

File 16- The Ethical Issues and Conflicts of Interest

LINKS AND REFERENCES

- The amendments or constitutional clauses that have been referred to by politicians and analysts

- ◆ **The Emoluments Clause**

See for example

<https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/emoluments-clauses-explained>

<https://usconstitution.net/emoluments-clause-presidential-business/>

- ◆ **The 25th Amendment**

See for example

<https://constitution.congress.gov/browse/amendment-25/>

https://www.economist.com/the-economist-explains/2021/01/08/how-does-the-25th-amendment-work?giftId=YjRjOTVkJmJmMjAwZCOON2FKLWE1MDctMWY0YTU0MzIxMTRm&utm_campaign=gifted_article

◆ **Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission**, 2010 Supreme Court Decision about campaign finance laws

See [HERE](#)

THE TRUMP FAMILY AND BUSINESS BENEFITING FROM THE PRESIDENCY

Opinion - The Editorial Board

How Trump Has Pocketed \$1,408,500,000

An infographic editorial, *The New York Times*, January 20, 2026

One year ago, Donald Trump took an oath to serve the American people. Instead, he has focused on using the presidency to enrich himself. Full article [HERE](#)

President Trump has never been a man to ask what he can do for his country. In his second term, as in his first, he is instead testing the limits of what his country can do for him.

He has poured his energy and creativity into the exploitation of the presidency — into finding out just how much money people, corporations and other nations are willing to put into his pockets in hopes of bending the power of the government to the service of their interests.

A review by the editorial board relying on analyses from news organizations shows that Mr. Trump has used the office of the presidency to make at least \$1.4 billion. We know this number to be an underestimate because some of his profits remain hidden from public view. And they continue to grow.



How Donald Trump Jr. is cashing in on his dad's presidency

The Trump Family Crypto Business

The Administration will regulate the tokens the Trumps are selling.

By The Editorial Board [Follow](#)

May 11, 2025 4:47 pm ET

Trump Is Poised to Accept a Luxury 747 From Qatar for Use as Air Force One

The plan raises substantial ethical issues, given the immense value of the lavishly appointed plane and that Mr. Trump intends to take ownership of it after he leaves office.

In Mideast, Trump plans to focus on business deals, not geopolitics

The trip is expected to focus primarily on cementing trade ties. On the heels of Trump Organization business deals in the region, it also showcases the blurring of Trump's private business ventures with foreign policy.

« La façon dont Trump utilise la présidence pour capter de manière flagrante de la richesse pour lui et sa famille n'a pas de précédent », selon l'historien Richard White

Le retour à la Maison Blanche du milliardaire républicain rappelle l'époque des barons voleurs, au XIX^e siècle, lorsque des industriels bâtissaient des empires grâce à la corruption, explique Richard White, professeur d'histoire émérite à l'université Stanford, en Californie.

Par [Arnaud Leparentier](#) (San Francisco, correspondant) , **Le Monde**, 30 mars 2026

Lorsque, à l'automne 2025, Jared Kushner, gendre de Donald Trump, a repris du service comme diplomate pour son beau-père entre Israël et les pays du Golfe, tout en menant ses affaires avec les politiques et les familles régnautes de la région, bien peu se sont offusqués. De même, l'Amérique est restée indifférente, début mars, lorsque furent révélés les investissements de deux des fils du président, Don Jr et Eric, dans des sociétés de drones susceptibles de recevoir des commandes du Pentagone. Les sommes en jeu ne sont pourtant pas minces. Les actions de Don Jr dans la société Unusual Machines, dont il est devenu conseiller à la fin de l'année 2024, et acquises pour 200 000 dollars (173 000 euros), en valent, si elles n'ont pas été revendues, 4 millions depuis que la société a décroché un contrat du Pentagone. Comme si népotisme, conflits d'intérêts et délits d'initiés étaient devenus acceptables aux Etats-Unis sous Donald Trump.

