DONALD TRUMP · OCTOBER 8, 2026

Trump administration corruption allegations, investigations and ethics controversies, January 2025 – October 2026

Catalogue of corruption allegations, probes, dropped and pursued prosecutions, court rulings and ethics controversies around Trump and his second administration to 8 Oct 2026, separating documented actions from allegations. Some paywalled items rest on headlines only.

32 min read · 16 sources · Updated Oct 8, 2026

2026 | Epstein files | Justice Department | World Liberty Financial | anti-weaponization fund | corruption allegations | ethics | pardons

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Scope, sources and how to read this catalogue

This is a catalogue of corruption allegations, investigations, prosecutions and ethics controversies tied to Donald Trump, his family businesses and his second administration, covering 20 January 2025 to 8 October 2026. It also covers Trump's own legal cases that remain live, because they overlap with the same questions of power and self-interest. It does not try to settle guilt. Most items below are allegations, watchdog findings or reported conflicts of interest. Very few are criminal charges against administration officials, and none is a criminal charge against Trump in this term.

$1.4–2.2bn	14,000+	$1.776bn	$59.5M	~$1bn
Crypto-linked income in Trump's disclosures	Stock trades in first year (Warren, from disclosures)	Anti-weaponization fund, since abandoned	Foreign licensing income, 2025 (+71%)	Planned federal spend on ballroom and White House building (WaPo, Aug 2026)

How the evidence is graded

- **Documented**: court rulings, official orders, agency announcements, signed laws (for example the OCC's conditional charter approval, Judge Hellerstein's ruling, Blanche's order ending the fund).
- **Reported**: investigative journalism relying on documents or sources, which the White House often disputes.
- **Alleged**: claims by watchdog groups, members of Congress or analysts, where the underlying facts may be real but the characterisation as "corruption" is contested.

The main synthesis sources are American Oversight, a watchdog that litigates and files records requests against the administration [1], and Wikipedia's running articles on corruption allegations and insider trading [2] [4]. Both are advocacy-adjacent or crowd-edited and I have used them for the list of events and for figures they attribute to named outlets, preferring primary reporting where I could read it. I could not open several paywalled pieces (Reuters, the New York Times, CBS), so some facts below rest on a single secondary account, and I say so where it matters.

The administration's position

The White House has consistently denied conflicts of interest. A spokeswoman described the World Liberty deals as involving "no conflicts of interest" [5]. The administration says Trump is not involved in day-to-day operations of the family company, and criticism is the product of "years of lies and false accusations" [2]. Asked about doing deals while in office, Trump reportedly said it was "Because I found out that nobody cared" [2]. Federal conflict-of-interest law also largely exempts the president and vice president, which is why many of these controversies are about norms and the emoluments clause, not statutes [2] [4].

Crypto and the Trump family businesses

The largest single source of alleged conflict is the family's crypto business. Trump's financial disclosures showed crypto-linked income of **$1.4 billion to $2.2 billion**, including the TRUMP memecoin and World Liberty Financial (WLFI) [7].

World Liberty Financial and the Abu Dhabi stake

WLFI was launched in September 2024 by Trump family members and the Witkoff family, among others, and the family receives 75% of net proceeds from WLFI token sales [5]. Key allegations:

- **UAE stake.** Four days before the January 2025 inauguration, representatives of Sheikh Tahnoun bin Zayed Al Nahyan signed a deal to buy **49% of the company for $500 million**, with Eric Trump signing. Of the first $250 million instalment, $187 million went to Trump

family entities[5]. The Wall Street Journal disclosed the deal in February 2026 and called it unprecedented for a foreign government official to take such a stake in an incoming president's company[5]. A World Liberty spokesman said Trump and Steve Witkoff were not involved[5].

- **Chips.** The Trump administration subsequently approved a plan to give a UAE firm hundreds of thousands of advanced computer chips despite national-security concerns, and legal experts called the UAE deal a potential emoluments violation[5]. The causal link is inferred by critics, not established.
- **Justin Sun.** Sun invested $30 million after Trump took office, and an SEC investigation into him was later dropped[5].
- **Changpeng Zhao.** Trump pardoned the Binance founder in 2025, after Binance had helped enrich World Liberty[5].
- **Scale.** By December 2025 the Trumps had reportedly made about $1 billion in proceeds while holding $3 billion of unsold tokens[5].

The bank charter

On **14 August 2026** the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency granted preliminary conditional approval for World Liberty Trust Co., a national trust bank to issue and custody the USD1 stablecoin. It is expected to be chaired by Zach Witkoff, and Eric Trump's DT Marks SC LLC is among passive indirect investors[6]. The bank cannot make loans, take deposits or carry FDIC insurance, and final approval requires anti-money-laundering compliance[6]. CREW's Donald Sherman called it "the most egregious example to date of the President's businesses profiting from his government job," and Senator Elizabeth Warren and colleagues introduced the Ending Presidential Corruption in Banking Act, which the author of the analysis I read thought unlikely to advance[6]. The same week FinCEN made permanent the end of beneficial-ownership reporting for domestic entities, which anti-corruption analysts say weakens a transparency tool[6].

CLARITY Act concession

In mid-September 2026 Senate Republicans released final text of the CLARITY Act market-structure bill, with an ethics package Trump agreed to after months of deadlock. Officials and spouses would have to divest significant crypto holdings or use a blind trust, could not issue or sponsor digital assets, and state attorneys general could enforce the rules[7]. Sponsor Cynthia Lummis said Trump "voluntarily agreed." The summary I read does not say whether the rules apply to the president himself, and a cloture vote needing 60 votes was still pending[7]. Treat the final scope as unverified.

