April 24, 2026

The Honorable Jim Jordan
Chairman
Committee on the Judiciary
United States House of Representatives
2138 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jamie Raskin
Ranking Member
Committee on the Judiciary
United States House of Representatives
2142 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Scott Fitzgerald
Chairman
Subcommittee on the Administrative State,
Regulatory Reform, and Antitrust
2444 Rayburn House Office Building,
Washington, DC 20515-4905

The Honorable Jerry Nadler
Ranking Member,
Subcommittee on the Administrative State,
Regulatory Reform, and Antitrust
2132 Rayburn House Office Building,
Washington, DC 20515-4905

RE: Public Interest Organizations Call for Committee Investigation of the Department of Justice's Settlement with Live Nation Entertainment

Dear Chairman Jordan, Chairman Fitzgerald, Ranking Member Raskin, and Ranking Member Nadler:

The eight undersigned public interest advocacy organizations write to urge this Committee to immediately open an investigation into what the evidence increasingly suggests is a pattern of corrupt interference by the White House, senior officials at the Department of Justice ("DOJ"), and lobbyists acting on behalf of Live Nation Entertainment ("Live Nation") in the federal government's antitrust lawsuit against that company. The sequence of events that led to the DOJ's surprise mid-trial settlement with Live Nation on March 9, 2026, on terms that independent experts, bipartisan state attorneys general, and industry advocates described as shockingly favorable to Live Nation, followed by a verdict against Live Nation on every antitrust count[1] when the state Attorneys General refused to settle, raise serious questions about whether the DOJ abandoned its statutory mandate in order to protect a well-connected corporate monopoly.

I. Background: A Landmark Case Against a Documented Monopoly

Live Nation Entertainment, parent company of Ticketmaster, controls more than 80 percent of the primary ticketing market for major concert venues in the United States,

[1] Letitia James and Jonathan Skrmetti, Rolling Stone, "We Took on Live Nation and Won. Here's What the Verdict Means for Fans," (Apr. 21 2026). https://www.rollingstone.com/music/music-features/live-nation-verdict-attorneys-general-fans-op-ed-1235551218/

according to DOJ's own trial presentation.[2] In May 2024, the Biden-era Department of Justice, joined by 30 state attorneys general and the District of Columbia, filed a sweeping civil antitrust lawsuit accusing Live Nation and Ticketmaster of illegally monopolizing the live entertainment industry, driving up prices for fans, squeezing out smaller promoters, and coercing venues into long-term exclusive contracts. The government's complaint sought structural relief, including forcing Live Nation to divest Ticketmaster, to restore competition to a market where, the evidence showed, the company held crushing dominance across concert promotion, venue operation, artist management, and ticketing.

The trial began on March 2, 2026, in the Southern District of New York before U.S. District Judge Arun Subramanian. By most contemporary accounts, the government's first week of testimony was proceeding effectively. Then, on the evening of March 8, the judge received a surprise e-mail notifying the court that the DOJ and Live Nation had reached a settlement. This occurred before he had seen so much as a term sheet, and before even the government's own lead trial counsel had been informed of the terms.[3]

Judge Subramanian was blunt in his assessment of how the settlement was handled. The parties' failure to inform the court in a timely manner was, in his words, an act showing "absolute disrespect for the court, the jury, and this entire process. It's absolutely unacceptable."[4]

The terms of that settlement were no less troubling. Under the agreement, Live Nation pays no financial penalty to the federal government, retains Ticketmaster, and makes only modest structural concessions, including divesting exclusive booking agreements with 13 amphitheaters and allowing venues to seek non-exclusive ticketing arrangements. A separate $280 million fund was established to address state damages claims, a sum that Stephen Parker, Executive Director of the National Independent Venue Association, states is about four days of Live Nation's annual revenue.[5] A bipartisan coalition of 36 states and the District of Columbia rejected the settlement outright and announced they would continue litigating.[6]

On April 15, 2026, those states obtained a complete jury verdict in their favor. After a five-week trial and four days of deliberations, a federal jury in the Southern District of New York found Live Nation and Ticketmaster liable on all monopolization counts and

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[2] Complaint, *United States et al. v. Live Nation Entertainment, Inc. and Ticketmaster LLC*, No. 1:24-cv-03973 (S.D.N.Y. filed May 23, 2024); DOJ Press Release, "Justice Department Sues Live Nation-Ticketmaster for Monopolizing Live Entertainment" (May 23, 2024); NBC News, "Live Nation settles antitrust case with DOJ, avoids Ticketmaster breakup" (Mar. 9, 2026) .