« Il y a déjà eu énormément de corruption par le passé, ce n'est pas nouveau, mais la façon dont Trump utilise la présidence pour capter de manière flagrante de la richesse pour lui et sa famille n'a pas de précédent », remarque, affligé, Richard White, professeur d'histoire émérite à l'université Stanford (Californie) et spécialiste de la corruption au XIX^e siècle. Sans cesse, l'ère Trump rappelle celle de l'« âge doré » (Gilded Age), dont le président a la nostalgie – ou plutôt l'« âge doré en toc », pour reprendre l'expression narquoise de l'écrivain Mark Twain (1835-1910), cette période d'enrichissement et de corruption qui s'étend de la guerre de Sécession (1861-1865) au sursaut progressiste de Théodore Roosevelt (1901-1909).

Tout commence au début du XIX^e siècle, dans une Amérique religieuse, mais sans foi ni loi. « Il y avait beaucoup de népotisme. Le capitalisme se résume fondamentalement à la confiance, et les seules personnes

en qui on pouvait avoir confiance, à l'époque, étaient les proches », explique l'historien. Banquiers et entrepreneurs protestants, marchands juifs : tous font des affaires en famille. L'émergence de Wall Street aurait dû permettre de s'affranchir de cette dépendance familiale, mais l'époque est faite de délits d'initiés et de manipulations permanentes qui imposent la méfiance.

L'arrivée au pouvoir de Donald Trump, en 2016, s'inscrit dans cette tradition : affairiste immobilier new-yorkais, il a repris l'entreprise de son père, travaille avec ses trois premiers enfants, et s'installe à la Maison Blanche quasiment sans autre entourage que sa fille Ivanka et son gendre Jared Kushner. Ce dernier l'expliquait candidement en septembre 2025, au podcast « No Priors » : « *La campagne de mon beau-père en 2016 était presque une campagne familiale.* » Et, arrivant à la Maison Blanche où il ne connaissait pas grand monde, « [Donald Trump] souhaitait s'entourer de personnes en qui il pouvait avoir confiance ».

« Pot-de-vin honnête »

A la fin du XIX^e siècle, la demande de protection sociale et d'un début d'Etat-providence se fait criante, mais l'Etat fédéral n'en a pas les moyens. Résultat, un système de patronage se met en place – des aides contre des voix –, qui connaîtra son apogée à New York avec Tammany Hall. Cette association, fondée dès 1789 pour venir en aide aux immigrants et aux ouvriers, s'est vite transformée, avec l'arrivée des Irlandais, en redoutable machine électorale démocrate dans cet Etat bascule.

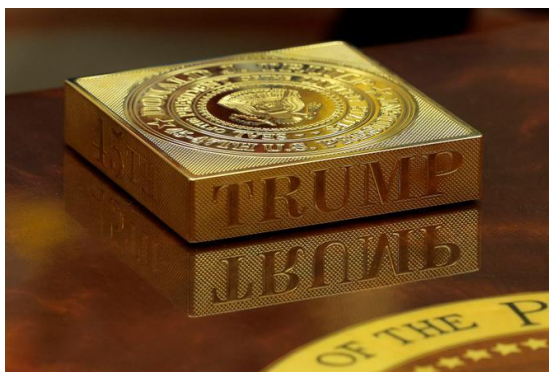
George Plunkitt (1842-1924) en est l'une des figures les plus emblématiques. Cet élu de l'Etat de New York accourt à chaque malheur local, vient au secours des nécessiteux, exigeant en retour des votes. Et des informations : ce système lui permet de faire fortune en achetant à bas prix des terrains qui seront ensuite rachetés par la puissance

publique pour des projets urbains. George Plunkitt théorisa cette pratique, osant la qualifier de « *pot-de-vin honnête* » (« *honest graft* »), par opposition au racket ou au chantage. « *Je vois ma chance et je la saisis* », expliquait-il.