Foreign licensing, Kushner and others

CNBC reported in August 2026 that Trump's foreign licensing business made more than **$59.5 million**, up 71% on 2024 and nearly tenfold on 2023, with much coming from companies seeking US investment, approvals or goodwill[2]. Trump did not divest or use an independent trustee; shares of Truth Social sit in a trust whose trustee is his eldest son and whose sole beneficiary is Trump[2]. Jared Kushner and Steve Witkoff act as envoys while Kushner's Affinity Partners seeks Gulf investment, and Kushner's Albanian resort provoked protests dubbed the "Flamingo Revolution"[2]. Kushner told 60 Minutes that what critics call conflicts, "Steve and I call experience

and trusted relationships”[2]. Trump said in June 2026 that his children had “inside information” when trading, while denying illegal conduct[4].

Chronology at a glance

The pattern is a first year of norm-breaking and dropped cases, a spring 2026 run of departures and legal reversals, and a late-summer 2026 cluster of rulings and new disclosures.

Jan 2025 — **Ethics pledge repealed; FCPA enforcement paused**
Day-one rescission of the ethics commitments order; EO 14209 halts new foreign-bribery prosecutions.

9 Apr 2025 — **’Great time to buy’ post, then tariff pause**
Triggers calls from Schiff to investigate possible market manipulation.

Oct 2025 — **East Wing demolished; $230M claim against DOJ**
Ballroom construction begins; Trump seeks compensation from his own Justice Department.

19 Nov 2025 — **Epstein Files Transparency Act signed**
DOJ misses the 19 Dec deadline; releases follow in 2026.

24 Nov 2025 — **Comey and James indictments dismissed**
Judge rules Lindsey Halligan was unlawfully appointed.

29 Jan 2026 — **Trump sues the IRS**
Tax-leak suit filed in S.D. Florida.

Early Mar 2026 — **Noem fired as DHS secretary**
DHS inspector general opens contracts inquiry later that month.

2 Apr 2026 — **Bondi out; Blanche acting AG**
Departure follows frustration over the Epstein files.

May 2026 — **IRS suit settled; $1.776bn fund and audit halt**
Settlement draws bipartisan criticism.

2 Aug 2026 — **Blanche formally ends the fund**
Secures Republican senators’ support for his nomination.

14 Aug 2026 — **OCC approves World Liberty Trust Co. charter**
Preliminary conditional approval for a Trump-family-linked national trust bank.

28 Aug 2026 — **Hush-money removal bid rejected a third time**
Judge Hellerstein; Trump appeals.

15 Sep 2026 — **4th Circuit hears Comey/James revival bid**
Panel appears sceptical of DOJ.

Sep 2026 **Truth API suits; Adani filings; CLARITY ethics text**
Watchdogs and San Francisco sue; senators question the Adani dismissal; Trump agrees crypto ethics terms.

Three phases

January–December 2025: structure and enrichment. The administration removed the Biden-era ethics pledge, paused foreign-bribery enforcement under the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, and fired or sidelined oversight officials[2]. Trump did not divest, and the family businesses expanded abroad[2]. Fundraising ran at a pace unusual for a term-limited president: MAGA Inc. collected $177 million in the first half of 2025, twice the Republican National Committee's haul[2]. The ballroom, the Qatari jet and the first wave of pardons all date from this phase[1][2].

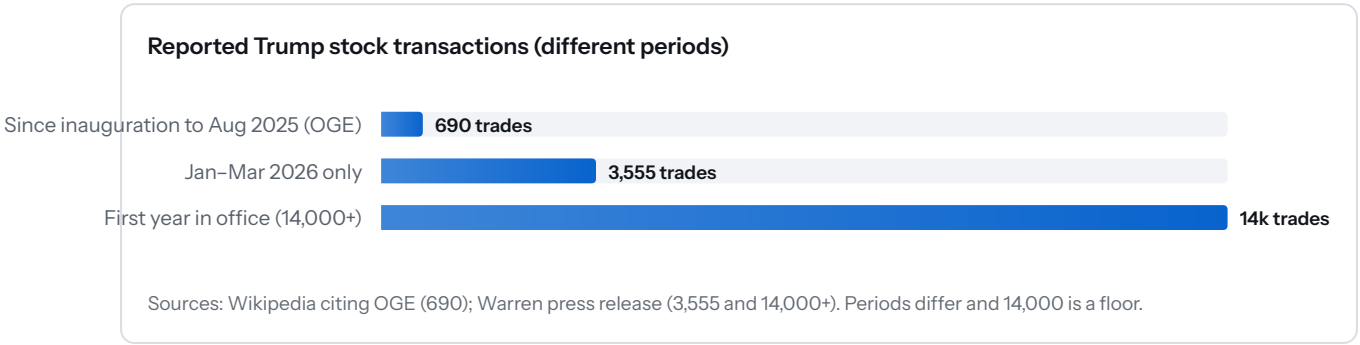
January–June 2026: litigation and departures. Trump sued the IRS, the Epstein files were released in part, and two cabinet officers left: Kristi Noem at Homeland Security and Pam Bondi at Justice[8][9]. The IRS settlement, with its $1.776 billion fund and audit halt, was the clearest example of the president's control of both sides of a legal dispute[3].

July–October 2026: reversals and scrutiny. A judge rejected the IRS settlement, Blanche formally ended the fund, the OCC approved the family-linked bank, Truth API drew lawsuits, and Democrats began to frame corruption as a midterm issue[1][3][6][12]. Congressional Democrats are also planning post-election probes if they win a chamber (a Reuters report I could not open, so this rests on its headline).

Dates for the Noem firing are approximate: NPR described it as almost a month before 2 April[8], and CNN's 26 March piece refers to it as "earlier this month"[9].