[3] Pollstar, "Breaking: Live Nation Reaches Settlement With DOJ In Antitrust Case" (Mar. 9, 2026)

[4] NBC News, "Live Nation settles antitrust case with DOJ, avoids Ticketmaster breakup" (Mar. 9, 2026) (quoting Judge Subramanian: "It shows absolute disrespect for the court, the jury and this entire process. It's absolutely unacceptable.")

[5] NPR, "Live Nation and Justice Department reach settlement in antitrust case" (Mar. 9, 2026) (quoting Stephen Parker, NIVA Executive Director: "Live Nation's reported settlement amount — $280 million — is the equivalent of 4 days of their 2025 revenue" and calling the deal "a failure of the justice system")

[6] PBS NewsHour, "States Continue Antitrust Case Against Live Nation and Ticketmaster After DOJ Settles," (Mar. 16, 2026)

determined that Ticketmaster overcharged consumers by $1.72 per ticket.[7] The verdict vindicates the case the federal government walked away from. It also underscores that the DOJ's decision to settle was not driven by weakness in the evidence. A jury, presented with substantially the same record, found Live Nation to be an illegal monopolist on every count.

The DOJ's retreat is particularly egregious given the verdict and concurrent findings by the Federal Trade Commission ("FTC") regarding Live Nation's pattern of consumer deception.[8] The FTC's case highlights what can only be described as a series of corporate lies used to maintain market dominance. Specifically, the FTC has documented Live Nation's use of "bait-and-switch" pricing, where the company advertises low prices while knowing, and allegedly intentionally hiding, that the final cost will be significantly higher. Furthermore, the FTC's case details how Live Nation "deceptively represent[s]" that it enforces strict ticket limits while privately "turning a blind eye" to brokers who use thousands of fictitious accounts to hoard inventory. The Commission argues this conduct forces fans into a secondary market where Live Nation can "triple dip" on fees—collecting from the initial broker purchase, the broker's resale listing, and the final consumer.[9]

II. A Troubling Pattern of Corruption: Lobbyists, Board Appointments, Political Donations, and Personnel Purges

It is apparent that the settlement did not emerge from an impartial assessment of the legal merits. As documented in reporting by *Semafor*, *The Wall Street Journal*, *Bloomberg*, *The American Prospect*, and other major outlets, Live Nation mounted an aggressive, politically-targeted influence campaign specifically designed to shape the Trump administration's handling of this case. This Committee should scrutinize each of the following elements:

A. Richard Grenell: A Sitting Presidential Envoy on Live Nation's Board

In May 2025, Live Nation announced that Richard Grenell, simultaneously serving as President Trump's Special Presidential Envoy for Special Missions and as President of the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, had been named to Live Nation's Board of Directors.[10] Grenell remains a close personal confidant of the President. As one prominent antitrust researcher wrote publicly at the time: "Ticketmaster just put Trump advisor Richard Grenell on its board of directors to get out from under the Antitrust Division's lawsuit."[11] The placement of an active senior presidential official on the board of a company that is simultaneously being sued by that official's own administration raises profound conflicts of interest that this Committee must examine.

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[7] CNN, "Jury finds Live Nation and Ticketmaster operated as a monopoly and overcharged fans," (Apr. 15, 2026). https://www.cnn.com/2026/04/15/politics/ticketmaster-live-nation-monopoly-verdict

[8] Federal Trade Commission. "FTC Sues Live Nation and Ticketmaster for Engaging in Illegal Ticket Resale Tactics and Deceiving Artists and Consumers about Price and Ticket Limits." *Federal Trade Commission*, 18 Sept. 2025.