Cette pratique disparaît avec Franklin Roosevelt et le New Deal de 1933, mais Donald Trump n'y est pas insensible, donc. Début 2026, le président républicain a lancé des « Trump Accounts » visant à ce que le Trésor américain octroie à chaque enfant américain né entre 2025 et 2028 1 000 dollars sur un compte d'épargne en actions. Son ami milliardaire Michael Dell a décidé de renforcer ce système en versant sur ces « Trump Accounts » 250 dollars à 25 millions d'enfants défavorisés, à hauteur de 6,25 milliards de dollars.

Donald Trump s'affranchit des règles éthiques patiemment imposées au cours du XX^e siècle : il nie systématiquement tout conflit d'intérêts. En janvier, il défendait encore les affaires de sa famille dans un entretien accordé au *New York Times* : « *J'ai une famille très honnête. Je leur ai interdit de faire des affaires durant mon premier mandat, et on ne m'en a absolument donné aucun crédit. Je n'étais pas tenu de le faire. Et c'est vraiment injuste envers eux* », a-t-il déclaré, estimant que la seule chose pouvant limiter son propre pouvoir était « [s]a propre moralité ». Et ses amis peuvent compter sur lui, puisque après avoir ordonné en février 2025 la mise en pause pour six mois du Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, qui interdit le versement de pots-de-vin à l'étranger, l'administration Trump en a ensuite allégé les contraintes.

Comme le rappelle Richard White, « *des années 1930 jusque dans les années 1980 et 1990, les Etats-Unis ont eu le type de gouvernement le plus honnête de leur histoire* ». Certes, tout n'était pas parfait : Hollywood rappelle sans cesse l'emprise des mafias dans les années 1950. Mais le gouvernement a frappé durement celles-ci dès les années 1960, et « *leur capacité à influencer les élections ou à transformer les institutions publiques en moyens de richesse privée était assez mineure* », tempère Richard White, qui estime que la mafia « *n'existe plus que par nostalgie* ».



Une boîte à sous-verres posée sur la table basse du président américain, Donald Trump, dans le bureau Ovale, à la Maison Blanche, à Washington, le 24 février 2025. CHIP SOMODEVILLA/GETTY IMAGES VIA AFP

De même, il tempère l'idée que les Américains auraient troqué le roi d'Angleterre contre des dynasties familiales :

cela relève aussi de l'ordre de la légende. Les Roosevelt, Theodore et Franklin, étaient de « *lointains cousins* ». Les Bush père et fils ont exercé des « *présidences médiocres* ». Les Clinton, Bill et Hillary, n'ont pas réussi le doublé à la Maison Blanche et l'histoire des Kennedy est avant tout une tragédie. Le trumpisme marque effectivement une rupture, un retour au XIX^e siècle.

« Intérêts bien précis »

La conquête du monde numérique et de l'intelligence artificielle a un goût de déjà-vu : elle rappelle la conquête de l'Ouest par le chemin de fer, avec l'exploitation de terres et de ressources immenses, qui va donner aux politiciens un pouvoir considérable. Cette époque de corruption et de partage fut qualifiée de « *grand barbecue* » par l'historien progressiste Vernon Parrington (1871-1929). « *C'est exactement ce qui se produit aujourd'hui, bien que le processus soit plus sophistiqué* », estime Richard White. Il cite le transfert vers le privé du programme spatial américain, à Elon Musk (SpaceX) et à Jeff Bezos (Blue Origin), ou le développement de toutes sortes de technologies concédées sous licence à des acteurs privés qui les utilisent pour « *bâtir d'immenses fortunes privées* ». « *Il s'agit là de l'échec de la sphère politique – et de l'échec du peuple américain – à prendre conscience que ce qui relève du domaine public mérite une certaine préservation* », accuse Richard White.