Stock trades, insider-trading allegations and Truth API

Previous presidents used blind trusts or avoided trading. Trump's disclosures show heavy personal trading in companies affected by federal decisions.



Figures

- OGE reported **690 stock transactions** by August 2025, including $100 million in bonds from local authorities, gas districts and major corporations[2].
- Warren cited disclosures showing **3,555 trades worth up to half a billion dollars in the first three months of 2026**, and more than 14,000 trades worth up to **$1.06 billion** in the first

year[13]. The 690 and 14,000 figures are not contradictory: they cover different windows and the later count includes more complete filings, though I could not confirm how OGE's count was reconciled.

- Trump disclosed **327 previously unreported trades** from the day before he paused Liberation Day tariffs, 14 months after the event[2].
- Trump has also been reported to have promoted companies on social media days after buying their stock[2][4].

The legal position matters. Conflict-of-interest law does not bar a president from participating in matters affecting his own finances[4], so the main constraints are securities law on trading on material non-public information and political cost. Trump has denied illegal conduct.

April 2025 tariff pause

On 9 April 2025 Trump posted "THIS IS A GREAT TIME TO BUY!!!", and about four hours later announced a 90-day pause on most tariffs. Heavy trading in an S&P 500 tracker fund (over 10,000 contracts a minute, against hundreds earlier) occurred minutes before, and the index rose 9.5% that day, one of the largest post-war gains, with almost $20 million profit to those traders[4]. Adam Schiff demanded a review of White House communications[4]. No enforcement action is reported in what I read.

Prediction markets

Analysts and NBC News reported well-timed bets on Polymarket by new or single-purpose accounts before executive actions, including on the 2026 Iran war and tariff decisions; NBC said traders with advance knowledge may have collectively pocketed millions[4]. Polymarket is partly offshore and does not follow know-your-customer rules in the same way[4]. Donald Trump Jr. is listed as an investor and adviser[4]. Whether any bettor held government information is unproven.

Truth API

Trump Media announced a paid service on 17 July 2026 giving faster access to Truth Social posts, including Trump's, which often move markets. Reports put subscriptions at up to $100,000, starting in early August. The company said markets "already move on Truth Social posts" and expected the service to be "a meaningful, ongoing source of revenue"[4]. Representative Jason Crow said it would enable insider trading, and NYU's Gian Luca Clementi said "This is insider trading by definition"[4]. American Oversight and Campaign for Accountability sued in September 2026, arguing the public gets delayed access to official government information compared with paying subscribers[1]. San Francisco filed its own suit on 22 September (per a New York Times headline I could see but not open). No ruling had been reported in the material I read.

Gifts, emoluments and foreign money

The Qatari jet

The administration accepted a Boeing 747 from Qatar for use as Air Force One. American Oversight describes it as a roughly $400 million jet[1]. American Oversight and the Freedom of the

Press Foundation sued the Justice Department in October 2025 for the legal opinions that justified acceptance, and have filed FOIA requests with DOJ and the Defense Department for communications with Qatari officials and the cost of converting the aircraft[1]. I did not find a court ruling on the emoluments question or a published legal memo.

The diamond ring

In August 2026 Senators Warren and Blumenthal wrote to the Antwerp World Diamond Centre and a cufflinks company over an 18-karat gold, diamond-encrusted ring given to Trump[13]. The press release text I could read was cut off before the reason for the timing, so I have not established what the senators say the gift preceded.

Gulf and other foreign money

The Abu Dhabi stake in World Liberty and the later chip approval are the most concrete foreign-money allegations[5]. Reporters also noted Saudi and Emirati ties across the Trump Organization and Kushner's fund, with Bloomberg reporting that investors in Kushner's firm do so expecting to influence the administration[2]. The Trump Organization dropped its first-term pledge to avoid new foreign deals[2]. Countries facing tariffs were pushed by the State Department to approve Elon Musk's Starlink[2], and Trump and Musk promoted Tesla vehicles on the White House lawn on 11 March 2025, described by The Nation as "brazenly corrupt"[2].

Presidential-library gifts

Miami Dade College donated **$67 million** in property for the library[1]. Meta, X and ABC News reportedly promised large donations as part of settlements of Trump's lawsuits[1]. The fund set up for the library was dissolved without explanation of where the money went, which prompted a Warren, Blumenthal and Stansbury letter[1]. Trump has said the library will be a hotel, which raises questions about how it could run through a nonprofit as presidential libraries normally do[1].

Foreign anti-bribery enforcement

Executive Order 14209 told the Justice Department to stop prosecuting Americans accused of bribing foreign officials under the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act[2]. That removes one of the main legal tools against corporate payoffs abroad, and critics link it to the wider pattern in the Adani matter below.

> CAUTION
>
> The emoluments clause has rarely been definitively litigated against a sitting president's foreign business income; first-term cases ended without a merits ruling. Treat "violation" claims here as expert opinion, not a legal finding.