[9] Complaint, *FTC v. Live Nation Ent., Inc.*, No. 2:25-cv-07981 (C.D. Cal. Sept. 18, 2025), https://www.ftc.gov/system/files/ftc_gov/pdf/FTCvLiveNation-Ticketmaster-Complaint-filed.pdf.

[10] CNN Business, "Live Nation adds key Trump ally Richard Grenell to its board amid DOJ probe" (May 20, 2025)

[11] The Hill, "Trump ally Richard Grenell joins Live Nation board amid antitrust probe, (May 21, 2025),

B. Mike Davis: The Lobbyist Who Helped Push Out DOJ's Antitrust Chief

Live Nation retained Mike Davis, an attorney described in press accounts as a "political fixer," to lobby on its behalf.[12] According to reporting in *Bloomberg*, Davis met directly with President Trump and, in that meeting, criticized and recommended the removal of Gail Slater, the Senate-confirmed head of the DOJ's Antitrust Division, who had been pursuing the Live Nation case toward trial. Davis has since publicly claimed credit for accelerating Slater's ouster.[13] Reporting by *The American Prospect* further reported that Davis reportedly earned approximately $1 million from separate corporate clients, including Hewlett Packard Enterprise, for facilitating DOJ settlements. This conduct strongly suggests that there is a disturbing pattern of pay-to-play antitrust enforcement at the highest levels of the Justice Department.[14]

C. Kellyanne Conway: Direct Meetings with DOJ Leadership, Bypassing Antitrust Staff

Live Nation additionally retained former Trump campaign manager and senior advisor Kellyanne Conway as a lobbyist. According to reporting by *Semafor*, Conway was the lead lobbyist in Live Nation's settlement negotiations with the DOJ in the weeks before trial, meeting directly with Antitrust Division chief Gail Slater and with representatives from Deputy Attorney General Todd Blanche's office.[15] Critically, those settlement negotiations were reportedly conducted by Live Nation's lobbyists with senior DOJ officials, including personnel in the Office of the Deputy Attorney General, specifically bypassing and sidelining the career antitrust lawyers who had spent years building the government's case.

D. The $500,000 Trump Inauguration Donation

Live Nation quietly donated $500,000 to President Trump's 2025 inaugural committee, making it one of the largest corporate donors to that fund, according to public filings. This donation was made while the company was simultaneously engaged in settlement negotiations with the Trump administration over a lawsuit that threatened its corporate existence.[16]

E. The Purge of DOJ's Antitrust Leadership

The corruption of this process is perhaps most clearly illustrated by what happened inside the Department of Justice as Live Nation's lobbying campaign intensified. Gail Slater, the Antitrust Division chief confirmed by the Senate on a strong bipartisan basis, was forced

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[12] *The American Prospect*, "Trump Justice Department Poised to Preserve Ticketmaster Monopoly" (Feb. 12, 2026);

[13] Josh Sisco & Leah Nylen, *How Trump MAGA Acolyte Mike Davis Drove Out Antitrust's Top Cop*, Bloomberg (Feb. 13, 2026)

[14] *The American Prospect*, "Trump Justice Department Poised to Preserve Ticketmaster Monopoly" (Feb. 12, 2026) (reporting Davis "reportedly earned a $1 million 'success fee'" in the HPE-Juniper merger matter); *The American Prospect*, "Real Talk About Lobbyists Buying the Justice Department" (Feb. 16, 2026).

[15] Semafor, "Live Nation settlement talks are dividing Trump's Justice Department" (Feb. 8, 2026) (reporting Conway "played the lead role in recent weeks" and "has met recently with both Slater and representatives from Deputy Attorney General Todd Blanche's office"); Yahoo Finance/Semafor (Feb. 8, 2026).

