

The Virgin Islands Consortium

U.S. Justice Department Faces Lawsuit Over Epstein Files Redactions, Missing Records

The lawsuit claims the Justice Department missed the disclosure deadline, withheld records, and heavily redacted others, while also failing to protect some alleged victims' identities in released Epstein-related files.

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Jeffrey Epstein.

Journalist and legal analyst Katie Phang has sued Acting Attorney General Todd Blanche in federal court, accusing the Justice Department of failing to fully comply with the Epstein Files Transparency Act and asking a judge to order the release of additional

records tied to Jeffrey Epstein and his network. The lawsuit arrives as the Justice Department is already facing scrutiny over how it handled the release of more than 3 million pages of Epstein-related material, including criticism over redactions and the exposure of alleged victims' personal information.

According to the complaint, filed Monday in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, Phang alleges that the Justice Department missed the law's deadline, improperly withheld records, and made redactions that were either incomplete or unexplained. The suit names Phang in his official capacity and seeks court intervention to compel what the complaint describes as full compliance with the 2025 transparency law.

The complaint argues that the law required the release of all covered records within 30 days of enactment, setting a deadline of Dec. 19, 2025. Phang's filing alleges that the department released only a fraction of the expected material by that date, then continued making later disclosures into early 2026. It further alleges that the department both over-redacted some records and failed to adequately protect victims in others.

Among the most serious allegations in the complaint are claims that the department released nude photographs of young women and girls and identified victims, including minors, without their consent, while also heavily redacting other records without providing the explanations that the law required. The lawsuit also alleges that some documents tied to Donald Trump were withheld, retracted, or redacted without lawful justification. Those are allegations made in the complaint, and no court has yet ruled on their merits.

Phang's complaint raises four legal claims, all built around the central argument that the Justice Department violated the law and should be ordered to comply. According to the filing, those claims include that the department acted contrary to law under the Administrative Procedure Act, acted arbitrarily and capriciously, exceeded its authority, and should be subject to a declaratory judgment. The complaint also asks the court to consider appointing a special master to review withheld or redacted material.

The broader backdrop to the suit is the continuing fallout over the federal government's handling of the Epstein files release. On April 23, the Justice Department's Office of Inspector General announced it would audit the department's compliance with the Epstein Files Transparency Act. That review is expected to examine how records were identified, redacted, and released, after bipartisan criticism over both the exposure of alleged victims and concerns that some names may have been redacted too heavily.

Although the case was filed in Washington, its implications are national. The case could test how far courts are willing to go in forcing agency compliance with a disclosure law passed specifically to open government files tied to Epstein. It also places renewed attention on whether the Justice Department's release process followed the statute's deadline and redaction limits, or whether the law was only partially carried out.

For now, the lawsuit represents a new legal front in the long-running battle over access to Epstein-related records.