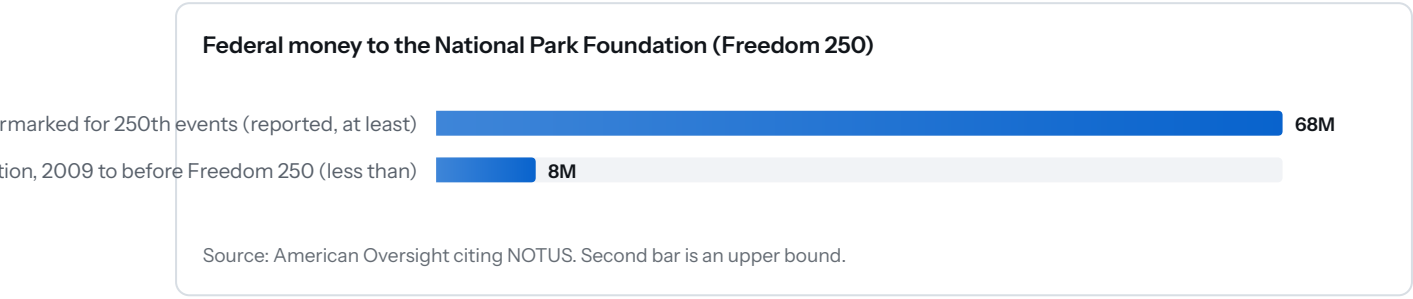
Donor-funded projects and pay-to-play

The White House ballroom

Trump announced the ballroom in July 2025 and the East Wing was torn down in October 2025, despite his earlier assurance that it would not "interfere with the current building"[1]. Allegations fall into three groups.

- **Process.** Federal law requires National Capital Planning Commission review, which normally takes years. Trump put three allies on the commission in July 2025, and it approved the project in April 2026. He also fired every member of the Commission of Fine Arts in October 2025[1].
- **Money.** Trump has solicited hundreds of millions of dollars from corporations and individuals and released a list of 37 donors including Amazon, Meta, Lockheed Martin, Apple and Microsoft, but not a full list[1]. A Washington Post report in June 2026 put the estimate at about $600 million with roughly half from taxpayers, and an August 2026 report said the government planned to spend close to **$1 billion** on the ballroom and other White House construction[1].
- **Courts.** The National Trust for Historic Preservation sued in December 2025. The suit has produced temporary injunctions that paused work, but as of August 2026 construction continued while the Supreme Court considered the case[1].

In late September 2026 Representative Jim Himes, the top Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee, warned intelligence contractors that their ballroom donations may be scrutinised for ties to federal contracts or access to officials [Nextgov headline; I could not read the full article]. This is a sign of what a Democratic House might investigate.



Freedom 250

Congress's bipartisan Semiquincentennial Commission and its nonprofit, America250, were expected to receive the $150 million appropriated in July 2025. In December 2025 Trump announced Freedom 250, a separate nonprofit inside the National Park Foundation, and Interior reportedly gave the foundation at least **$68 million**, against under $8 million in federal grants since 2009[1]. A donor packet obtained by the New York Times offered a private reception with Trump for $1 million donors, and embassies solicited global executives[1]. Senator Schiff wrote to Interior in March 2026[1]. There is no finding of wrongdoing in what I read.

Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool

Atlantic Industrial Coatings, which had worked on Trump-owned properties, received a no-bid contract, justified by the July 2026 anniversary deadline. Paint peeled and algae bloomed soon

after the June completion. Trump blamed vandals and several people were arrested, including former Olympian David Hearne, but the US Attorney's office dropped the charges and attributed the damage to a botched installation, and the contractor acknowledged "human oversight" in documents seen by the New York Times. The administration kept using the same company[1].

MAGA Inc. and policy decisions

Critics tie donations to favourable actions[2]:

DONOR	GIFT	GOVERNMENT ACTION
Fanjul Corp (Central Romana)	$1M to MAGA Inc.	Ban on Central Romana sugar imports lifted despite forced-labour allegations
Extremity Care	$5M	Medicare skin-substitute coverage restriction delayed
Nursing-home industry	about $4.8M	Staffing-increase policy revoked
Walczak family	$1M dinner ticket	Paul Walczak pardoned; restitution of $4.3M was owed

These are correlations reported by media and OpenSecrets; none has been tested as bribery in court[2].

Trump's IRS lawsuit, the $230 million claim and the anti-weaponization fund

This is the clearest case of Trump being on both sides of a dispute with the government he runs.

The $230 million claim

In October 2025 Trump sought up to **$230 million** from the Justice Department and FBI as compensation for past investigations into possible 2016 election interference and his handling of classified materials. Any payout would be a serious conflict of interest because Trump controls DOJ and has installed loyalists to lead it[1]. I did not find a reported resolution, and American Oversight has filed records requests for recusal documents and ethics deliberations on both lawsuits[1].

The IRS suit

In January 2026 Trump, his sons and the Trump Organization sued the IRS and Treasury in the Southern District of Florida (case 1:26-cv-20609, Judge Kathleen Williams). They claimed the agency failed to stop contractor Charles Littlejohn from leaking Trump's tax returns to the New York Times and ProPublica in 2019–2020. Littlejohn was convicted and sentenced for the leaks[3]. Press reports put the demand at $10 billion[1]. Wikipedia notes that Trump's control of the agencies he was suing "complicated the case and presented several possible conflicts of interest"[3].

DOJ settled in May 2026 and the plaintiffs dropped the case. The settlement created a **$1.776 billion** fund for people claiming DOJ had been weaponised against them, and the plan stoked outrage because Jan. 6 defendants who attacked police could be eligible[3][12]. The next day an addendum from acting Attorney General Todd Blanche ordered the IRS to permanently end

current and possible audits and inquiries into the Trump family and business [3]. Democrats, Republicans and the overseeing judge criticised the unprecedented structure [3].

Anti-weaponization fund and audit protection, May–Sept 2026

1 change · **1** new · **2** removeds

Fund 2

ITEM	STAT	BEFORE	AFTER	CHANGE
$1.776bn compensation fund Terminated to win Republican votes for his nomination	Status	Created by IRS settlement, May 2026	Blanche announces retreat 2 Jun; formal termination order 2 Aug	Removed
DOJ position in court Raises fears of revival	Posture	Fund abandoned	DOJ appeals ruling that blocked it (Sept 2026)	Change

Audits 1

ITEM	STAT	BEFORE	AFTER	CHANGE
IRS audits of Trump family and business Protection continued after fund retreat	Status	Open or possible	Ordered permanently ended	New

Case 1

ITEM	STAT	BEFORE	AFTER	CHANGE
Settlement itself Trump appealed	Judicial ruling	Settled	Thrown out in July 2026 for no true controversy	Removed

Sources: Wikipedia (Trump v. IRS), American Oversight, AP/NBC.