De fait, l'ère Trump surpasse même celle des « barons voleurs » – comme étaient surnommés les rois des chemins de fer (Cornelius Vanderbilt, 1794-1877) de l'acier (Andrew Carnegie, 1835-1919), du pétrole (John Davison Rockefeller, 1839-1937) ou de la finance (John Pierpont Morgan, 1837-1913) du XIX^e siècle –, car elle ne se limite pas à la simple corruption à usage personnel. « *Les "barons voleurs" avaient des intérêts bien précis, poursuit Richard White. Carnegie réclamait des droits de douane, car l'industrie sidérurgique américaine ne pouvait rivaliser avec les importations européennes, et il obtint gain de cause.* » John Davison Rockefeller avait besoin d'une législation pour bloquer les initiatives concurrentes en matière de transport du pétrole, ajoute-t-il. C'est pourquoi il s'employa à contrôler la législature de Pennsylvanie. Les compagnies ferroviaires, elles, avaient besoin de subventions.

« *Mais le reste du fonctionnement gouvernemental ne les intéressait guère. Aujourd'hui, les milliardaires modernes semblent bien plus enclins à vouloir contrôler non seulement les rouages essentiels à la réussite de leurs entreprises, mais le gouvernement lui-même* », déplore Richard White. Il s'afflige de la bascule de la Silicon Valley : « *Ses acteurs se tenaient autrefois à l'écart de la politique. Aujourd'hui, ils y sont pleinement investis. Trump est idéal à leurs yeux, car il incarne à la perfection une logique purement transactionnelle.* » Ils représentent potentiellement un danger bien plus grand que n'importe quel acteur de l'« âge doré », car ils sont plus riches, leurs intérêts sont plus vastes et leurs ambitions plus démesurées, juge l'historien.

Richard White démystifie la légende, celle de pionniers préparant le « siècle américain », au prix d'une corruption marginale. Au contraire, celle-ci était centrale. Selon lui, les chemins de fer transcontinentaux n'ont été construits que parce que le gouvernement le voulait, afin d'établir des postes militaires pendant la guerre de Sécession et conquérir l'Ouest. « Ces compagnies ferroviaires étaient incapables de générer des bénéfices par leurs propres moyens, mais elles avaient la possibilité d'obtenir d'énormes subventions du gouvernement fédéral : sous forme de prêts, de concessions foncières, de garanties de trafic ou encore de lois votées à l'encontre de leurs concurrents. C'est ainsi qu'elles inventèrent les premiers lobbys modernes comme un moyen de corrompre le gouvernement fédéral », explique l'historien. La vraie Amérique des chemins de fer n'est pas celle des glorieux westerns des années 1950, mais celle d'Il était une fois dans l'Ouest, le western spaghetti de Sergio Leone (1968) fait de crime et de corruption.

