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# Slow pace of Epstein disclosures sets off new storm to batter Trump

4 HR AGO

Analysis by  Stephen Collinson



Material marked with evidence tape inside the home of Jeffrey Epstein is shown in this image ...



The Justice Department is denying accusations of a cover-up and of flouting a new law following its partial and extensively redacted releases of **files on Jeffrey Epstein** in an ever-deepening political storm around President Donald Trump.

The department **started to make public** files from a huge trove of information on the accused sex trafficker to meet Friday's deadline. The files contained the stunning revelation that there are 1,200 people identified as victims or their relatives. They include materials from dozens of hard drives, old CDs and computers.

But the information has fallen far short of the **congressionally mandated** full disclosure, and hundreds of thousands of pieces of evidence are still being reviewed by officials. Experts say that many documents critical to understanding the case and why Epstein was not prosecuted earlier have yet to appear.

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The department's limited compliance is the latest twist in the saga over Epstein, a highly connected former financier who died in jail in 2019, which has drawn in a group of famous political and business elites who were once in his orbit.

Senior officials insist their caution is motivated by the need to avoid identifying Epstein's victims, but Trump's opponents allege obstruction by his politicized DOJ. And the limited release of documents threatens to condemn women who were allegedly trafficked or abused by Epstein as young girls to another false dawn in their long-frustrated **quest for justice.**



Rep. Thomas Massie, accompanied by Rep. Marjorie Taylor Greene, speaks during a press conference on the Epstein Files Transparency Act ahead of a House vote on the release of files related to the late convicted sex offender Jeffrey Epstein on Capitol Hill in Washington, DC, on November 18, 2025. (*Annabelle Gordon/Reuters*)

Rep. Jamie Raskin, the top Democrat on the House Judiciary Committee, told CNN's Kasie Hunt on "State of the Union" on Sunday that the DOJ's motives could not be trusted. "They have not shown any deference or respect for the victims at all, for the survivors of this nightmare," the Maryland lawmaker said. "It's all about covering up things that, for whatever reason, Donald Trump doesn't want to go public — either about himself, other members of his family, friends, Jeffrey Epstein, or just the social, business, cultural network that he was involved in for at least a decade, if not longer."

Rep. Thomas Massie, who helped lead the congressional campaign to require the files' release, warned that the administration was "flouting the spirit and the letter of the law." The Kentucky Republican said on CBS' "Face the Nation" on Sunday that "I won't be satisfied until the survivors are satisfied."

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Massie's Democratic partner in the disclosure effort, Rep. Ro Khanna of California, joined his colleague in threatening contempt proceedings against Attorney General Pam Bondi after the holidays if there is not full compliance. "We're building a bipartisan coalition. And it would fine Pam Bondi for every day that she's not releasing these documents," Khanna told CBS.

Deputy Attorney General Todd Blanche, however, brushed off earlier warnings that he, Bondi or other Justice Department officials could face impeachment or even criminal proceedings. "Bring it on. We are doing everything we're supposed to be doing to comply with the statute," Blanche said Sunday on NBC's "Meet the Press." He went on: "You're talking about a million or so pages of documents. Virtually all of them contain victim information. So listen, the idea that Attorney General Bondi would ever let a single piece of paper go out of this department that contains victim information is something they know we won't do."

The Justice Department released reams of documents Friday but not all of those required by law. Many of the documents carried extensive redactions — far beyond what the law required. They included notable references to Bill Clinton, including a photo of the former president in a pool next to someone whose face was redacted. But there were few references to Trump — who was a friend of Epstein but has said that he later broke off the relationship.



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This photograph, file 468, from the Epstein files that includes a photo of Donald Trump.  
*(Screenshot/CNN)*

On Saturday, a photograph of Trump among other images in a photo of an open desk drawer **was removed** from a Justice Department website. The photo was restored Sunday after the department said it reviewed it to protect any victims following a request from legal authorities in New York.

Neither Trump nor Clinton has been accused of any criminal wrongdoing in relation to Epstein. A spokesman for Clinton accused the administration of trying to deflect attention from Trump.

The Epstein Files Transparency Act, which Trump initially opposed but which a GOP rebellion forced him to sign, requires the DOJ to release all unclassified documents related to Epstein and associates but allows some redactions for victims' privacy or to avoid prejudicing existing investigations.