What the courts did

American Oversight reports that in July 2026 a federal judge threw out the settlement because there was no true controversy, since Trump was on both sides, and that Trump appealed [1]. The docket also shows an Eleventh Circuit appeal captioned against thirty-five former federal judges, who had apparently weighed in; I did not read the details [3]. Separately, Judge Leonie Brinkema in Alexandria, Virginia, blocked the creation of the fund in a case brought by Democracy Forward, which argued the government cannot divert taxpayer money to a slush fund for Trump's allies [12]. On 18 September she declined to dismiss the case as moot, saying "The issues that underlie this case are still alive and kicking," and that officials "contradict themselves all the time," because Trump kept voicing support for the fund while Blanche called it dead [12].

The Blanche deal

Bipartisan backlash nearly derailed Blanche's confirmation. He negotiated for weeks with two Republican senators who wanted written assurance, then issued the 2 August order terminating the fund [12]. A Senate vote advanced his nomination on 8 September (per a 10 September report I could only partly read), and the September court filings refer to him as Attorney General. I did

not establish the date of the final confirmation vote. In September DOJ appealed the ruling that blocked the fund, which critics see as a signal that the "dead" fund could be revived [1].

KEY FINDING

The audit-halt addendum survived the fund's collapse. Whether a president's family can be shielded from tax enforcement through a settlement of the president's own lawsuit is unresolved in court as of early October 2026.

Pardons, dropped cases and the Adani and Homan matters

Clemency

Trump pardoned about **1,500** people convicted over the 6 January 2021 Capitol attack at the start of the term [15]. Wikipedia's list of second-term clemency, which I could read only in a degraded form, has dedicated sections on a "pardon czar" position, the role of lobbyists, pardons of companies, fake-elector plot pardons, former NFL players, semiquincentennial pardons and a delayed announcement of pardons dated 3 September 2026 [15]. That structure shows the main criticisms: access through lobbyists and donors, and bypassing the Office of the Pardon Attorney.

Specific allegations of donor-linked clemency include:

- **Paul Walczak.** Pardoned after his mother attended a $1 million-a-head MAGA Inc. dinner. Prosecutors alleged he withheld over $10 million in payroll taxes from nursing-home staff and spent some on a $2 million yacht. He owed **$4.3 million** in restitution before the pardon [2].
- **Changpeng Zhao.** The Binance founder was pardoned in 2025 after Binance helped enrich World Liberty Financial [5].
- **Justin Sun.** Not a pardon but a related pattern: an SEC probe was dropped after his $30 million World Liberty investment [5].

The New York Times described MAGA Inc.'s fundraising as "pay-for-access", saying several donors received pardons, favourable regulatory actions or government appointments shortly after giving [2].

Adani

Federal bribery and fraud charges against Indian billionaire Gautam Adani were dismissed in a case in Brooklyn. Senators Warren and Blumenthal say new court filings confirm that after Adani hired Trump's personal lawyer, his attorneys conveyed an offer to invest **$10 billion** in the United States "as part of any resolution of" the criminal matter, after which the charges were dismissed [13]. They called it "an offer of a quid-pro-quo for individual criminal immunity." The overseeing judge, Nicholas Garaufis, wrote that the DOJ's decision-making looked "highly unusual" and that "irregularities in the decision to dismiss the indictment are concerning" [13]. Further reports say a federal prosecutor who withdrew from the case was fired about a month later, and that Boris Epshteyn, another Trump adviser, was involved as a "connector" charging up to six-figure monthly fees [13]. DOJ's side of the story was not available to me; the dismissal was itself a prosecutorial decision, and the filings establish the offer, not that it caused the decision.

Tom Homan

Border czar Tom Homan was recorded in September 2024 accepting a bag with **$50,000** in cash from undercover FBI agents who posed as business executives seeking government contracts. According to CNN and the New York Times in September 2025, the Trump Justice Department closed the investigation after Trump took office. The White House defended Homan, who has denied wrongdoing. House Judiciary Democrats demanded the recordings. I did not read the primary stories, only their headlines and summaries.

Foreign-bribery enforcement

Executive Order 14209 curtailed FCPA prosecutions [2]. Together with the Adani dismissal and the Homan closure, critics argue DOJ has lowered the odds of white-collar and public-corruption cases that touch allies.

Weakened oversight and the Justice Department's leadership

Repeals and rule changes

One of the earliest acts of the term was repealing the executive order on ethics commitments for executive-branch personnel, which had barred major gifts from lobbyists and imposed two-year bans on moving between lobbying and executive jobs. Critics called it the opposite of "drain the swamp" [2]. Trump did not adopt his own ethics guidelines and told reporters conflict laws did not apply to him [2]. In August 2026 FinCEN made permanent the end of beneficial-ownership reporting for domestic companies, which analysts say removes a tool for tracing shell-company money [6].

Pam Bondi's exit

Trump announced on **2 April 2026** that Attorney General Pam Bondi was out after 14 months, citing no reason beyond praise and a "much needed and important new job in the private sector." NPR attributed the departure to "simmering frustration over her leadership and her handling of the Epstein files," and noted she was the second cabinet member forced out in a month after Noem [8]. Under her, NPR said, the department abandoned its tradition of independence from the White House, pursued the president's perceived foes and fired prosecutors and FBI officials who had worked on Capitol riot cases or the Trump investigations [8]. Acting Attorney General Blanche later said "nobody has any idea" why Bondi was fired and that only Trump knows (New York Times live-blog headline, 7 April). Blanche, a former Trump defence lawyer, became acting AG and then the nominee [8].