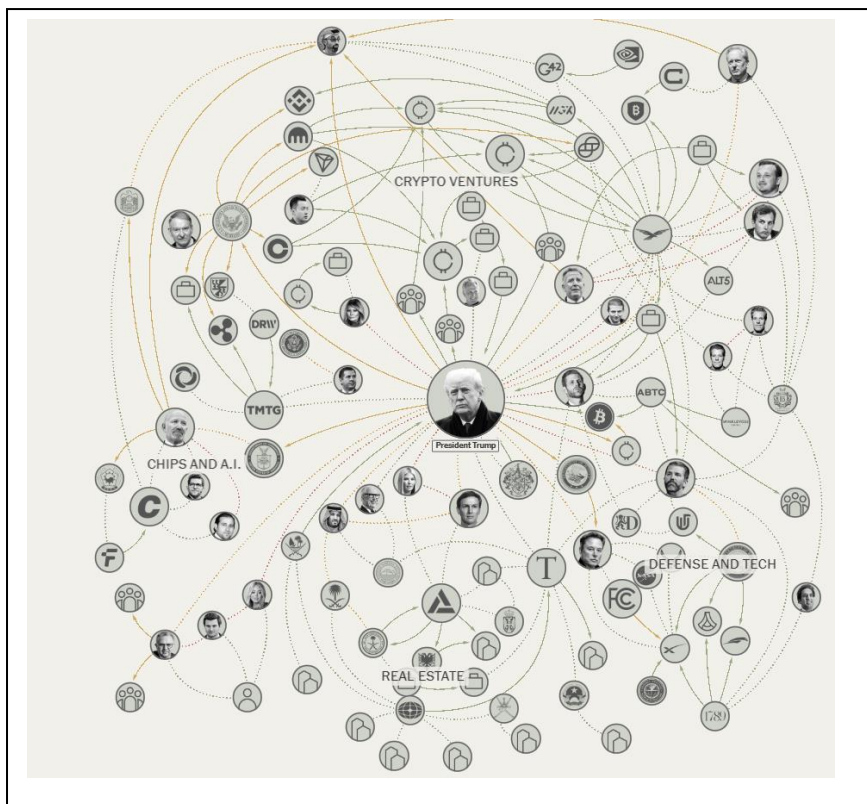
Système dysfonctionnel

C'est la particularité du XIX^e siècle : c'est un monde physique, violent, ouvrier, mais la bataille de l'argent et du pouvoir a lieu, déjà, à Wall Street, dans une sphère quasi dématérialisée qui n'a rien à envier à celle d'aujourd'hui. « La grande invention du **Gilded Age*** fut de rendre la richesse intangible », explique l'historien. Les industries produisent des biens concrets, certes, mais la fortune ne provient pas uniquement de la vente d'acier, de charbon ou de services ferroviaires : elle est générée sur le marché des actions et des obligations.

Le système est dysfonctionnel, la corruption engendrant des périodes d'essor suivies d'effondrements sur fond de misère ouvrière épouvantable. « Tous les dix ans

– en 1873, 1883-1884 et, plus particulièrement, en 1893-1894 –, le système économique subissait un krach. Des affrontements éclataient dans les rues ; le spectre de la lutte des classes planait, et l'idée d'une révolution ou d'une nouvelle guerre civile gagnait les esprits. La situation ne nuisait pas seulement aux travailleurs, tout en suscitant un vaste mouvement politique d'opposition qui dégénérait souvent en violence ; elle entraînait également la faillite des compagnies ferroviaires elles-mêmes, au point qu'elles finirent par réclamer de la réglementation », raconte Richard White.

C'est ainsi qu'est intervenue, avec Theodore Roosevelt, la période dite « progressiste », qui verra enfin la mise en pratique des lois antitrust, et l'instauration de l'impôt sur le revenu en 1913. Mais, estime Richard White, « à la fin du XX^e siècle et au début du XXI^e, nous avons démantelé ce système », avec la baisse des impôts à partir de Ronald Reagan (1981-1989), **le financement libre des partis consacré par la Cour suprême en 2010***, le recul de l'antitrust. « Les fortunes actuelles éclipsent celles de la fin du XIX^e siècle. L'argent afflue vers la sphère politique – en grande partie injecté par une classe relativement restreinte de milliardaires – dans des proportions jamais atteintes à la fin du XIX^e siècle », estime l'historien, qui n'exclut pas une correction comme celle apportée sous Theodore Roosevelt : « Si Trump fait s'effondrer cette économie – ou si cette économie s'effondre d'elle-même –, la situation basculera très rapidement. Espérons que nous parviendrons à y mettre un terme sans cela, et sans la menace de combats de rue. C'est pourtant ainsi que s'est achevé le Gilded Age : le système tout entier s'est effondré sur lui-même. Et les réformes ont suivi relativement vite. »



Trump's Tangled Web of Deal-Making, Policy and Riches

By Lazaro Gamio and Amy Schoenfeld Walker – *The New York Times*, Dec. 31, 2025

Since his return to office, President Trump and his family have engaged in a moneymaking campaign like none in modern American history. It is enriching the family, as well as important officials and business partners. The president's family and allies are benefiting from their proximity to power, retaining or building stakes in industries that the government oversees and that Mr. Trump's

Explainer (Long Read / technical) - How Weak Federal Ethics Laws Enable Presidential Profiteering

Lackluster laws and barriers to enforcement clear many paths for the wealthy to get money to the president.

