

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

January 30, 2026

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue Northwest
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Trump,

In October, Americans watched with shock as the East Wing of the White House was destroyed to build a new Trumpian ballroom. Not only was this an egregious action that disregards any consideration of longstanding historic preservation practices or consultation with experts on historic structures, but we are concerned that your administration did not follow health and safety laws and required demolition practices to protect the health and safety of workers and the general public from asbestos exposure from the massive fumes and dust created during the demolition.

The East Wing was originally constructed in 1902 and expanded in 1942. At this time, use of asbestos in building construction materials was prevalent to insulate buildings and their structural components and protect them from the dangers of fire. Reporting from December 2025, highlights documents from the District of Columbia's Department of Energy and Environment that suggest the White House may have ignored regulations of the city and federal agencies to identify the presence of asbestos and remove it prior to demolition work to protect the public from exposure.¹

There is no safe level of exposure to asbestos, a known carcinogen. Following asbestos exposure, symptoms of life-threatening diseases do not manifest for decades. Once airborne, particulates can linger in the air for days, and travel several hundred meters from the original site, particularly in windy outdoor conditions like Washington, D.C. experienced in late October 2025. This is not just your administration disregarding a bureaucratic notification process, but is an action that could have put lives at risk.

In March 2024, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) put in place federal requirements to protect workers from exposure to chrysotile asbestos throughout the chemical's lifecycle. Although EPA does not require a permit for asbestos, local regulations in the District of Columbia require that all buildings built before 2000 obtain an asbestos abatement permit before the demolition or renovation of the building. Additionally, the DC Department of Buildings requires permits for any demolition project within the city – a permit which requires a copy of an asbestos survey and proof of abatement. Further, like other cities and states, DC must follow the comprehensive abatement regulations of EPA and Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), which require reporting such as a notice of demolition and waste disposal plans to be submitted to the implementing agency.

More recently, reporting from January reflects that White House officials made claims that “any hazardous material abatement was done in September,” and that “a very extensive abatement and remediation assessment was followed, complying with all applicable federal standards.” Yet as the reporting also highlights, the federal

¹ *White House Dodged East Wing Asbestos Permits*, Politico Pro (Dec. 1, 2025), <https://subscriber.politicopro.com/article/eenews/2025/12/01/white-house-dodged-east-wing-asbestos-permits-00669670>

government has failed to respond to stakeholder Freedom of Information Act requests to verify this statement - only sharing abatement documents from early 2025, before and unrelated to the East Wing demolition.²

The federal government has the obligation to be transparent about the actions it has taken to reduce the risks of serious, cancer-causing hazards. As such, we request written responses to the below questions and all records and correspondence from the White House or its representatives, including contractors, and relevant agencies as it relates to asbestos and hazard abatement for the demolition of the East Wing of the White House by February 20, 2026:

1. What pre-demolition asbestos, lead, and silica inspections and testing was completed for the East Wing and other parts of the White House in advance of and related to the demolition of the East Wing in October 2025?
2. Please list and provide all abatement plans, notifications, and certifications for the East Wing demolition submitted to or required by regulations and procedures adopted or enforced by the District of Columbia, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), the General Services Administration (GSA), and offices responsible for building management and safety within the Executive Office of the President.
3. What actions did the federal government take to protect construction workers or individuals working in or visiting the White House, neighboring office buildings as well as pedestrians frequenting the area around the White House complex from exposure to asbestos, lead, and silica during the demolition of the East Wing and related activities, including, but not limited to personal protective equipment, air monitoring results, plans to handle and dispose of waste, warning placards, and/or safety plans for workers?
4. Please provide all written White House, EPA and GSA correspondence with the National Capital Planning Commission, McCrery Architects, Clark Construction Group, AECOM, ACECO and any environmental-compliance consultants or entities regarding asbestos and other environmental hazard remediation for the East Wing Demolition project.

Sincerely,


Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator


Suzanne Bonamici
Member of Congress

² *Advocates Sue Trump Officials for Answers on East Wing Asbestos Risk*, Washington Post (Jan. 7, 2026), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2026/01/07/trump-east-wing-ballroom-asbestos-lawsuit/>