Appointments of loyalists

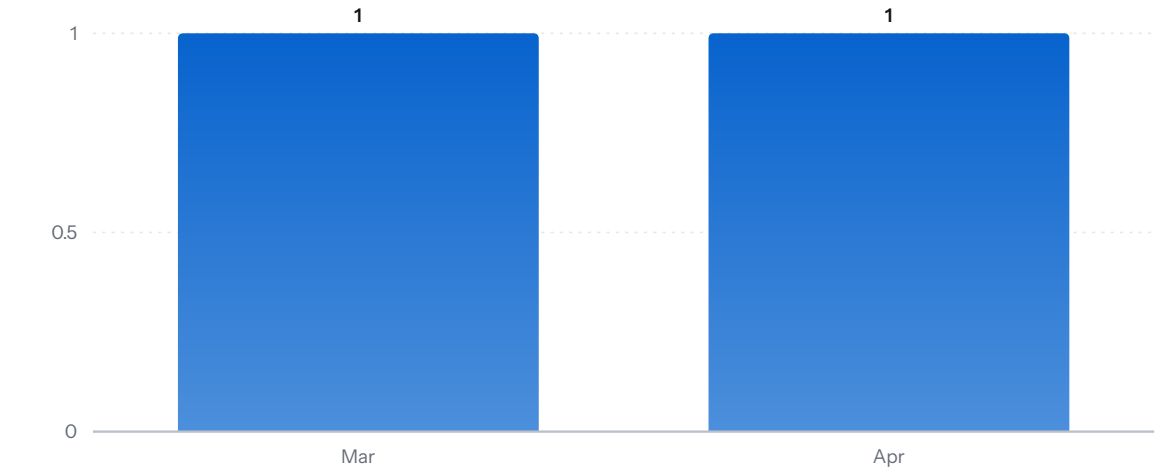
American Oversight notes Trump installed loyalists across DOJ, including political hires [1]. A US attorney's appointment became the central legal weakness in the Comey and James cases (see below) [11]. A federal court also found the interim US attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia unlawfully appointed [11].

Inspectors general

The DHS inspector general, Joseph Cuffari, wrote to Congress in early March 2026 that the agency had "systematically obstructed" his work, listing **11 instances** including one involving "a criminal investigation with national security implications"[9]. His audit of no-competition contracts was paused because staff were furloughed during a DHS funding lapse[9]. Other watchdog complaints include a Campaign Legal Center request to the DOJ inspector general in March 2026 for an inquiry into Kash Patel's trips [see below]. The administration's early removal of multiple inspectors general is widely reported, but I did not read a primary source for it in this research.

Congressional oversight

Republican control of Congress meant few subpoenas. The exceptions were bipartisan: the Epstein Files Transparency Act in November 2025[1] and the Senate resistance to the fund[12]. A Democratic House after the 3 November 2026 midterms would be the first institution with the power to subpoena on most of these topics.



Noem (DHS, early March) and Bondi (DOJ, 2 April), per NPR. Not a complete count of departures.

Cabinet and agency controversies

Kristi Noem and Corey Lewandowski (DHS)

The best-documented departmental scandal involves contracts. ProPublica reported in November 2025 that a firm tied to Noem's circle, run by the husband of her chief DHS aide, secretly received part of **$220 million** in DHS advertising contracts. CNN said Noem's handling of contracts was one of the main catalysts for her ouster in early March 2026[9]. Key facts[9]:

- Congress criticised, including Republicans, the $220 million in ads that prominently featured Noem. Noem said Trump approved the spending, which the president later denied.
- Noem required her personal approval for grants and contracts over $100,000, which created bottlenecks in disaster relief funding.

- The DHS inspector general opened a “sprawling” investigation into how contracts were solicited and handled, including the involvement of Noem and Lewandowski, her de facto chief of staff. Investigators ordered dozens of officials to preserve records. The inspector general’s office neither confirmed nor denied the probe and said it was separate from a congressionally mandated audit.
- The agency had received a **$165 billion** infusion from the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, including $65 billion for ICE, which magnified the stakes of contracting [9].

Noem was moved to a State Department role as special envoy on countering drug trafficking, and Markwayne Mullin became DHS secretary and pledged cooperation with the inspector general [9]. No charges had been reported at the time of writing.

Kash Patel (FBI)

Patel faced complaints about use of FBI aircraft. In February 2026 a whistleblower alleged, per BBC reporting relayed by a Democratic lawmaker, that his jet use delayed investigations, including a team’s response to a mass shooting at Brown University. The Campaign Legal Center filed a complaint with the DOJ inspector general on 4 March 2026 seeking an inquiry into multiple trips. In May 2026 reports described an FBI-jet trip to see his girlfriend at a concert in Philadelphia with a private suite, which the FBI defended as official business. These come from headlines and snippets I could not read in full, so treat details as unverified. No finding has been reported.

Pete Hegseth (Defense)

The Defense Department inspector general issued a report (released December 2025, identified as DODIG-2026-021) on Hegseth’s sharing of sensitive operational information on the Signal messaging app. Representative Seth Moulton described it as finding that Hegseth violated security protocols and endangered troops. This is a security-conduct matter, not a financial one, and I did not read the report itself.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr. (HHS)

Senator Warren has investigated whether Kennedy’s family may benefit financially from a **$50 million** anti-vaccine settlement he could have influenced as HHS secretary, and in August 2026 wrote asking whether he had changed his ethics agreement [13]. These are inquiries by a minority-party senator; no official finding was reported.

