



May 12, 2025

Stephen Ehikian
Acting Administrator and Deputy Administrator
U.S. General Services Administration
1800 F Street, NW
Washington, DC 20405

Dear Acting Administrator Ehikian:

In February 2025, President Donald Trump issued an executive order that terminated multiple federal advisory committees (FACs). In addition to those explicitly named, the order granted broad authority to the Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, the Assistant to the President for Economic Policy, and the Assistant to the President for Domestic Policy to identify and terminate additional committees that the administration deems “unnecessary.”¹ Among those disbanded was the Open Government Federal Advisory Committee, a vital body dedicated to making transparency and accountability recommendations across the federal government. As a former member, I urge the General Services Administration (GSA) to reinstate the Open Government Federal Advisory Committee to ensure continued oversight, public input, and progress on open government initiatives. Federal advisory committees have a long-standing history in the American policymaking process. All three branches of government were consulting with individuals outside of the federal government even before the Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA) — the statutory authority for creating and terminating these committees — was passed in 1972.² The passage of FACA marked the government’s official recognition of the value of federal advisory committees, and established rules to ensure effective collaboration with committee members.

The FACA has been considered one of the “four pillars of openness in government.”³ Not only did it make government activities more accessible to everyday Americans, it also provided another way for the public to hold officials accountable. FACA has three key requirements that clarify its scope: Federal officials make the final determination as to whether recommendations are implemented; members of the committees need to be balanced in terms of perspectives and functions; and the committees must hold public meetings (with narrow exceptions) and ensure that advisory committee reports, records, and other papers are available for public inspection.⁴

¹ “Commencing the Reduction of the Federal Bureaucracy,” The White House, last accessed February 19, 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/02/commencing-the-reduction-of-the-federal-bureaucracy/>.

² Congressional Research Service, *Federal Advisory Committees: An Introduction and Overview*, 2, <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/R44253>.

³ “50 Facts for 50 Years: Building the Framework of FACA,” September 30, 2022, <https://www.gsa.gov/blog/2022/09/30/50-facts-for-50-years-building-the-framework-of-faca>.

⁴ Congressional Research Service, *The Federal Advisory Committee Act (FACA): Overview and Considerations for Congress*, <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/R47984>.

And while the Project On Government Oversight (POGO) has raised some concerns about FACs, they can, when independent of corporate and lobbyist influence, make the federal government fundamentally more accessible and promote citizen engagement.⁵

President Donald Trump reversed these transparency gains just one month into his presidency by instructing agencies to eliminate multiple FACs, including those that have provided reliable insight for over a decade. The consequences of this decision have adverse impacts that do not promote the public's interest. The pipeline for everyday Americans, like students, academics, subject matter experts, and industry and service workers, to engage with the federal government has been constricted.

Just days following the February executive order, the GSA terminated the young Open Government FAC. As one of the 15 appointed members, I did not receive any detailed information from GSA about the reason for the committee's termination.

The Open Government FAC was established in June 2024 by the U.S. Open Government Secretariat to further strengthen GSA's relationship with civil society and to implement open government initiatives focused on increasing transparency, accountability, and engagement. One of our primary goals was to work with GSA to develop the sixth National Action Plan.⁶ Our involvement would have represented a significant milestone, marking the first time the U.S. government included a federal advisory committee specifically focused on interdisciplinary open government initiatives in informing its action plan.⁷ Given how closely each member worked with local and state civil society organizations, our input would have been invaluable to crafting recommendations.

Our membership was culturally and intellectually diverse, which prompted interesting perspectives and discourse.⁸ The public meetings held prior to the FAC's termination were not short of dialogue, and we welcomed public participants' feedback. Our cohort worked in good faith to advocate for meaningful reforms to improve public engagement and government response.

Canceled FACs have been reinstated before. In March, the Department of Homeland Security consulted with the Committee Management Secretariat, housed within the GSA, to reinstate the

⁵ Angela Canterbury, "POGO's Public Comment Regarding Lobbyists Serving on Federal Advisory Committees," Project On Government Oversight, December 1, 2010, <https://www.pogo.org/public-comments/pogos-public-comment-regarding-lobbyists-serving-on-federal-advisory-committees>; Michael Smallberg, "Public comment regarding ACUS recommendations on federal advisory committees," Project On Government Oversight, December 2, 2011, <https://www.pogo.org/public-comments/public-comment-regarding-acus-recommendations-on-federal-advisory-committees>.

⁶ "Seeking Public Input for the 6th U.S. Open Government National Action Plan," General Services Administration, September 12, 2024, <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2024/09/12/2024-20702/seeking-public-input-for-the-6th-us-open-government-national-action-plan>.

⁷ General Services Administration, *5th OPEN GOVERNMENT NATIONAL ACTION PLAN Mid-Term Self-Assessment Report 2022-2024*, last accessed April 25, 2025, <https://www.gsa.gov/system/files/NAP%205%20Mid-Term%20Self%20Assessment%202024.pdf>.

⁸ General Services Administration, "Open Government Federal Advisory Committee Administration Meeting #1 - October 18, 2024," video, October 22, 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NPcUYjlpIws>.

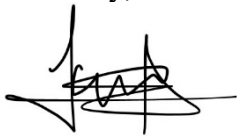
Homeland Security Advisory Council, finding it “necessary and in the public interest.”⁹ The Open Government FAC should also be reinstated for the same reason, and I urge the U.S. Open Government Secretariat to consult with the Committee Management Secretariat to reestablish this critical committee.

Reinstating the Open Government Federal Advisory Committee is a crucial step for the government to reaffirm its commitment to open government principles, demonstrating to Americans that their feedback matters. As GSA once boasted, “This new Federal Advisory Committee is a testament to GSA’s commitment to work within and across the U.S. government, while holding ourselves to the open government principles of transparency, accountability, and engagement alongside civil society stakeholders.”¹⁰

Is this no longer the case?

I appreciate your consideration of this matter. If you have any questions or would like to discuss this further, please contact me at 202-949-5973.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Janice Luong', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Janice Luong
Policy Associate

⁹ Department of Homeland Security, “Notice of Committee Charter Renewal Homeland Security Advisory Council,” March 11, 2025, <https://public-inspection.federalregister.gov/2025-03856.pdf>; “Federal Management Regulation; Federal Advisory Committee Management,” General Services Administration, April 18, 2024, <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2024/04/18/2024-08215/federal-management-regulation-federal-advisory-committee-management#:~:text=The%20Act%20not%20only%20formalized,See%2041%20CFR%20102%2D3.100.>

¹⁰ “GSA launches Open Government Federal Advisory Committee to advise on governmentwide transparency efforts,” General Services Administration, April 26, 2024, [https://www.gsa.gov/about-us/newsroom/news-releases/gsa-launches-open-government-federal-advisory-committee-to-advise-on-governmentwide-transparency-efforts-04262024.](https://www.gsa.gov/about-us/newsroom/news-releases/gsa-launches-open-government-federal-advisory-committee-to-advise-on-governmentwide-transparency-efforts-04262024)