The Brennan Center for Justice, March 16, 2026

Since taking office in January 2025, President Trump has pocketed an estimated \$3 billion from his various business enterprises. His family is estimated to have raked in billions more. Much of the money appears to be coming from foreign governments and others seeking to curry favor with the Trump White House.

The scale of President Trump's self-enrichment is unprecedented, as is his openly transactional approach to governing. In an era dominated by enormous concentration of private wealth and political power, Trump's second term in office has laid bare the many channels — direct and indirect — through which money can reach the president and shape the national agenda. Gaps in ethics rules and a lack of real enforcement options mean that little if any of this profiteering is illegal, pointing to the need for significant reforms.

The president is not covered by the same ethics rules as other federal officials.

The president is exempt from many of the basic ethics rules that apply to other federal officials. For instance, most executive branch employees are not allowed to participate in government matters that could have a direct impact on their personal finances or those of their spouses or business affiliates. That restriction even extends to situations where employees could appear to have a financial conflict of interest that would raise questions about their impartiality. Where participation in a given matter is a core part of an official's duties, Office of Government Ethics rules generally require them to sell or divest from the relevant assets.

The president, however, is exempt from those rules, leaving him free to use the power of the presidency in ways that directly benefit him and his family. Many of the notable examples in Trump's second term relate to the cryptocurrency sector, now the source of much of the president's personal wealth. Trump has sought to roll back restrictions on the industry and advance its other priorities while doling out benefits to purchasers of his own cryptocurrency products. These include pardons and other favorable legal treatment for industry moguls and even privileged access to advanced U.S. computer chip technology, which the administration granted to the United Arab Emirates after one of its state-backed companies took a 49 percent stake in World Liberty Financial, the Trump family's main cryptocurrency platform.

Likewise, most executive branch employees are strictly prohibited from receiving gifts from sources that their department regulates, or who have a vested interest in their work. Again, the president is generally exempt from that requirement and free to accept gifts from people and companies with a financial interest in what the president and his administration are doing.

When Apple, seeking to protect its products from tariffs, announced a major domestic investment, the company's CEO met with Trump in the Oval Office and gave the president a custom glass sculpture set in a 24-karat gold base.

There's also the Hatch Act, which bans executive branch employees from engaging in political activity while on duty to ensure that the federal government operates in a nonpartisan manner. The president is not covered by the Hatch Act and is allowed to engage in partisan politics. Although his immediate subordinates are subject to Hatch Act restrictions, senior officials are rarely, if ever, targeted for enforcement.

There are some anti-corruption laws that do apply to the president.

Several other anti-corruption safeguards technically apply to the president, but there are major impediments that keep them from serving as actual checks on wrongdoing.

Annual Financial Disclosures

One core federal ethics rule does apply to the president: He is required to file annual reports disclosing his personal finances. These reports enable the public and coequal branches of government to at least see some potential financial conflicts of interest the president may have, although there are gaps in the information officials are required to provide. Past presidents also voluntarily disclosed their personal tax returns, but Trump broke with that norm during both of his White House stints.

Foreign and Domestic Emoluments Clauses

The Constitution itself includes rules aimed at insulating the president from corrupting influences. The Foreign Emoluments Clause bans all federal officials, including the president, from accepting gifts or payments from foreign governments without congressional approval. The Domestic Emoluments Clause bars the president alone from personally receiving gifts or other benefits from Congress or the states beyond his salary.

