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Based on a December 28, 2017 memorandum obtained by the Washington Post, the Department of the Interior (DOI) is now mandating review by a political appointee for all grants and cooperative agreements with an individual or aggregate award of at least \$50,000 to a nonprofit organization that can legally engage in advocacy or to an institution of higher education, and for all grants or cooperative agreements of over \$100,000. In the memo, Scott Cameron, DOI's principal deputy assistant secretary for policy, management, and budget, instructed other assistant secretaries and heads of bureaus and offices to submit qualifying grants and agreements to one of his senior advisors for approval. The memo also states that financial decisions will promote the Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke's "Top Ten Priorities" listed in an attachment.

A DOI spokeswoman told the Washington Post that political appointees have been reviewing grants and cooperative agreements totaling at least \$100,000 since April 2017, and an Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) memorandum obtained by E&E News this past summer directed all grant solicitations to the agency to be reviewed by John Konkus, the deputy associate administrator in EPA's Office of Public Affairs, before they are posted online and there is any external engagement relating to the solicitation. Concerned about maintaining the scientific integrity, transparency, and accountability of the grant review process, the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine released a statement on January 16 indicating that they "view any political review of scientific proposals as inappropriate, as it gives the appearance of political interference in science."

Sources: E&E News; Department of the Interior; National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine; Washington Post