# Consequences of Epstein showdown are getting more serious

Incomplete disclosures and a weekend of recriminations and building political controversy are certain to prolong the Epstein controversy, which has carved deep divisions inside the Republican Party and the MAGA movement and which has potentially grave political and legal ramifications.

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The only unequivocal takeaway in this new phase of the drama is that, yet again, the Trump administration's attempts to quell the storm have whipped up a new vortex of political energy that could harm the president.

There are several possibilities that could be driving the administration's actions.

- The sheer size of the Epstein files could be creating genuine issues for officials who rushed to meet a deadline and to protect the identities of victims, even if the authors of the law compelling disclosure say this is not a viable excuse.
- The department may lack the competence to do such a vast job comprehensively and quickly, following purges of career officials by Trump's aides, who turned the department into an arm of the president's political operation.

- Given that history, Trump's critics would not be surprised if the DOJ was attempting to protect the president, following disclosures by congressional Democrats of documents highlighting his former relationship with Epstein.

The latest developments ensure the episode will remain a headache for Trump, who is beset by multiple political controversies as **his approval ratings dip** and he seeks to reestablish public confidence in his management of a **tough economy**.



Ghislaine Maxwell and Jeffrey Epstein are seen in this image released by the Department of Justice on December 19, 2025. (US Justice Department/Reuters)

The Epstein story has long been important to Trump's base, as it plays into a narrative that Washington is dominated by corrupt elites and an evil establishment "deep state" that covers up abuses and crimes.

Epstein's long evasion of the law, the nature of his alleged offenses, and his death by suicide while awaiting trial have made the case ripe for the conspiracy theorists who populate far-right politics. Limited disclosures by the Justice Department will foster impressions that the government has something to hide, even if it doesn't.

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In other prominent cases — for instance, the assassination of President John F. Kennedy — the absence of proof of any conspiracy only fuels the certainty of believers that something is wrong.

And the administration's incessant efforts to satisfy the president's zeal for revenge against his political foes, like the rush to indict former FBI Director James Comey, only bolster accusations that Trump's DOJ is actively shielding the president. It does not help that Blanche, one of the administration's most high-profile faces in the Epstein storm, is Trump's former personal lawyer.

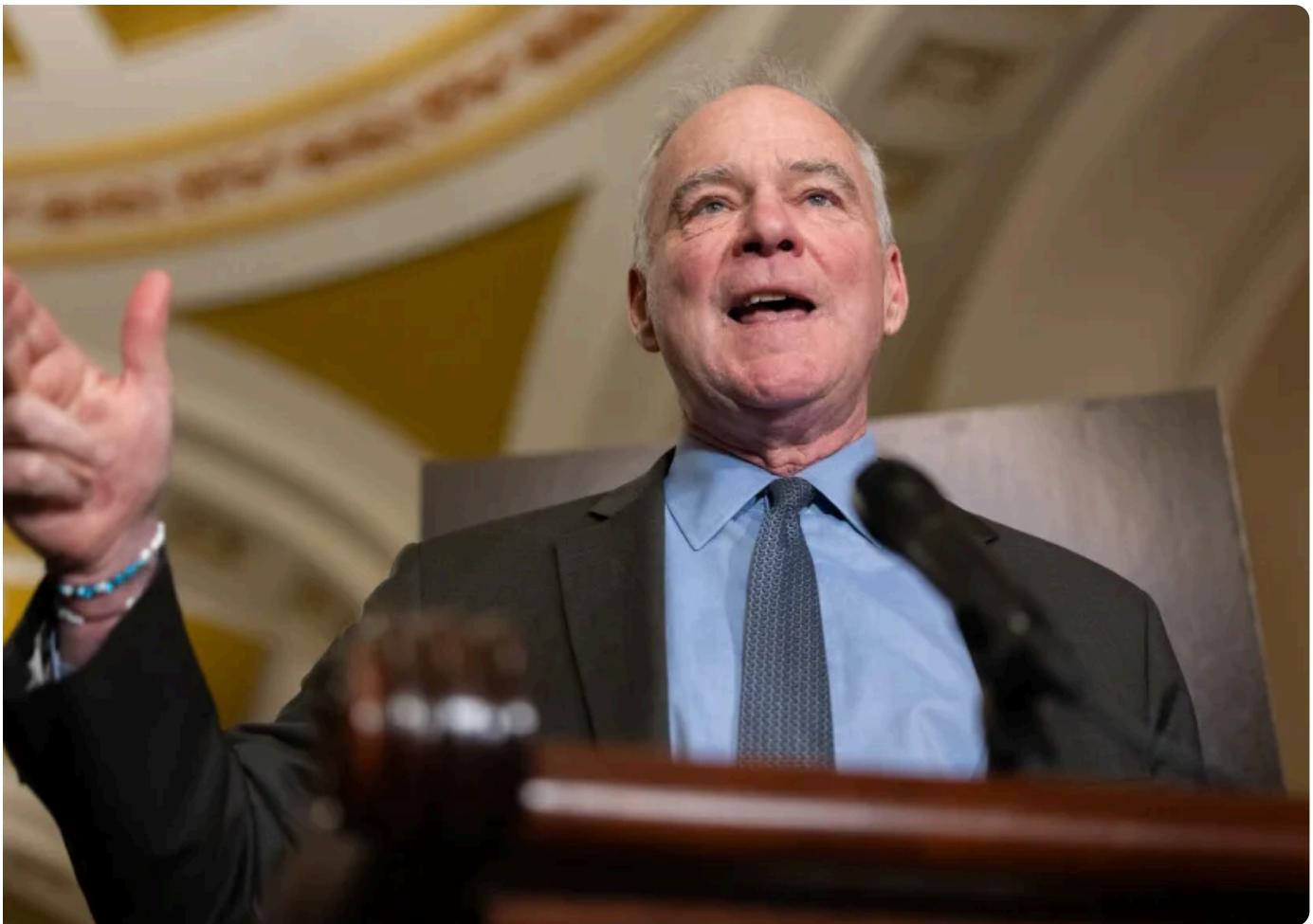
## **Republicans and Democrats face new political dilemmas over Epstein**

