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The Blind Spot in Trump's War on Fraud: His Own Administration

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The Trump Administration talks a big game about rooting out waste, fraud, and abuse. But while it has put fraud at the center of its political agenda, it has increasingly looked the other way at abuses closer to home.

Last year, we warned that the second Trump Administration was weakening the guardrails meant to prevent waste, fraud, and abuse while creating new opportunities for corruption and conflicts of interest.¹ A year later, those problems have gotten worse. In this memo, we examine three ways the Trump Administration is undermining the very accountability it claims to champion:

1. **Trump and his family are using the presidency to grow their wealth**, creating conflicts between public duties and private financial interests.
2. **Cabinet officials are increasing the risk of waste, fraud, and abuse** through questionable spending, contracting, and relationships with private interests.
3. **The White House is weaponizing legitimate anti-fraud tools**, using authorities meant to protect taxpayer dollars against political opponents while overstating its own anti-fraud record.

Fighting real fraud remains essential. But accountability cannot be selective. An administration cannot credibly claim to protect taxpayers while tolerating conflicts of interest at the top and politicizing the tools meant to safeguard public programs.

This memo continues a series highlighting opportunities to improve government efficiency and reduce waste, fraud, and abuse—often referred to as program integrity initiatives. For more on this topic, see our collected work [here](#).

Trump and His Family Are Using the Office to Get Wealthier

President Trump was routinely criticized in his first administration for a variety of financial conflicts of interest, including those involving his Washington hotel.² His second term has taken those conflicts to a new level. For example:

- **Unprecedented and largely unregulated crypto ventures:** According to recent financial analyses from watchdog groups, Trump has generated more than \$2.4 billion in estimated cash proceeds from his family's cryptocurrency ventures since his 2024 election.³ These digital assets—which generally face less regulatory oversight than traditional financial markets—mark a stark pivot from Trump's condemnation of crypto as a scam just two years earlier.⁴ Through World Liberty Financial Inc. (WLFI),

the family's decentralized finance platform, Trump has earned \$59 million from USD1, a US-dollar-backed stablecoin; \$636 million from \$TRUMP, his meme coin; and nearly \$1.5 billion from \$WLFI, the platform's governance token, whose purchasers saw a loss of nearly 90% of its value since launch. ⁵

- **Extensive stock trading while in office:** Trump has also maintained an extraordinary volume of trading in traditional financial markets. His financial disclosures show more than 21,000 securities trades during his first year back in office, including transactions that coincided with consequential administration decisions. ⁶ Examples include a roughly \$500,000 purchase of Boeing stock on the same day the company received an \$880 million government contract; a \$500,000 investment in Abbott Laboratories months before the Justice Department dropped a criminal investigation into sanitation violations at a company plant linked to contaminated baby formula; and 327 stock purchases made on April 8, 2025—one day before Trump announced a 90-day pause in many of his “Liberation Day” tariffs. ⁷
- **Profiting from war:** The Trump family's portfolio also includes substantial investments in defense technology. Specifically, Eric Trump and Donald Trump Jr. have acquired stakes in American companies seeking federal business. ⁸ Although many of these companies are newcomers to the competitive defense-contracting arena, those financed by the Trump brothers have generated more than \$3.2 billion in direct government business. This amount is roughly equivalent to the National Park System's operating budget, roughly 7% of the entire National Institutes of Health budget, or annual SNAP benefits for more than 1.4 million Americans. ⁹

The Trump Cabinet is Creating New Waste and Abuse Risks

President Trump is not the only one creating serious breaches of public trust. Many high-ranking officials are creating plenty of their own. For example:

- **Stretching the bounds of office privileges through personal use of public resources:** While claiming to fight fraud, Trump administration officials are using government resources for luxury aircraft, family travel, political travel, and activities with dubious official purposes. These costs add up. For example, federal procurement data show that agencies spent more than \$5 billion on air travel in FY 2025, up from \$2.35 billion in 2016. ¹⁰

Former Department of Homeland Security (DHS) Secretary Kristi Noem spent almost \$300 million on a luxury aircraft fleet drawn from accounts intended for Coast Guard and border security purposes under OBBBA, prompting calls for investigations.

It's not just a DHS problem. FBI Director Kash Patel has taken more than 10 trips that likely violate federal travel regulations, including to the Olympics and to a wrestling tournament that included a performance by his girlfriend.¹¹ Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth brought six of his children on an official trip to France earlier this year, potentially increasing security costs and diverting resources from Army investigations.¹²

- **Steering government contracts and controlling procurement in ways that may not serve the public interest:** Investigations are looking into accusations that former DHS Secretary Noem improperly spent money for contracts that went to her allies (including on the aforementioned luxury aircraft and on a \$220 million ad campaign) and were concealed through the use of holding companies.¹³

The DHS Inspector General opened a formal investigation into the DHS contracts in spring 2026.¹⁴ The vulnerability of Trump administration contracting extends beyond DHS and into the Defense Department and the Department of the Interior, among others.¹⁵

- **Influencing agency regulations:** Drug and food additive makers are among the most prominent examples of groups that are giving money to the same Trump officials that they are hoping will reward them with favorable policymaking.¹⁶ They have created conflicts between public duties and private interests, as these regulatory systems were designed to protect public health—not to merely respond to whoever enriches them.

