline in the absence of a conviction.⁴⁵ Here, Mr. London likely violated prohibitions against bribery and extortion by entering an illegal agreement with Trump, and may have later violated the Antideficiency Act

⁴³ Mike Spector *et al.*, *How Trump's Crackdown on Law Firms Is Undermining Legal Defenses for the Vulnerable*, Reuters (July 31, 2025), <https://www.reuters.com/investigations/trumps-war-big-law-leads-firms-retreat-pro-bono-work-underdogs-2025-07-31>; Molly Redden, *Trump's War on Big Law Means It's Harder to Challenge the Administration*, ProPublica (Aug. 6, 2025), <https://www.propublica.org/article/trump-law-firms-accountability-environment-police-lgbtq>.

⁴⁴ Weiss, *supra* note 28; Goldstein, Silver-Greenberg & Schmidt, *supra* note 28.

⁴⁵ See *In re Slattery*, 767 A.2d 203, 207 (D.C. 2001) (drawing clear distinctions between the role of disciplinary proceedings as compared to criminal proceedings, and stating, “There is no requirement in either provision of the rule that an attorney actually have been convicted of a crime for the rule to apply.”); *In re Corizzi*, 803 A.2d 438, 442 (D.C. 2002) (“A lawyer need not actually be convicted of a crime of moral turpitude in order to be disbarred on the basis of the underlying conduct.”); *In re Gil*, 656 A.2d 303, 306 (D.C. 1995) (finding misconduct despite respondent not being convicted because respondent likely committed larceny or its statutory equivalent).

by having Skadden attorneys provide free services to the federal government in partial fulfillment of its illegal agreement.

Bribery of a public official is prohibited by 18 U.S.C. § 201(b)(1). Trump's decisions to issue, not issue, or withdraw executive orders and his directives to subordinates to take specific actions, constitute official acts.⁴⁶ The promises made by Mr. London on behalf of Skadden constitute the *quid pro quo* element of federal bribery laws—namely the acceptance of a “thing of value in exchange for official action.” *United States v. Terry*, 707 F.3d 607, 614 (6th Cir. 2013). Though individuals and organizations routinely negotiate settlements with federal prosecutors and regulatory agencies, Skadden's deal was not a typical “settlement” of legal claims by any measure. The deal primarily provided personal and political benefit to Trump, did not involve the typical agency personnel or review processes. The specifics of the agreement do not appear to have been in writing. And there is no official investigation or case that has been laid to rest by the agreements—which means nothing prevents Trump from releasing another executive order to encourage more “deals.”

Extortion is unlawful pursuant to the Hobbs Act. 18 U.S.C. § 1951. Individuals who pay an extortion demand may be criminally liable for aiding or abetting a public official in committing extortion. 18 U.S.C. § 2(a) (“Whoever commits an offense against the United States or aids, abets, counsels, commands, induces or procures its commission, is punishable as a principal”); *see, e.g., United States v. Torcasio*, 959 F.2d 503, 505 n.1 (4th Cir. 1992), amended, 993 F.2d 368 (4th Cir. 1993). Mr. London, on behalf of Skadden, promised \$100 million towards Trump's favored causes “with the expectation of obtaining favorable action,” *Torcasio*, 959 F.2d at 506, specifically rescission of the executive order. The promise therefore likely constitutes extortion by Trump and his associates. Though Mr. London may claim that he and his firm were victims and cannot be party to their own extortion, the U.S. Supreme Court has previously found a payor guilty of conspiring to commit Hobbs Act extortion under 18 U.S.C. § 371, the general federal conspiracy statute. *Ocasio v. United States*, 578 U.S. 282, 287-292 (2016); *see also, United States v. Nelson*, 486 F. Supp. 464, 486 (W.D. Mich. 1980) (“... a payor of money which has been extorted ‘under color of official right’ in violation of the Hobbs Act, can, in certain cases, be charged under 18 U.S.C. § 2(a) with aiding and abetting that crime.”). In addition, Mr. London's decisions to negotiate with Trump and ultimately reach an agreement with him on behalf of Skadden, either directly or by strategizing, orchestrating, and arranging the negotiations as executive partner of the firm, were voluntary and preemptive of any punitive action. Indeed, the fact that the firm was never actually subject to a punitive executive order, and the fact that other firms in similar positions chose to fight the blatantly

⁴⁶ See *McDonnell v. United States*, 579 U.S. 550, 578 (2016) (holding that for purposes of construing § 201, an “official act” requires that “the public official must make a decision or take an action” on “something specific and focused that is ‘pending’ or ‘may by law be brought’ before a public official”).

unconstitutional executive orders, demonstrate that Mr. London and Skadden did not need to make this deal and would have had other, lawful options had Trump targeted the firm with an executive order. That the services given in exchange for political favor were for Trump’s political and personal benefit, not in the public interest, also weighs heavily against the lawfulness of such an agreement.

The Antideficiency Act prohibits any officer or employee of the U.S. government from accepting voluntary services on behalf of the government except in very limited circumstances. 31 U.S.C. §§ 1341-1342, 1511-1519. Under Mr. London’s leadership, Skadden has reportedly provided free legal services to the Commerce Department, which may violate the Antideficiency Act unless it is shown that its services are authorized pursuant to one of the law’s exceptions, *see* 5 U.S.C. § 3109 (permitting experts and consultants to serve without compensation with a written record of the agreement or as authorized by statute).