Historically, these provisions haven't needed to be formally enforced, as federal officials usually took steps to comply voluntarily. However, in Trump's first term, he broke with precedent and refused to get rid of business holdings that received patronage and other benefits from state officials and foreign governments. These apparent violations of the Emoluments Clauses prompted lawsuits, but the courts never actually weighed in on the merits: The lawsuits foundered on procedural grounds and were dismissed after he left office in 2021. That left considerable doubt about what mechanisms exist, if any, to enforce these provisions absent federal legislation.

Anti-Bribery Laws

The president, like all public officials, is ostensibly bound by federal criminal laws banning bribery and similar conduct.

Indeed, the Constitution itself lists bribery as a reason to remove a president from office, and the federal ban on bribing public officials expressly applies to the president. However, in recent decades, the Supreme Court has weakened many federal anticorruption laws.

The Court has also ruled that presidents are immune from being prosecuted for official acts they take that are “within [their] exclusive sphere of constitutional authority.” Bribery, at its core, would involve taking illicit money in exchange for carrying out a so-called official act. As a result, the Supreme Court’s immunity ruling raises questions about whether and how a president could be investigated and prosecuted for taking bribes.

Campaign Finance Laws

Presidential candidates — even if they are the sitting president — are also supposed to abide by the limited rules on the books around election spending, including restrictions on who can donate to their campaign, how much donors can give them, and their ability to coordinate with outside groups such as super PACs.

These rules, however, are often more loophole than law. Thanks to Supreme Court decisions like Citizens United, wealthy donors can pump limitless funds into the political system through super PACs. These entities are supposed to operate independently from candidates and disclose their donors, but in practice they often end up working hand-in-glove with candidates and deriving a substantial amount of their funding from “dark money” groups that keep their funding sources secret. Even individuals and companies holding billions of dollars in lucrative government contracts are essentially free to spend unlimited money on elections. The result: a political system in which wealthy interests play an outsized role in setting the agenda, with the president at its center.

While the erosion of campaign finance rules long predates Trump’s reelection, his political operation has still found ways to push the envelope. MAGA Inc., the main super PAC supporting Trump, has raked in at least \$305 million since the 2024 election, almost entirely from million-dollar contributions from megadonors. The Constitution bars Trump from running for a third term, so it is not clear how this enormous war chest will be used. One possibility is that the president will use the money to back his favored candidates in the midterms and beyond. Unlike funds deposited in a traditional campaign account, however, super PAC money can also be used for nonelectoral or nongovernmental purposes, including to cover a candidate’s personal expenses such as legal fees.

Legal Defense Funds

Presidents, like other federal officials and candidates, are allowed to set up personal legal defense funds, which they can use to raise money to cover legal bills related to matters surrounding their reputation or fitness for office. These funds, like campaign committees, are subject to strict contribution limits and disclosure requirements. However, gaps in the law often make it easier for high-profile officials like the president to use money from other sources, including super PACs, to cover personal legal bills.

Indeed, while running for reelection in 2024, Trump used his PACs to cover upwards of \$100 million in legal costs for

which he would have otherwise been personally on the hook, and did not bother to set up a traditional legal defense fund.

Other avenues through which individuals and companies are spending money to curry favor with the president include his inaugural committee, his presidential library, and the White House ballroom construction project.

Money is also being used to curry favor with the president through many other channels that are largely — if not entirely — unregulated.

For instance, when a president takes office, they typically celebrate with events organized by an inaugural committee. These committees can rake in unlimited funds from companies and private donors (with very few exceptions), making them appealing options for those looking to curry favor with the new administration. When Trump took office in 2025, his inaugural committee received more than \$245 million, including large donations from Big Tech, cryptocurrency companies, the pharmaceutical industry, fossil fuel interests, and other sectors facing regulation.

Likewise, after leaving office, presidents typically set up a presidential library, which is essentially a museum for documents and artifacts from their time in the White House that is usually intended to cast their legacy in a friendly light. These libraries are funded entirely through private donations with virtually no restrictions on who can donate or how much they can give.