Current DHS Secretary Markwayne Mullin disclosed an investment worth as much as \$1 million in Botanic Tonics, a kratom company that could benefit from policies he had advocated, and he later pressed HHS to remove language from the FDA's website warning of harms from kratom.¹⁷ The Senate Finance Committee has launched an investigation into Mullin and HHS Secretary Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., favoring both kratom and tobacco companies that make vapes and e-cigarettes.¹⁸

The Trump Administration is Weaponizing Tools to Reduce Fraud

As the Trump administration has publicly focused on combating fraud in federal programs, it is creating a centralized, politically-directed enforcement apparatus. Recent actions have focused disproportionately on states that tend to vote for Democrats.¹⁹ For example:

- **Cutting off funding for those who investigate Medicaid fraud:** The Trump administration has withheld funds to the Medicaid programs in California, Minnesota and New York, and suspended federal funding for New York's Medicaid Fraud Control

Unit.²⁰ The administration claimed the anti-fraud unit was not securing enough criminal indictments, but the New York Attorney General defended the office's record and countered that it has recovered more than \$627 million since 2019.²¹ The broader campaign against New York Medicaid was also marred by false data due to an inflated number of people allegedly using personal home care services.²²

- **Targeting programs for private data on individuals:** Two dozen states filed a lawsuit challenging a federal initiative that compels them to share the private personal data of TANF recipients.²³ The Trump administration has similarly targeted states for personal data on beneficiaries of child care and SNAP programs, prompting a similar legal response.²⁴ Leaders in states that are pushing back argue that the amount of requested personal data is unprecedented and could be used for immigration enforcement or purposes Congress never authorized.
- **Rebranding anti-fraud achievements that happened under previous Presidents:** Vice President J.D. Vance, the administration's "Fraud Czar," and Justice Department officials have ignited Trump's supposed "war on fraud" by taking credit for prosecutions and investigations that occurred before Trump's second administration even began.²⁵ Feeding Our Future prosecutions connected to Minnesota fraud were announced in 2022 during the Biden administration, and a hospice crackdown in California was preceded by a moratorium established by Democrats in 2021.²⁶ The Trump administration has also created a new National Fraud Enforcement Division within the Justice Department with a new assistant attorney general, even though the DOJ Criminal and Civil Divisions already have an extensive record of prosecuting fraud.²⁷

Taking fraud seriously matters, and [our recent polling](#) shows that voters want accountability over spending.²⁸ But the Trump administration has proven over and over again that their interest in accountability is selective.²⁹ Real accountability means protecting taxpayer dollars no matter who is responsible for wasting or abusing them. That means holding government officials to the same standard as everyone else—and using anti-fraud tools to fight actual fraud, not political opponents.

ENDNOTES



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CAP’s tracker estimates that the Trump family has generated more than \$2.4 in cash proceeds from cryptocurrency ventures since his election. Trump’s most recent financial disclosure separately reported more than \$1.4 billion in crypto-related income in 2025 alone.
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The Post investigation found at least \$3.2 billion in direct government business since the Trump sons invested, plus about \$3.1 billion in future contract options. SpaceX and Anduril account for 97% of the direct cash.

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The FY 2026 Consolidated Appropriations Act provided \$47.2 billion in program-level funding to the NIH, according to appropriations tables included in the Congressional Record for the Labor-HHS-Education section of the bill (Division B). The \$3.2 billion in Trump-connected defense contracts is equivalent to 6.8% of this budget.

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- 15.** Within the Defense Department, private equity firm founder Steve Feinberg serves as the deputy secretary of Defense and oversees the office in charge of the Golden Dome for America project, which is designed to intercept and destroy missiles launched at the United States. At least four of the companies that have been awarded contracts so far are owned by Cerberus Capital Management, Feinberg's firm.

Within the Department of the Interior, the Trump administration entered into two no-bid contracts to re-coat the bottom of the Reflecting Pool on the National Mall. Over the next two months, costs initially estimated at \$1.5 to \$2 million increased to more than \$16 million. The contractor, Atlantic Industrial Coatings, acknowledged flaws in the installation plan, all while allegations that it was caused by vandalism started to unravel.

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A DHS spokesperson has said that Mullin has not lobbied for any individual or company and characterized his advocacy as targeting synthetic 7-OH rather than botanical kratom. A new investigation released in September raised questions about Mullin’s financial disclosures and whether he acquired his Bontanic Tonics stake before his policy advocacy.

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