Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

June 17, 2026

Marco Rubio
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
Washington, D.C. 20528

Todd Blanche
Acting Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
Washington, D.C. 20530

Scott Bessent
Secretary of the Treasury
U.S. Department of the Treasury
Washington, D.C. 20220

Secretary Rubio, Acting Attorney General Blanche, and Secretary Bessent:

We write with grave concern about the brazen interference of senior U.S. officials, including President Trump, in Colombia's presidential election. This interference involves the full-throated endorsement of Abelardo de la Espriella, a candidate with a profoundly troubling record that appears to run counter to U.S. interests and potentially to U.S. laws.[1] Rather than campaigning for him, our government should be examining his ties to a terrorist-designated organization and an accused money launderer, and possible financial improprieties related to Florida-based companies and real estate transactions.

President Trump and multiple Republican Members of Congress have openly endorsed Mr. De la Espriella.[2] President Trump has also implied that if Mr. De la Espriella loses, Colombia may lose the support of the United States, its most important trade and security partner.[3] This direct interference by U.S. officials in another country's democratic elections is inconsistent with longstanding principles of national sovereignty and non-interference, as well as international law.

This interference is particularly alarming given Mr. De la Espriella's background. A criminal defense lawyer and businessman, he has come under scrutiny over the source of his fortune and his links to Colombian clients, including Alex Saab, an ultra-wealthy fixer for Nicolás Maduro

---

1 Camila Osorio and María Martín, "Abelardo de la Espriella, el abogado del diablo que quiere ser presidente de Colombia," *El País*, May 31, 2026, https://elpais.com/america-colombia/elecciones-presidenciales/2026-05-31/abelardo-de-la-espriella-abogado-del-diablo-que-quiere-ser-presidente-de-colombia.html

2 Annie Correal, "Trump Endorses Colombia's De la Espriella," *The New York Times*, June 2, 2026, https://www.nytimes.com/2026/06/02/world/americas/trump-endorses-colombia-de-la-espriella.html; Pedro Camacho, "Florida Rep. Salazar Backs Conservative Candidate in Sunday's Colombian Election: 'Cannot Afford Another Petrismo Disaster,'" *Latin Times*, May 28, 2026, https://www.latintimes.com/florida-rep-salazar-backs-conservative-candidate-sundays-colombian-election-cannot-afford-597642; Daniel Castropé, "Congresistas del sur de la Florida aplauden el triunfo de De la Espriella en Colombia," *Diario Las Américas*, June 1, 2026, https://www.diariolasamericas.com/florida/congresistas-del-sur-la-florida-aplauden-el-triunfo-de-la-espriella-colombia-n5396386

3 Juan David Cano, "Donald Trump vuelve a respaldar a Abelardo de la Espriella y promete todo el apoyo de Estados Unidos si gana la Presidencia," *Cambio Colombia*, June 10, 2026, https://cambiocolombia.com/poder/articulo/2026/6/donald-trump-vuelve-a-respaldar-a-abelardo-de-la-espriella-y-promete-todo-el-apoyo-de-estados-unidos-si-gana-la-presidencia

who is currently under federal criminal indictment in the Southern District of Florida for allegedly laundering millions of dollars.[4]

Mr. De la Espriella has also maintained close relations with multiple leaders from the paramilitary drug-trafficking organization known as the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC).[5] The AUC, which the U.S. government designated as a foreign terrorist organization in 2001, was responsible for numerous massacres, assassinations and forced disappearances, as well as torture, forced displacement, sexual violence, collusion with state/security and political actors, and large-scale drug trafficking to the U.S. and other countries.[6]

Along with providing legal counsel to a variety of paramilitary leaders, Mr. De la Espriella has acted as an outspoken public advocate for their interests.[7] He founded and led an organization that was reportedly financed by the AUC to broaden its social and political influence, campaigned to block the extradition of paramilitary leaders to the U.S. where they were facing drug-trafficking charges, and pressured the Colombian government and congress to push for pardons for AUC leaders in order to promote impunity for paramilitary crimes.[8]

