

January 23, 2026

Sen. Charles Grassley, Chairman
Sen. Richard Durbin, Ranking Member
Senate Judiciary Committee
Washington, D.C. 20510

Sen. Rand Paul, Chairman
Sen. Gary Peters, Ranking Member
Senate Homeland Security & Governmental
Affairs Committee
Washington, D.C. 20510

Rep. Jim Jordan, Chairman
Rep. Jamie Raskin, Ranking Member
House Judiciary Committee
Washington, D.C. 20515

Rep. James Comer, Chairman
Rep. Robert Garcia, Ranking Member
House Committee on Oversight and Reform
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Members of Congress:

As civil society organizations united in our commitment to protecting First Amendment press freedoms, human rights, and civil liberties, the undersigned are writing to you with urgent concern regarding the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) recent execution of a search warrant at the home of Hannah Natanson, a reporter for The Washington Post, and seizure of her devices, including a phone, her work computer, her personal laptop, and a Garmin smart watch capable of tracking the wearer's movements.

Given the possibility that the Department of Justice may have obtained the search warrant from a judge under false pretenses and potentially in violation of the Privacy Protection Act of 1980 (42 U.S.C. § 2000aa), we ask you to launch an oversight investigation into this extraordinary situation.

As a crucial first step, we urge you to exercise your constitutional prerogative and power to obtain and publicly disclose the search warrant materials, including any sworn affidavits submitted in support. We ask you to also seek the Department of Justice's authorization paper trail, including communications, memoranda, approval documents, and any authorizations signed by the Attorney General, as well as any discussions pertaining to this search in connection with the Privacy Protection Act, the Department of Justice's regulations pertaining to the news media, and the government's investigation of *United States v. Perez-Lugones*.

Congressional intervention is necessary because the FBI's January 14, 2026 raid of Natanson's home represents a perilous escalation in the executive branch's use of law enforcement powers against the free press and a citizenry that depends on fearless newsgathering. While the Department of Justice has publicly justified this intrusion as a necessary step in a classified leaks investigation involving federal contractor Aurelio Perez-Lugones, the available facts suggest a far more disturbing motive: the weaponization of legal process to engage in a fishing expedition into more than 1,000 confidential sources cultivated by Natanson inside the federal workforce. The government has not even accused Natanson of any wrongdoing.

As leaders of the oversight and judiciary committees in Congress, you have the constitutional duty and authority to supervise the executive branch's activities. This [extraordinary moment](#) especially calls for your oversight. The basis for your immediate and robust intervention includes the following:

First, the credible evidence of pretextual action by the government cannot be ignored. The Administration alleges that the raid of Natanson's home was necessary in connection with a specific [criminal prosecution](#) of a government contractor, Aurelio Perez-Lugones, who has been accused of unlawfully retaining classified information. However, the government's [criminal complaint](#) against Perez-Lugones does not accuse him of disseminating classified information he is alleged to have taken. Furthermore, Perez-Lugones and his communications devices were already in [federal custody](#) at the time of the FBI's raid of Natanson's home, making the latter unnecessary for the government's prosecution of Perez-Lugones. Any risk that full disclosure of all the warrant materials, including any affidavits, might undermine the government's investigation is also diminished by the fact that the search has already been executed and by all the public details about the Perez-Lugones prosecution itself that were already disclosed by the government.

These facts raise the grim possibility that the FBI raid of Ms. Natanson's home was a pretextual attempt to threaten the press, to uncover whistleblowers, and to chill newsgathering unflattering to the government. We have reason to fear that the government's true objective here is to seize the reporter's electronic devices to identify hundreds of other confidential whistleblowers within the federal workforce who are unrelated to the specific case at hand.

Second, the available evidence points to the government's possible violation of the Privacy Protection Act (42 U.S.C. § 2000aa). This statute allows law enforcement to conduct searches and seizures of journalists' work product materials only under narrow exceptions, such as where the journalist is alleged to be involved in a crime. But again, the government has not accused Natanson of any wrongdoing. These circumstances sound the alarm that the Department of Justice may have misled the court that approved the warrant. It is imperative for Congress to address these questions and determine if the government violated the Privacy Protection Act in Natanson's case or the safeguards that remain in the Administration's own revised news media [guidelines](#), such as use of "filter teams" separate from the prosecution and investigative teams and other search protocols that are designed to minimize intrusion into newsgathering activities unrelated to the investigation.

Third, Congress has an independent and co-equal duty to oversee the Department of Justice. While at least [one motion](#) to unseal judicial records related to the FBI's raid of Natanson's home is currently pending in district court, Congress has its own authority to issue subpoenas for the same records held by the executive branch. This is critical for the legislative branch to independently assess whether the investigatory powers granted by Congress are being abused to dismantle the free press.

If the Department of Justice has nothing about its own conduct to hide from Congress and the public, this Administration should welcome the opportunity to prove the necessity of its actions. If, however, federal officials have misled a judge in order to expose the identities of whistleblowers and to intimidate the press, Congress must know immediately. We look to you to defend our First Amendment freedoms against executive overreach and abuse.

Sincerely,

American Society of Journalists and Authors
Amnesty International USA
Defending Rights & Dissent
Demand Progress
Democratic Messaging Project
Freedom of the Press Foundation
Journalism & Women Symposium (JAWS)
National Press Photographers Association
PEN America
People For the American Way
Public Citizen
Radio Television Digital News Association
Reporters Without Borders (RSF)
Society of Professional Journalists
The Association of Foreign Press Correspondents in the USA
The Media and Democracy Project