

# Summary: Former NPS Employee Violated Ethics Rules

Report Date: January 27, 2026

Report Number: 24-0083

The OIG investigated allegations that a former Administrative Assistant at the Fort Davis National Historic Site (FODA), National Park Service (NPS), and her second-level supervisor violated ethical requirements, including those set forth by 18 U.S.C. § 205, in connection with the then Administrative Assistant's outside position with the Blackwell School Alliance (BSA). BSA is a nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving the history of the Blackwell School<sup>1</sup> in Marfa, Texas.

We substantiated the allegations. We found that the Administrative Assistant violated 18 U.S.C. § 205 by representing BSA before NPS on numerous occasions, and that her second-level supervisor and other NPS management officials, including the former NPS Deputy Regional Director, were aware of some but not all of these activities.

For example, in January 2022, three months after receiving approval for her outside position with BSA and being notified of related restrictions, the Administrative Assistant applied for a grant on behalf of BSA. This request sought nearly \$819,000 in Federal funding through the U.S. Economic Development Administration (EDA), U.S. Department of Commerce (DOC). EDA ultimately did not award the grant to BSA; nonetheless, as an NPS employee, the Administrative Assistant's mere application for a Federal grant on behalf of BSA was in violation of 18 U.S.C. § 205.<sup>2</sup> We found no evidence that the Administrative Assistant's NPS management was aware of this application for an EDA grant or that they directed the Administrative Assistant's activities with BSA.

Following the initiation of our investigation, the Administrative Assistant resigned from the position with BSA in January 2023 and subsequently resigned from the position with NPS in May 2025. The Administrative Assistant declined our request for an interview. The other two employees retired from NPS.

The U.S. Attorney's Office for the Western District of Texas declined to prosecute this matter.

This is a summary of a report we issued to the Comptroller of NPS, exercising the delegated authority of the Director, for any action deemed appropriate.

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<sup>1</sup> According to the official NPS website for the Blackwell School National Historic Site (<https://www.nps.gov/blsc/learn/index.htm>), "the Blackwell School in Marfa, Texas, was the sole public education institution for the city's Hispanic students from 1909-1965. The Blackwell School is a significant local example of the period when the practice of 'separate but equal' dominated education and social systems in the United States."

<sup>2</sup> 18 U.S.C. § 205(a)(2) prohibits a Federal employee from acting as an agent before any department or agency in connection with any covered matter in which the United States is a party or has a direct and substantial interest. 18 U.S.C. § 205(h) defines a covered matter to include an application, contract, or other particular matter. Furthermore, 18 U.S.C. § 205(d)(2)(C) states that a Federal employee may not participate in a covered matter that involves a grant, contract or other agreement that is providing for the disbursement of Federal funds to the organization or group. Here, the Administrative Assistant violated 18 U.S.C. § 205 by acting as an agent for BSA before a U.S. Department (DOC) in connection with a covered matter, the grant application.