He has also praised paramilitary leaders and opposed the implementation of the historic 2016 peace agreement, including institutions designed to provide a measure of justice for the thousands of innocent victims who were forcibly disappeared and killed by the Colombian military.[9]

There are also significant questions about the sources of Mr. De la Espriella's vast fortune. Several of his former clients have accused him of having pocketed funds allegedly intended to be

---

4 U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Florida, *United States v. Alex Nain Saab Moran et al.*, No. 26-CR-20020-WILLIAMS/LETT, Indictment, Jan. 14, 2026, https://www.justice.gov/opa/media/1441106/dl

5 Jaime Flórez, "La tierra de un narcoparamilitar que pasó a manos de Abelardo de la Espriella," *Vorágine*, Feb. 15, 2026, https://voragine.co/historias/investigacion/la-tierra-de-un-narcoparamilitar-que-paso-a-manos-de-abelardo-de-la-espriella/

6 U.S. Department of State, "Designation of the AUC as a Foreign Terrorist Organization," Statement by Secretary Colin L. Powell, Sept. 10, 2001, https://2001-2009.state.gov/secretary/former/powell/remarks/2001/4852.htm

7 Nicolás Torres, "Este es Abelardo de la Espriella: el polémico abogado que busca la Presidencia en 2026 como outsider," *El Espectador*, April 24, 2026, https://www.elespectador.com/politica/elecciones-colombia-2026/este-es-el-perfil-de-abelardo-de-la-espriella-abogado-con-polemicas-que-busca-la-presidencia-en-2026-como-outsider/

8 Comisión de la Verdad de Colombia, *Partidos políticos y paramilitarismo*: "el Estado de Autodefensa", consultoría de Juan Diego Restrepo E., 2022, https://www.comisiondelaverdad.co/sites/default/files/descargables/2022-08/Caso%20Parapolitica.pdf; Camila Osorio and María Martín, "Abelardo de la Espriella, el abogado del diablo que quiere ser presidente de Colombia," *El País*, May 31, 2026, https://elpais.com/america-colombia/elecciones-presidenciales/2026-05-31/abelardo-de-la-espriella-abogado-del-diablo-que-quiere-ser-presidente-de-colombia.html; Álvaro Uribe no le dijo 'ladroncito' a Abelardo de la Espriella en 2012," *La Silla Vacía*, November 27, 2025, https://www.lasillavacia.com/detector-de-mentiras/falso/alvaro-uribe-no-le-dijo-ladroncito-a-abelardo-de-la-espriella-en-2012/; Supreme Court of Colombia, Criminal Cassation Chamber, *Juan Pablo Sánchez Morales*, Case No. 32.436, Judgment of Oct. 12, 2011 (discussing the structure and activities of the United Self-Defense Forces of Colombia (AUC) and related criminal conduct), https://www.ambitojuridico.com/sites/default/files/BancoMedios/Archivos/sent-32436-11.doc; Ana María Cuesta, "Firmes por la plata: Abelardo de la Espriella a través de sus clientes," *Cambio Colombia*, Dec. 7, 2025, https://cambiocolombia.com/poder/articulo/2025/12/firmes-por-la-plata-abelardo-de-la-espriella-a-traves-de-sus-clientes

9 Gustavo Gómez, interview with Abelardo de la Espriella, "Mancuso dio una lucha que hemos debido dar todos los cordobeses," *Semana*, September 26, 2008, https://www.semana.com/nacion/articulo/mancuso-dio-lucha-hemos-debido-dar-todos-cordobeses/95594-3/; ColombiaOne, "Colombia Election: De la Espriella and Valencia Clash over 2016 Peace Deal," May 6, 2026, https://colombiaone.com/2026/05/06/colombia-election-de-la-espriella-and-valencia-clash-over-2016-peace-deal/; Cindy A. Morales Castillo, "Otra vez candidatos prometen 'acabar' la JEP, pero esta vez afecta alianza entre Paloma Valencia y Juan Daniel Oviedo," *El Espectador*, March 10, 2026, https://www.elespectador.com/colombia-20/jep-y-desaparecidos/elecciones-paloma-valencia-y-abelardo-de-la-espriella-prometen-acabar-jep-y-aleja-vicepresidencia-de-juan-daniel-oviedo/

used for bribing key judicial actors, and some of his associates have been credibly implicated in wire fraud.[10] Moreover, he and his spouse are connected to at least 14 Florida-based apparent shell companies and a number of multi-million-dollar Florida real estate purchases involving funds whose source is not clear.[11] There is evidence that at least one of these transactions may have been funded in part by Mr. Saab, who is currently under indictment for money laundering.[12]