[16] TicketNews, "Live Nation Donated $500,000 to Trump Inauguration Committee" (Apr. 22, 2025).

out of her position on February 12, 2026, just two weeks before the scheduled start of the Live Nation trial.[17] Her departure followed a sustained effort by Live Nation's lobbyists, particularly Davis, to have her removed.

But Slater's removal was not the first. Earlier in her tenure, amid an internal dispute over a DOJ settlement approving Hewlett Packard Enterprise's acquisition of Juniper Networks – a merger also lobbied by Mike Davis – the DOJ's chief of staff fired Slater's top two deputies, Roger Alford, her Principal Deputy, and Bill Rinner, the head of merger enforcement.[18] Both were career antitrust professionals who had also served in Trump's first administration. They were fired for what internal sources described as "insubordination," a word that, in context, appears to mean resistance to lobbyist-driven decisions. Three days prior to Slater's departure, her number two official, Mark Hamer, also abruptly resigned from his position.[19]

Roger Alford subsequently spoke publicly in August 2025, warning that the DOJ Antitrust Division was "now overwhelmed with lobbyists with little antitrust expertise going above the antitrust division leadership seeking special favors with warm hugs." He specifically warned that Live Nation could be "the next casualty" of what he characterized as a lobbyist takeover of the department, and stated: "Today cases are being resolved based on political connections, not the legal merits."[20]

The DOJ's Antitrust Division was, in effect, decapitated in the weeks before a major case went to trial, where the company being prosecuted had hired operatives with close ties to the White House.

III. The Presidential Pardon of a Key Government Witness

Perhaps the most troubling single episode in this entire saga involves the presidential pardon of Tim Leiweke, the former CEO of Oak View Group ("OVG"). As documented in extensive reporting by *Billboard* and *The Wall Street Journal*, Leiweke was a central figure in the DOJ's antitrust case against Live Nation.[21] The government's complaint described OVG as Live Nation's "pimp" and "hammer" and cited internal communications in which Leiweke privately promised Live Nation's CEO that he would "always protect you [Live Nation]."[22] In July 2025, Trump's own DOJ indicted Leiweke on antitrust charges for allegedly conspiring to rig the bidding process for the Moody Center arena at the University

[17] CBS News, "Trump officials oust Abigail Slater as DOJ's antitrust chief, sources say" (Feb. 12, 2026)
[18] CBS News, "Top DOJ antitrust officials fired as tension grows in a Trump administration monopoly-fighting office" (July 28, 2025) (reporting DOJ chief of staff Chad Mizelle fired Alford and Rinner, citing "insubordination").
[19] Reuters, "US Justice Department's deputy antitrust chief steps down," (Feb. 9, 2026) (reporting Hamer "said in a post on LinkedIn that he had committed to working in the public service for a year when he accepted the job"); *The American Prospect* (Feb. 12, 2026).
[20] Alford, Roger Paul, "The Rule of Law versus The Rule of Lobbyists" (August 18, 2025).
[21] Brooks, Dave. "Trump's Pardon of Tim Leiweke Throws Wrench Into DOJ's Live Nation Antitrust Case." *Billboard*, (Dec. 11, 2025);
[22] Complaint, *United States et al. v. Live Nation*, No. 1:24-cv-03973 (S.D.N.Y. 2024) (describing OVG as Ticketmaster's "pimp, hammer and protector" and quoting internal communications

of Texas, a scheme that deprived a public university of the benefits of competitive bidding.[23]

For the DOJ's antitrust case against Live Nation, Leiweke's potential testimony was of enormous significance. He reportedly possessed direct, firsthand knowledge of dealings between OVG and Live Nation. Such knowledge could have served as powerful evidence at trial. The government had been fighting for months in court to force Leiweke to testify.[24]

Then, in late November 2025, Leiweke's attorney, former Republican Congressman and Fox News host Trey Gowdy, played a round of golf with President Trump at Mar-a-Lago.[25] Shortly after, Trump issued Leiweke a full and unconditional pardon even though the bid-rigging case was only months old and no trial had begun.

