

The Department of Justice Grift Store

OVERVIEW

The Department of Justice's [grift store](#) for friends and supporters of the president, laying a solid foundation for settlement payouts, should be an affront to every taxpayer in America.

The following Action Alert provides a detailed factual background about ways that the Department of Justice is using the extraordinary powers and financial resources of the federal government to pardon friends and financial supporters of the administration, waive retribution and penalty payments owed, and use taxpayer dollars to settle dubious claims against the government.

This is a moment to recognize the implications for accountability, fairness, and the rule of law. We urge you to use the information provided to speak out with clarity against this corruption of justice. In particular, we ask that you voice your opposition to the conflict-ridden settlement discussions between the President and his DOJ that could result in a multi-billion-dollar payment of public funds directly to the President. This is especially time sensitive, so please act now.

THE FACTS

Presidential Profiteering Amid Significant Conflicts of Interest

In January, the President, his two sons, and The Trump Organization [filed a lawsuit](#) against the Treasury Department and Internal Revenue Service, both led by Trump appointees, for the leak of Trump-related tax records to the media. The [complaint](#) sought at least 10 billion dollars in damages.

What is extraordinary about this lawsuit, beyond the staggering amount of damages sought, is the **unprecedented conflict of interest at its core:**

both sides of the litigation are effectively controlled by the same person, President Trump.

Recent [reporting](#) suggested this case may be settled before a judge had a chance to evaluate the merits. The [President, with the DOJ's consent](#) had sought and was granted an extension of a key deadline on the basis that **the parties were engaging in discussions to resolve the matter**. The [judge then ordered](#) both the President's personal attorneys and the DOJ to explain whether there was a genuine controversy as the President essentially controls the DOJ. The judge also appointed amici to further advise the court about its jurisdiction.

In a flagrant disregard for the court process and its legitimate inquiry into the myriad conflicts of interest, the President and the DOJ instead chose to [dismiss the case](#) with prejudice and create a \$1.776 billion fund where American taxpayers will be reimbursing those that this administration thinks were unfairly targeted. It is not difficult to guess who will be included in this largesse, in light of the pardons and other claims described in this Action Alert.

The irony of the fund amount should be lost on no one and perfectly fits this administration's ability to monetize even a sacred date in history.

The President previously [acknowledged](#) his conflict of interest: "But isn't that a strange position to be in," the President said at a rally when talking about this litigation, "I've gotta make a deal. I negotiate with myself." Indeed, he did.

As president, Trump oversees the DOJ and has [appointed his own former lawyers to key senior leadership roles within the Department](#), including Todd Blanche, who served as the Deputy Attorney General under Pamela Bondi and now serves as the Acting Attorney General. Blanche [stated during his confirmation hearing](#) that his "attorney-client relationship with President Trump remains."

Blanche, [the first Acting Attorney General in modern history](#) to have been the president's personal criminal defense lawyer, regularly demonstrates full allegiance to the President. For example, during a recent press conference, [Blanche said](#) that if the President chose not to nominate him as Attorney General and asked him to leave DOJ, his response would be to thank the President and tell him, "I love you, sir,"

The Acting Attorney General [also stated](#) that the President has both a "right" and a "duty" to influence federal investigations, including the investigations of the president's political enemies who the president "believes should be investigated."

This is not the President's only lawsuit seeking taxpayer money from the government he controls. He is also [pursuing \\$230 million](#) from DOJ related to prior investigations, including the search for classified documents at Mar-a-Lago and the investigation into Russia's involvement in the 2016 presidential campaign. The President's administrative filing was part of a claims process that is often a [precursor to a lawsuit](#).

At the same time, DOJ has failed to turn over records relating to these claims, prompting [a lawsuit seeking records](#) that might show whether the President *already* profited personally from this litigation.

Together, these lawsuits represent a direct attempt to convert presidential power into personal profit, raising questions about abuse of office, misuse of taxpayer funds, and the erosion of basic conflict-of-interest norms.

If the DOJ resolves this case by settling for even a fraction of the billions sought, it will validate its disdain of the tax-paying public and its contempt for conflict-of-interest requirements.

Pardons, Payouts, and Exonerations

One independent tracking source found that the President's record of granting pardons and commutations during his two terms is [without modern precedent](#). A New York Times editorial asserted that he has created a [veritable pardon industry](#).

According to a document submitted to a House Judiciary Committee hearing record, the President has [used his pardon power](#) to **protect wealthy allies and political supporters from accountability**, and now he and his administration are facilitating a pathway for them to collect taxpayer dollars as recompense.

Reports indicate that [at least a dozen of those pardoned](#) have since been charged with other serious crimes including child molestation, assault, and murder plots.

At least [27 committed other crimes prior to their pardons](#), demonstrating that these blanket pardons were granted without individual review of each case, as is historically done, but as an **overall effort to rewrite the history of January 6**.

What begins with pardons and commutations does not necessarily end there. **Increasingly, these acts of clemency are being followed by**

efforts to erase records, recover penalties, and shift financial consequences onto the public.

The following illustrates how this pattern is emerging.