It is possible that Mr. De la Espriella's U.S.-based assets were legally acquired, but his significant ties to Mr. Saab and paramilitary figures, suspicious transactions involving the possible flow of illicit funds into the U.S., and other credible allegations of criminal conduct warrant significant scrutiny and investigation by our government. We urge you to review these matters within your respective jurisdictions, investigate the sources of the funds used to finance Mr. De la Espriella's investments in the United States, and call on President Trump to stop interfering in another country's democratic election on behalf of an individual who may pose a threat to U.S. interests. Our government must respect, not undermine, the democracy and sovereignty of our neighbors in the region.

Sincerely,

Jesús G. "Chuy" García
Member of Congress

Greg Casar
Member of Congress

10 Cecilia Orozco Tascón, "De la Espriella: indicios preocupantes," *El Espectador*, Apr. 1, 2026, https://www.elespectador.com/opinion/columnistas/cecilia-orozco-tascon/de-la-espriella-indicios-preocupantes/; Cuestión Pública, "¿Ladrón que roba ladrón? Al parecer, Abelardo De La Espriella se chupó la plata de otra clienta," March 27, 2026, https://cuestionpublica.com/ladron-que-roba-ladron-al-parecer-abelardo-de-la-espriella-se-chupo-la-plata-de-otra-clienta/; Gerardo Reyes, "Socio de candidato presidencial colombiano Abelardo de la Espriella vinculado por EEUU a un caso de fraude a narcotraficantes," *Univision Noticias*, Apr. 18, 2026, https://www.univision.com/noticias/america-latina/socio-de-candidato-presidencial-colombiano-abelardo-de-la-espriella-vinculado-por-eeuu-a-un-caso-de-fraude-a-narcotraficantes; Gerardo Reyes, "Fiscalía de EE.UU. deberá entregar el historial completo de un exinformante federal que fue asistente legal en Miami del candidato presidencial Abelardo de la Espriella," *Univision*, June 12, 2026 https://www.univision.com/noticias/estados-unidos/fiscalia-de-ee-uu-debera-entregar-el-historial-completo-de-un-exinformante-federal-que-fue-asistente-legal-en-miami-del-candidato-presidencial-abelardo-de-la-espriella

11 Jineth Prieto and Ana León, "El universo empresarial de la Espriella: socios cuestionados, saldos en rojo y bienes raíces," *La Silla Vacía*, Jan. 13, 2026, https://www.lasillavacia.com/silla-nacional/el-universo-empresarial-de-la-espriella-socios-cuestionados-saldos-en-rojo-y-bienes-raices/; El negocio inmobiliario que une a Abelardo de la Espriella con Luis Carlos Vélez," *Radio Nacional de Colombia*, June 12, 2026, https://www.radionacional.co/actualidad/el-negocio-inmobiliario-que-une-abelardo-de-la-espriella-con-luis-carlos-velez; Daniel Castropé, "Congresistas del sur de la Florida aplauden el triunfo de De la Espriella en Colombia," *Diario Las Américas*, June 1, 2026, https://www.diariolasamericas.com/florida/congresistas-del-sur-la-florida-aplauden-el-triunfo-de-la-espriella-colombia-n5396386

12 Daniel Coronell, "Los giros de Alex Saab," *CAMBIO* (Los Danieles), May 24, 2026, https://cambiocolombia.com/los-danieles/articulo/2026/5/los-giros-de-alex-saab

Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress

Delia C. Ramirez
Member of Congress

Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress

Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress

Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress

Summer L. Lee
Member of Congress

Maxwell Alejandro Frost
Member of Congress

Jonathan L. Jackson
Member of Congress

Mike Quigley
Member of Congress