The Epstein case shows no sign of releasing its grip on Washington ahead of midterm elections next year — even if it is not the top concern of many voters. That means both parties face hurried new political calculations.

The White House may hope that slow, continued disclosures over the holiday season drain the Epstein issue of potency by the time lawmakers return to Washington in the new year. But that seems unlikely, since the recent government shutdown, when House members stayed home, acted as a pressure cooker and helped create critical mass for the Republican revolt against Trump on the Epstein issue. And House Speaker Mike Johnson's capacity to continue running interference for the president may be undercut by his loss of control over the restive Republican majority.

It is unclear whether the intensity of feelings among Republicans in the near-unanimous initial push for the release of the Epstein files will be replicated if the administration is seen to be foot-dragging. While only a handful of Republicans would need to join Democrats to censure key officials in the House, the prospect of similar action in the Senate is more remote.

It's possible that a push to punish top administration officials in a midterm election year would unify Republicans, despite Trump's diminished hold over his party.



Sen. Tim Kaine speaks at a news conference in Washington, DC, on December 16, 2025. (*Nathan Posner/Anadolu/Getty Images*)

Democratic Sen. Tim Kaine of Virginia warned Sunday that a push for impeachment or contempt proceedings against senior officials was premature. “We have tools in appropriations bills and other tools to force compliance if somebody is dragging their feet. And I’d rather focus on those tools than get into discussions about contempt and impeachment,” he said on “Meet the Press.”

Raskin said on CNN that he was open to multiple ways to force the administration into compliance, but he warned against “performative” measures that might not deliver results because of the GOP’s control of Congress.

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“So, when people say, ‘Let’s impeach Bondi, let’s impeach Robert F. Kennedy, let’s impeach Trump’ or whomever, I say, ‘Bring me some Republicans and we can have a conversation,’” Raskin said.

Meanwhile, Epstein victims who were robbed of closure by his death and who got a modicum of vindication with the imprisonment of his convicted accomplice Ghislaine Maxwell are doing what they’ve always done — waiting for delayed justice.

“The victims want answers,” Epstein survivor Lisa Phillips told CNN’s Kaitlan Collins on Friday. “We want to know. We want to connect the dots. We want our stories to make sense.”

Phillips said of the Trump Justice Department: “They’re protecting themselves, not the victims.”



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