The timing of what followed does not appear to have been coincidental. The very day after receiving his pardon, Leiweke appeared for a previously scheduled deposition in the DOJ's civil antitrust suit against Live Nation and invoked his Fifth Amendment right against self-incrimination in response to every government question.[26] Freed from criminal jeopardy by the pardon, Leiweke had no legal compulsion to cooperate, and he did not. A key government witness had been neutralized, not by the legal process, but by a golf game and a presidential signature.

IV. The Committee Must Act

Taken individually, each of these facts might be dismissed as a coincidence. Taken together, they describe a systematic and successful effort by a powerful corporation to corrupt the federal antitrust enforcement process at enormous cost to American consumers who pay billions in excess ticket fees every year because of Live Nation's monopoly power.

The House Judiciary Committee has clear jurisdiction over both the Department of Justice and antitrust law. The Subcommittee on the Administrative State, Regulatory Reform, and Antitrust exists precisely to conduct oversight of these issues. This matter calls for the full exercise of that jurisdiction. Specifically, NCL urges this Committee to:

1. Subpoena all communications between the White House, DOJ leadership (including the Office of the Deputy Attorney General and the Attorney General's office), and any representatives of Live Nation, its lobbyists (including Mike Davis, Kellyanne

[23] DOJ Press Release, "Justice Department Charges Former Arena Executive with Bid Rigging" (July 2025).
[24] Billboard, "Tim Leiweke Pardon Stalls DOJ Efforts in Live Nation Case" (Dec. 10, 2025) (reporting DOJ had been "hoping to force Leiweke to testify in the government's antitrust case" and had been fighting for months in court); TicketNews, "Golf, Immunity and a Pardon: How Tim Leiweke Slipped DOJ's Grip" (Dec. 9, 2025).
[25] Independent, "Trump was persuaded into pardoning golf partner's client over 18 holes: Report (Dec. 6, 2025)
[26] Billboard, "Tim Leiweke Pardon Stalls DOJ Efforts in Live Nation Case" (Dec. 10, 2025) ("The pardon came just one day before the ex-OVG chief's deposition in the DOJ's Live Nation case, where he repeatedly invoked his Fifth Amendment right"); Bloomberg, reported in TicketNews, "Fresh Off Trump Pardon, OVG's Leiweke Refuses to Testify in Live Nation Antitrust Suit" (Dec. 5, 2025).

Conway, and any associated firms), or Richard Grenell, relating to the antitrust case or any settlement discussions;

2. Conduct public hearings to examine the circumstances surrounding the forced departures of Gail Slater, Roger Alford, Bill Rinner, and Mark Hamer, and the role, if any, played by Live Nation's lobbying campaign in those personnel decisions;

3. Investigate the basis for the presidential pardon of Tim Leiweke, including any role played by Live Nation, its lobbyists, or its board members (including Richard Grenell) in facilitating or encouraging that pardon, and the extent to which the pardon was understood by any party to affect the government's civil antitrust case against Live Nation;

4. Request a full accounting from the Department of Justice of all meetings, calls, and written communications between DOJ officials at or above the Deputy Assistant Attorney General level and Live Nation, Ticketmaster, or their representatives since January 20, 2025; and

5. Examine whether the terms of the DOJ's settlement with Live Nation were determined by the legal merits of the case or by the company's political connections, campaign contributions, and access to senior administration officials.

The Tunney Act requires that any final settlement with the DOJ be determined to be in the public interest. The public interest in this case demands that Congress first determine whether the process that produced this settlement was itself corrupted. American consumers, who have been paying exorbitant and opaque ticket fees for years as a direct result of Live Nation's monopoly, deserve no less.

The undersigned organizations stand ready to provide this Committee with any additional information, analysis, or testimony that would assist in its investigation. We thank you for your attention to this urgent matter and urge you to act without delay.

Respectfully submitted,

National Consumers League
Economic Action Maryland
Sports Fans Coalition
Consumer Action
Public Knowledge
Virginia Citizens Consumer Council
Oregon Consumer Justice
Consumer Federation of America