January 6 Defendants & Fake Electors

The January 6, 2021, Capitol riot followed a rally where Trump repeated his false claims that he won the 2020 election.

In the aftermath, the Justice Department charged 1,575 people in connection with the attack. Under President Trump, nearly all have been pardoned and their cases dismissed. In many cases **the pardons erased the attackers' obligation to pay restitution for the millions of dollars in damages they caused during the attack on the Capitol.**

Even some of the leaders of the Proud Boys and Oath Keepers may soon see their convictions erased, as the DOJ has moved to vacate their convictions for seditious conspiracy. The U.S. attorney in D.C. asked an appeals court to vacate the convictions and then stated she will move to dismiss all the underlying charges, an action that would completely clear these defendants for any role in the riots.

President Trump also issued sweeping pardons to the named fake electors, shielding them from potential federal liability arising from their efforts to subvert the certification of President Biden's 2020 election, even though most of the ongoing cases against them were at the state level.

In some cases, those pardoned sued to recover financial losses from the taxpayers, seeking to shift the cost of their unlawful conduct to the public.

Many filed suit asking that taxpayers refund the financial penalties they paid upon conviction.

Others are suing the federal government for tens of millions of dollars for alleged physical and emotional injuries they claim they suffered resulting from law enforcement actions. Compounding this injustice, **none** of the more than 140 police officers injured in the Capitol siege have received any compensation or reparations for their losses.

White Collar Criminals

Trump's clemency largesse also extends to wealthy financial allies and donors. In cases involving financial misconduct, pardons have eliminated significant monetary penalties and restitution obligations.

Over half of [the 88 individual pardons](#) granted in the first year of his second term were for white-collar offenses, with money laundering, bank fraud, and wire fraud among the most common.

[This includes](#) a woman whose sentence for fraud he previously commuted in 2021; she was again convicted on an unrelated fraud charge in 2024 and was pardoned for the new offense in January 2026.

Also pardoned in early 2026 were 3 individuals who had pleaded guilty in a political corruption case, including a man whose daughter [gave millions to a Trump-backed super PAC](#).

Fines, which are owed to the government, and restitution, which is owed to victims, are intended to make up for the harm caused by crime.

In the [four years of his first term](#), Trump's pardons nullified convictions that resulted in more than \$276 million in fines and restitution. By comparison with the administrations that preceded and succeeded him, Obama's pardon recipients owed \$2.5 million in total, while Biden's recipients owed just under \$700,000.

In the first year of his second term, [defendants pardoned by the President had been ordered to pay](#) more than **\$298 million in fines and restitution**. It is estimated that Trump's first and second terms clemency actions [have erased more than \\$1.3 billion](#) in court-ordered restitution and financial penalties.

In several cases, these pardons have coincided with significant financial contributions linked to political or affiliated fundraising, for example: [Trevor Milton](#), who donated \$1.8 million to Trump's reelection fund and whose pardon [eliminated \\$660 million of restitution obligations](#); [Julio Herrera Velutini](#), whose daughter donated \$3.5 million to a Trump-supporting super PAC; [Imaad Shah Zuberi](#), who had previously donated more than \$1.1 million to various committees associated with the President and his party; and [Changpeng Zhao](#), who brokered a \$2 billion investment in Eric and Donald Trump Jr.'s cryptocurrency business.

Treatment of 2016 Campaign Advisers

The Michael Flynn case is a clear illustration of how the DOJ Gift Store operates to provide taxpayer dollars to those who have previously been pardoned via taxpayer-funded settlements of litigation (that can be a lawsuit of dubious merit).

Former 2016 campaign advisor and then National Security Advisor [Michael Flynn](#) resigned after only weeks in the job as a result of his

misleading senior officials about his contacts with Russia's ambassador. **Flynn pleaded guilty for making false statements to the FBI, but his subsequent pardon by President Trump resulted in a dismissal of the case.**

Not satisfied with the pardon and dismissal, Flynn sued the government claiming malicious prosecution. His lawsuit was thrown out for failure to allege the most basic facts needed to support his allegation.

The DOJ, which had previously been successfully fighting the case, reversed course under the Trump administration, paying a reported \$1.25 million taxpayer funded settlement to Flynn. And more recently, the government submitted a court filing, asserting it **had reached yet another settlement in principle with Flynn on a different claim.**

Although the Flynn payout was one of former Attorney General Pam Bondi's final acts, it is relevant to note credible reporting that she was fired because she was not successful enough in weaponizing DOJ against this administration's enemies.

In yet another pardon-to-payout example, the DOJ also reportedly paid \$1.25 million to former 2016 Trump campaign adviser, Carter Page, for his claims against the government relating to the Russia investigation, notwithstanding that lower courts had dismissed Page's lawsuit and an appeal was pending.

These outcomes raise critical questions about the independence of the institutions and individuals involved.

Bypassing DOJ's Established Pardon Rules and Process

These pardons are being issued amid evidence that the Justice Department's longstanding standards and review procedures for clemency are being disregarded.