Mr. London’s conduct likely violated these criminal laws and “adversely reflects on the lawyer’s honesty, trustworthiness, or fitness as a lawyer,” in violation of Rule 8.4(b).

B. Rule 1.7—Conflicts of Interest

Rule 1.7 bars lawyers from having conflicts of interest, with few exceptions. Per Rule 1.7(b)(2-3), a lawyer shall not represent a client with respect to a matter if, “[s]uch representation will be or is likely to be adversely affected by representation of another client” or “[r]epresentation of another client will be or is likely to be adversely affected by such representation.” Rule 1.7(b)(4) further prohibits representation if “the lawyer’s professional judgment on behalf of the client will be or reasonably may be adversely affected by the lawyer’s responsibilities to or interests in a third party or the lawyer’s own financial, business, property or personal interests.” Indeed, in October 2025, the D.C. Bar issued a legal ethics opinion specifically warning that lawyers may run afoul of Rule 1.7 if they engage in prospective agreements with a government that contain conditions that may limit or shape their law practices.⁴⁷

In acquiescing to Trump’s demands, Mr. London oversaw the creation of unavoidable conflicts of interests as the firm avoids cases and causes that might go against the Trump administration’s preferences. Much of the litigation handled by Skadden has historically been against the federal government or for causes that

⁴⁷ *Ethics Opinion 391: Lawyers and Law Firms That Contemplate Agreeing with Governments to Conditions That May Limit or Shape Their Law Practices*, D.C. Bar (October 2025), <https://www.dcbar.org/For-Lawyers/Legal-Ethics/Ethics-Opinions-210-Present/Ethics-Opinion-391> (last visited Oct. 16, 2026). The ethics opinion also contemplated that such activity may violate Rules 1.3, 1.10, 1.16, 5.4, and 5.6.

Trump may not agree with. Therefore, the agreement has likely had a substantial and material adverse effect upon the interests of many of Skadden's other clients.⁴⁸

Rule 1.7(c) contains exceptions permitting a lawyer to represent an affected client if they obtain their informed consent. However, the exact contours of the agreements between the law firms, including Skadden, and Trump appear to be vague and unspecific.⁴⁹ Further, those deals, rather than foreclosing further meddling from the Trump administration, appear to open the door to ongoing dialogue, oversight, and approval of law firm activities from the Trump administration as part of the deals' enforcement. None of the deals prohibited Trump from taking arbitrary punitive action in the future.

The dispute regarding Skadden's representation of Intel in its deal with the Commerce Department is a prime example of such an unavoidable conflict created by Mr. London's decision to enter into an agreement with Trump. It is also a worrisome indicator that Skadden, under Mr. London's leadership, is apparently not appropriately disclosing the conflict to affected clients.⁵⁰ Even if such discussion takes place, it is hard to conceive how any client would ever be able to provide truly informed consent to such an amorphous, evolving conflict of interest. It is even less conceivable when the affected clients are not powerful multinational corporations but low-resource individuals and communities, the traditional recipients of legal pro bono efforts.

C. Rule 8.4(a)—Rules Violation and Inducement

Rule 8.4(a) states that a lawyer shall not “[v]iolate or attempt to violate the Rules of Professional Conduct, knowingly assist or induce another to do so, or do so through the acts of another.” In violating Rules 1.7 and 8.4(b), Mr. London also triggered a violation of Rule 8.4(a). In addition, by making this agreement on behalf of the firm, Mr. London may have created scenarios where Skadden-employed attorneys are induced to violate the Rules by participating in the satisfaction of Skadden's illegal agreement with Trump.

⁴⁸ See, D.C. R. Pro. Conduct 1.7, cmt. 30 (“Generally, it is doubtful that a lawyer could hold such a belief [that lawyer can provide competent and diligent representation to each client affected by a conflict] where the representation of one client is likely to have a substantial and material adverse effect upon the interests of another client, or where the lawyer's individual interests make it likely that the lawyer will be adversely situated to the client with respect to the subject-matter of the legal representation.”).

⁴⁹ Carrie Johnson, *Trump's Deals With Law Firms Are Like Deals 'Made With a Gun to the Head,' Lawyers Say*, NPR (May 31, 2025), <https://www.npr.org/2025/05/31/nx-s1-5406173/trump-deals-law-firms>.

⁵⁰ *Verified Stockholder Derivative Complaint, Paisner v. Tan*, at 32-34, *supra* note 41.

III. CONCLUSION

For the reasons set forth above, Free Speech For People respectfully requests that you take the following actions: first, open an investigation into whether Mr. London has violated the Rules in making and satisfying a deal with Trump; and second, take appropriate action if warranted by the evidence gathered in the investigation, including, but not limited to, seeking disciplinary sanction against Mr. London.

In failing to uphold his ethical obligations, Jeremy London has violated the expectations of a member of the D.C. Bar. Because of the serious nature of the conduct involved, we request that you act with urgency.

Sincerely,

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