Susan Collins and the bribery-probe story

Opinion and news coverage in October 2026 describes Senator Susan Collins as having narrowly avoided entanglement in an FBI bribery probe into defence contracts and campaign donations, and her Democratic opponent raised it in a debate. It concerns a Republican senator rather than the administration directly, and I have only read headlines, so I record it as a reported item, not an established fact.

Elon Musk and DOGE

Musk’s White House role overlapped with Tesla and Starlink interests, as described above [2]. I did not find a formal ethics ruling on his service.

Epstein files

The Epstein material is less about money than about whether the Justice Department protected the president. It is catalogued here because it drove Bondi's removal and several congressional actions [1] [8].

- **May 2025** — **Bondi tells Trump his name appears**
  Per Wall Street Journal reporting cited by American Oversight.
- **15 Jul 2025** — **DOJ says it will release no more files**
  Days later Senator Durbin alleges FBI reviewers were told to flag Trump mentions.
- **19 Nov 2025** — **Epstein Files Transparency Act signed**
  Required release by 19 December.
- **19 Dec 2025** — **Deadline missed**
  DOJ does not meet the statutory date.
- **30 Jan 2026** — **Over 3 million pages released**
  Plus 180,000 images and 2,000 videos; more than 1,000 mentions of Trump.
- **11 Mar 2026** — **Documents indicate FBI flagging instructions were real**
  New York Times report cited by American Oversight.
- **2 Apr 2026** — **Bondi removed**
  Amid frustration over her handling of the files.

What is established

- Bondi and DOJ first promised transparency, then backtracked by summer 2025 [1].
- Congress passed the Epstein Files Transparency Act, signed on 19 November 2025, requiring release of the investigative files by 19 December 2025. DOJ missed the deadline [1] [16]. The law followed a House discharge petition and defections by Republicans, per the structure of Wikipedia's account [16].
- On 30 January 2026 DOJ released over **3 million pages**, 180,000 images and 2,000 videos [16]. The documents contained more than **1,000 mentions** of Trump [1]. Mentions are not allegations: Trump appears in the files because of his documented social connection with Epstein, and the files contain unverified tips and accusations alongside records.
- Before that release, under 1% of the files had been public by early January according to a DOJ letter to Judge Paul Engelmayer [16].
- Bondi clashed with House Democrats over the files at a Judiciary Committee oversight hearing on 11 February 2026 (NPR headline) [8].

What is disputed

- American Oversight says later reporting showed that documents containing accusations against Trump had been withheld, citing NBC News about a woman's allegation [1]. I did not verify what

the withheld documents contained, and DOJ's reason for any withholding was not in the material I read.

- Durbin's July 2025 claim that agents were told to flag mentions of Trump was supported by documents released in 2026, per the New York Times as cited [1].
- American Oversight has sued for DOJ training materials and instructions on the review, and for records of any interviews with Trump in the investigation [1].

Why it counts as an ethics matter

The concern is not whether Trump committed an offence, which the files as described do not establish, but whether a DOJ led by his appointees used its discretion over disclosure to shield him. Wikipedia's account also records redaction failures and a 2026 congressional review of unredacted files [16], so counts, names and claims continue to change. Readers should check the current state of litigation before relying on any single figure here.

Trump's own criminal and civil cases

Trump entered the term as a convicted felon in New York and with civil judgments against him. The federal criminal cases from the first-term era did not survive his election; what remains is state and civil litigation.

Hush-money conviction (New York)

Trump was convicted in 2024 on 34 felony counts of falsifying business records tied to hush-money payments to adult film actress Stormy Daniels, routed through attorney Michael Cohen. He was sentenced in January 2025 to an unconditional discharge, so the live fight is about erasing the conviction, not a punishment. He has tried three times to move the case to federal court [10]. On **28 August 2026** US District Judge Alvin Hellerstein rejected the latest bid, ruling the payments were "private" conduct and writing "Paying hush money to an adult film star or engaging in a cover-up of an embarrassment are not subsumed in presidential immunity" [10]. Trump's lawyers quickly appealed [10]. The ruling followed a Second Circuit decision, reported by Courthouse News, that sent the case back to Hellerstein for another look at the immunity arguments. The conviction stands, and the appeal in the state system is separate.

Civil fraud case (New York)

In April 2026 Trump asked New York's highest court to vacate the finding that he inflated the value of his real estate assets, citing doubts about the testimony of his former lawyer Michael Cohen (Bloomberg headline of 8 April 2026; I could not read the article). I did not establish the status of the penalty or any date for argument.

E. Jean Carroll

	Carroll II (battery and defamation)	vs	Carroll I (defamation)
Jury award	$5 million	·	$83.3 million
Trump appeal status	Supreme Court declined, mid-2026	·	Second Circuit rejected DOJ substitution and appeal by April 2026; petition to Supreme Court filed July 2026
Collected	$5.6 million including interest	·	Bond posted for amount plus 10%
Judge	Lewis Kaplan	·	Lewis Kaplan

Source: Wikipedia, E. Jean Carroll v. Donald J. Trump.

The jury in the first trial found Trump liable for sexual abuse and defamation, not rape as New York then defined it, and awarded $5 million; the second jury awarded $83.3 million for defamation, bringing the total to **$88.3 million** [14]. The Justice Department tried to substitute the United States as defendant under the Westfall Act, which would moot the case because the government cannot be sued for defamation; the Second Circuit rejected that and the appeal by April 2026, and Trump and DOJ petitioned the Supreme Court in July [14]. The next Supreme Court session begins in October, so action on that petition is the next event [14]. Having DOJ defend the president in a personal defamation case is a conflict-of-interest question in its own right, and American Oversight has requested records on the ethical deliberations behind DOJ's role in Trump's other suits [1].

