

FOIA Filed Seeking Records on Trump-Ordered Dismissal of Smithsonian Official, Kim Sajet & Board of Regent's Meeting

Highlights Ongoing Questions About Smithsonian's Legal Status and Public Accountability

WASHINGTON, DC, UNITED STATES, July 7, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Artist, author, and free speech activist Julian Marcus Raven, a long-time litigant in matters involving the Smithsonian

Institution, filed a Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) request today seeking internal communications, board deliberations, and government correspondence regarding the high-profile resignation of Kim Sajet, former director of the National Portrait Gallery.

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It is important that the steps we take ensure a transparent, inclusive and thorough process.”

*Lonnie Bunch III, Smithsonian Secretary, June 22, 2022
www.si.edu*

The FOIA request, sent to the Smithsonian Institution's Office of General Counsel, senior counsel Jennifer B. McIntyre, requests records from 2016 through 2025 and covers topics including President Donald J. Trump's

attempts to remove Sajet, internal deliberations by Smithsonian Secretary Lonnie G. Bunch III, and email communications involving Smithsonian leadership and the Board of Regents—including Chief Justice John Roberts, who serves as Smithsonian Chancellor.

[The FOIA was also copied to Lindsey Halligan](#), Ed Martin at the (DOJ), as well as other Smithsonian Secretary Bunch III, Smithsonian officials and members of the media. The request includes requests for documentation involving Raven's own artwork and lawsuits, including his case *Raven v. Sajet*, No. 17-cv-01240 (TNM).

The FOIA request targets several interconnected themes:

Communications regarding President Trump's removal of Kim Sajet, which occurred in May of 2025, followed by the Board of Regents' silence.

Secretary Bunch's and other officials' internal handling of the situation, including correspondence with Sajet, Deputy Secretary Richard Kurin, and others.

Discussion of Julian Raven and his previously rejected portrait of Donald Trump, a painting that has figured prominently in earlier litigation.

In light of *Raven v. Sajat*, the FOIA cites Judge Trevor McFadden's 2018 ruling that the Smithsonian Institution is "government through and through," thereby binding it to constitutional principles and transparency standards applicable to federal agencies (Case No. 17-cv-1240, U.S. District Court, D.D.C.).

Background and Public Interest

The request comes in the wake of a series of politically charged events involving the Smithsonian Institution:

On January 20, 2025, Donald Trump was inaugurated to a second non-consecutive term as President of the United States.

In February 2025, Trump publicly criticized the Smithsonian, citing "ideological bias" and diversity-related initiatives.

In May 2025, Trump announced the removal of Kim Sajat from her position as Director of the National Portrait Gallery, calling her "highly partisan."

Despite the move, the Board of Regents and its Secretary Lonnie Bunch III in a closed session, declared they he and they are alone responsible for hiring and firing.

The same week Kim Sajat tendered her resignation on June 13th, 2025.

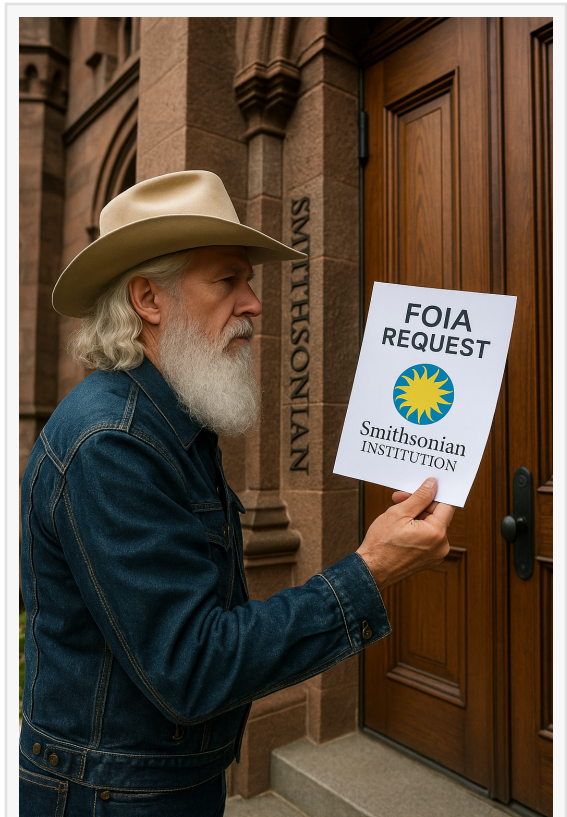
Raven, in response, on June filed an emergency petition on June 20th for rehearing at the U.S. Supreme Court regarding his formerly denied petition for cert that requested clarification on the legal entity status of the Smithsonian Institution as he pursued the vindication of his 1st Amendment free-speech rights.

The situation has prompted renewed media coverage from outlets including The Washington Post, ABC News, The Raw Story, The Guardian, and The Week, where Raven has been mentioned for his legal activism and the controversial portrait that was never accepted by the National Portrait Gallery.

Legal, Policy, and Ethical Implications

The FOIA request may shine light on lingering questions about:

The Smithsonian Institution's legal entity status



Artist FOIA Smithsonian

How \$700 Million of tax payer appropriations influence a Smithsonian FOIA request

Whether the Board of Regents took formal action or gave informal advice regarding Sajat's status after the President's directive.

The extent of political activity and advocacy within the Smithsonian leadership.

Next Steps and Public Access to Board of Regent's meetings that for now are closed to the public

A full copy of the FOIA request is available upon request or can be seen at www.smithsoninstitution.com/litigation

Raven has indicated that he is prepared to pursue litigation under 5 U.S.C. § 552(a)(4)(B) if the Smithsonian fails to respond

Julian Raven

Julian Raven Artist

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