

First, we found that several FBI employees who played critical roles in the investigation sent political messages—some of which related directly to the Midyear investigation—that created the appearance of bias and thereby raised questions about the objectivity and thoroughness of the Midyear investigation. Even more seriously, text messages between Strzok and Page pertaining to the Russia investigation, particularly a text message from Strzok on August 8 stating “No. No he’s not. We’ll stop it.” in response to a Page text “[Trump’s] not ever going to become president, right? Right?!” are not only indicative of a biased state of mind but imply a willingness to take official action to impact a presidential candidate’s electoral prospects. This is antithetical to the core values of the FBI and the Department of Justice. While we did not find documentary or testimonial evidence that improper considerations, including political bias, directly affected the specific investigative actions we reviewed in Chapter Five, the conduct by these employees cast a cloud over the entire FBI investigation and sowed doubt about the FBI’s work on, and its handling of, the Midyear investigation. It also called into question Strzok’s failure in October 2016 to follow up on the Midyear-related investigative lead discovered on the Weiner laptop. The damage caused by these employees’ actions extends far beyond the scope of the Midyear investigation and goes to the heart of the FBI’s reputation for neutral factfinding and political independence.