For decades, the Office of the Pardon Attorney followed established regulations and internal practices designed to ensure that clemency decisions are carefully vetted and grounded in evidence of rehabilitation and accountability.

The pardon review process also included consultation with the U.S. Attorney's Offices, judges, and victims and a thorough background investigation through the FBI to assess the applicant's conduct, credibility, and suitability for relief.

This is no longer the case. The leader of the Office of the Pardon Attorney was terminated, and it is now led by former interim U. S. Attorney Ed Martin. Mr. Martin is currently the subject of disciplinary proceedings brought by the District of Columbia Office of Disciplinary Counsel [for alleged violations](#) of ethics requirements.

Without adherence to the safeguards that have existed for years, clemency decisions cannot be guided by consistent standards, independent review, or traditional considerations of fairness and accountability.

Unequal Access to Justice and Compensation

These examples of wealthy and well-connected individuals who have had their convictions overturned, restitution payment obligations eliminated, and, in some cases, profited from questionable settlements with the government at the taxpayer's expense are very different from what most others experience in the criminal justice system. Too often, [wrongfully convicted](#) individuals spend years, sometimes decades, fighting to prove their innocence. Even after exoneration, [many struggle](#) to obtain compensation or accountability from the government that the law allows. Consider, for example, the circumstances of [a New Jersey man](#) who spent nearly 30 years trying to prove he was innocent of a rape **only to then be denied compensation for his wrongful imprisonment because the DNA evidence proving his innocence was not given to him until after the filing deadline for compensation.**

The same administration that [opposes accountability mechanisms for wrongful imprisonment](#) is creating a payout pipeline for politically or personally connected allies.

By contrast, politically connected allies appear positioned to receive pardons, favorable treatment, settlements, or financial relief with unusual speed and support from the very institutions meant to ensure impartial justice.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

As noted in the Overview, this is a moment to recognize the implications for accountability, fairness, and the rule of law. If outcomes in the criminal justice system appear to hinge on access, wealth, or political loyalty, public confidence in the justice system erodes. That's precisely when public engagement matters most. Silence allows for normalization.

No one person alone can change this, but united, we can make a tremendous difference. We all have an obligation to speak out with clarity against this corruption of justice.

And we must also be clear in our opposition to the conflict-ridden settlement discussions between the President and his DOJ, opposing any “negotiated” resolution of the President’s claims against the government he controls.

Here are ways to respond immediately, using the facts provided in this Action Alert as a basis for your efforts.

- **Write an opinion article or letter to the editor:** Focus on a few clear arguments, for example:
 - conflict of interest
 - unequal treatment
 - misuse of taxpayer dollars

And be sure to support your arguments with specific examples. Local outlets are often more accessible and widely read by decision-makers. By way of example, the following is an opinion article by LDAD’s Executive Director on this topic: [The Justice Department’s Appalling Grift Store](#).

- **Use social media and LinkedIn strategically:** Share concise, fact-based posts that link to credible reporting. Frame the issue in terms of broader principles such as fairness, precedent, and institutional integrity. You can borrow from the language in this document and LDAD’s other posts for examples.
- **Engage your community:** Research indicates that the public expects accountability, fairness, and honesty from their leaders. Gather people in your community or take advantage of your membership in local clubs or associations to speak out on these issues. Emphasize why this is wrong, unprecedented, and directly harms the taxpaying public. Also, consider an emphasis on those issues that will appeal directly to your community, such as:
 - How these actions demonstrate that government is not accountable.
 - Emphasize the lack of candor and honesty in the DOJ’s approach.
 - Connect threats to the rule of law to the lives of your neighbors, using examples and language that resonates.
- **Contact your elected officials:** Urge them to conduct oversight of presidential lawsuits and support legislation that would prohibit sitting Presidents and Vice Presidents from receiving settlement payments

from the federal government, temporarily halt the filing and adjudication of any current claims, limit the DOJ's ability to pay damages to a sitting President or Vice President, and establish safeguards governing federal lawsuits in which a President or Vice President seeks monetary damages. [As a volunteer for a nonprofit organization, you may not support a particular legislative proposal, but you may educate elected officials about specific concerns and solutions to problems.] Your communication could, for example, address these points:

- How these actions demonstrate that government is not accountable.
 - Emphasize the lack of candor and honesty in the DOJ's approach.
 - Connect threats to the rule of law to the lives of your neighbors, using examples and language that resonates.
- If you are a lawyer, **contact your state, local, and/or affinity bar** association and ask that they speak out against such blatant conflicts of interest that arise when the DOJ engages in questionable settlements with politically connected individuals at taxpayer expense. Bar associations should publicly defend prosecutorial independence, conflict of interest standards, and equal justice under law as core principles of our profession and the rule of law.

Americans pay taxes with the understanding that their money will be used to fund essential functions on behalf of the public. DOJ settlements that favor the administration's political allies, supporters, and the President's own family represent a profound abuse of that responsibility and a misuse of public resources.

Public confidence in the justice system depends on the principle that no individual, regardless of wealth, office, or political loyalty, is entitled to preferential treatment at public expense.