What is not live

No federal criminal case against Trump is pending. The first-term-era 2020 election and classified-documents cases ended after his election, and are outside the January 2025 scope, but they feed the $230 million compensation claim [1].

Prosecutions of Trump's critics

The mirror image of dropped cases against allies is the pursuit of opponents. This matters for corruption analysis because critics argue it shows the Justice Department being used for personal or political ends. The administration says these are ordinary law-enforcement matters.

Comey and Letitia James

Former FBI Director James Comey and New York Attorney General Letitia James were indicted in autumn 2025 after Trump publicly called on Bondi to prosecute them, and both indictments were sought and signed by Lindsey Halligan alone [8] [11]. The prosecutor who had led the Eastern District of Virginia office, Erik Siebert, resigned under pressure to secure an indictment [11]. James was

charged with lying on a mortgage application [Reuters headline]. On **24 November 2025** Judge Cameron Currie dismissed both cases without prejudice, finding Halligan unlawfully appointed [11].

On 15 September 2026 a Fourth Circuit panel heard DOJ's bid to revive them. Chief Judge Albert Diaz warned the government's theory would create "a revolving door of 120-day appointees," and Judge Henry Floyd asked how Halligan differed from "a man who walked off the street." Judge Richard Richardson seemed more sympathetic to DOJ's argument that Bondi ratified Halligan's actions. MS NOW judged the court likely to uphold the dismissal [11]. Because the dismissal was without prejudice, DOJ could try again, subject to statute-of-limitations questions I did not examine.

Other targets

NPR listed investigations of Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell, Senator Adam Schiff, and former intelligence officials James Clapper and John Brennan [8]. It also reported that targets of the department had to pay costs even if they won, in an October 2025 story [8]. In June 2026 former national security adviser John Bolton reportedly pleaded guilty to illegally retaining classified information (a social-media post I could not corroborate; treat as unverified). A Reuters piece of 10 September 2026 reported that charges in some high-profile cases of this kind have faltered, but I could not read it.

Interpretation

Two things should be kept apart. A prosecution that fails on appointment grounds is a procedural defeat, not proof of political motive. The case for motive rests on the public pressure Trump applied and the personnel changes that preceded the indictments [8] [11]. The administration has not accepted that characterisation.

Politics and what to watch

Corruption is now an explicit midterm theme. The Guardian asked on 6 October whether claims that Trump is "using the presidency to line his pockets" could fuel a backlash amid cost-of-living discontent, and the Orlando Sentinel reported on 7 October that a Virginia Democrat is testing an anti-corruption message in the 1st Congressional District. American Oversight points to polling in which more than half of Americans say they struggle to afford gas and groceries, and ties the issue to affordability [1]. These are headlines and advocacy framing; I did not read polling on how much voters weigh corruption.

Democratic plans

A Reuters story dated 28 September 2026 (which I could not open) says Democrats would probe Trump family business deals if they win the midterms. Rep. Himes has already warned ballroom donors [Nextgov]. Warren has put forward the Ending Presidential Corruption in Banking Act, though it is unlikely to pass this Congress [6]. Some Democrats, such as Rahm Emanuel, argue for ethics reform over impeachment (NBC headline).

Dated items to watch

ITEM	WHERE IT STANDS	NEXT STEP
Anti-weaponization fund	Terminated 2 Aug; DOJ appealed block in Sept [1] [12]	Brinkema ruling on mootness
IRS settlement and audit halt	Settlement thrown out July 2026; Trump appealed [1]	Eleventh Circuit
World Liberty Trust Co.	Preliminary OCC approval 14 Aug [6]	Final approval
CLARITY Act ethics text	Final text released mid-Sept; cloture needs 60 votes [7]	Senate vote
Truth API suits	Filed Sept 2026 [1] [4]	Injunction rulings
Comey/James	Fourth Circuit argued 15 Sep [11]	Decision
Carroll I	Supreme Court petition [14]	October term
Hush money	Appeal of 28 Aug ruling [10]	Second Circuit
Ballroom	Construction continues; Supreme Court considering [1]	Court order
DHS IG contracts probe	Open [9]	Report or referral
Midterms	3 November 2026	Control of House oversight

Reliability warning

Many of these items are changing weekly. Where this catalogue relied on headlines or snippets of paywalled reports, it says so. Check the primary dockets and agency announcements before quoting any figure.

Bottom line

Between January 2025 and early October 2026 the record shows few criminal charges against anyone in Trump's orbit, and a great deal of conduct that critics call corruption but that mostly falls into legal grey zones: a family crypto business with a foreign-government shareholder and a newly approved bank charter, heavy presidential stock trading, donor-funded construction, pay-for-access fundraising, and a Justice Department that dismissed or closed cases involving allies while pursuing opponents. The strongest documented items are those with court or agency actions behind them: the rejected IRS settlement and the terminated fund, the OCC charter, Hellerstein's August ruling, and the Fourth Circuit hearing on the Comey and James dismissals. The weakest are inferences of cause, such as chips following a stake or dismissals following offers. The White House denies every conflict. The practical expectation is that real accountability will come mostly from courts and from whichever party controls the House after 3 November 2026, not from the executive branch's own ethics machinery.

Terms used in this document (3)

- **Emoluments clause** — Constitutional ban on federal officeholders accepting payments or gifts from foreign states without Congress's consent.
- **IG** — Inspector general, an agency's internal watchdog.

- **OGE** — Office of Government Ethics, the executive-branch agency that collects and reviews financial disclosures.

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