Donors can even pump money into a presidential library fund while the president is still in office. In the first year of Trump’s second administration, his presidential library fund had already received more than \$50 million. Several companies — ABC News, Meta, and Paramount — seeking to settle lawsuits from the president over personal grievances pledged to direct tens of millions of dollars into the library fund. Trump is not the first president to raise money for his library from donors looking for special favors. President Bill Clinton, for instance, notoriously pardoned financier Marc Rich, whose ex-wife had donated \$450,000 to Clinton’s library foundation.

The current administration has also unveiled new avenues for money to make its way into the White House — literally. Construction is currently underway on an opulent new White House ballroom, a project the president pledged to fund through private donations. While legal questions about his authority to order the project abound, the administration has already reportedly raised \$400 million for it. The Trump administration has allowed many donors to the project to remain anonymous, but companies that have been identified publicly — including Amazon, Google, and Palantir — collectively hold billions of dollars in government contracts.

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The ease with which private money can be used to curry favor with — and even be funneled directly to — the president undermines ideals of public service and further reinforces Americans’ already widespread sense that politics and policy are rigged to serve wealthy interests rather than solving the problems that matter most to people’s daily lives. In the wake of Gilded Age corruption, Watergate, and other scandals, Americans mobilized and Congress enacted far-reaching changes. A new era of reform is overdue.

◆ **The Brennan Center for Justice** is an American liberal nonprofit law and public policy institute. The organization is named after Supreme Court justice William J. Brennan Jr. Justice Brennan's idea of a living constitution figures largely into the center's work. Its operations are centered at the New York University School of Law.

The Brennan Center is part think tank, part public interest law firm, and part advocacy group. The organization is involved in issues such as opposing voter ID laws that it believes unduly restrict voter registration, and other barriers to registration and voting, and advocates for redistricting reform and campaign finance reform. (In particular it opposed the Citizens United V. FEC 2010 Supreme Court Decision

◆ Here are extracts from Justice Brennan's obituary by the Washington Post in 1997:

Justice Brennan, Voice of Court's Social Revolution, Dies

By Joan Biskupic, Friday, July 25, 1997

Former Supreme Court Justice William J. Brennan Jr., the progressive voice of the modern court and a justice unequalled for his influence on American life, died yesterday. He was 91.

During his 34 years on the court, Brennan pushed his colleagues to take on a variety of social issues and was widely recognized as the chief strategist behind the court's civil rights revolution.

He was the architect of rulings that expanded rights of racial minorities and women; led to reapportionment of voting districts guaranteeing the ideal of "one person, one vote;" and enhanced First Amendment freedom for newspapers and other media.

A slight man with a ready Irish grin, Brennan was recognized across the political spectrum not only for his legal mastery but as a defender of individual liberty and a voice of civility. Poor health forced his retirement from the court in 1990. (...)

What distinguished Brennan was his ability to forcefully articulate a liberal vision of judging. It was a vision that found the essential meaning of the Constitution not in the past but in contemporary life, prized individual rights beyond what was explicitly written in the text, and compelled him to reach out to right perceived wrongs. He called the Constitution "a sparkling vision of the supreme dignity of every individual," and employed it as a tool of racial equality and social justice.

"The genius of the Constitution rests not in any static meaning it may have had in a world that is dead and gone," he wrote in an essay published in 1997, "but in the adaptability of its great principles to cope with current problems and present needs."

THE ADMINISTRATION – Reports of misconduct

➤ Kash Patel

https://www.washingtonpost.com/video/politics/kash-patel-responds-to-accusations-of-being-drunk-on-the-job/2026/04/22/ac272cfe-0e7c-4699-9e3b-ed94a1ad558b_video.html

The F.B.I. director accused The Atlantic of publishing 'obviously fabricated allegations.'

NYT, April 20, 2026



Kash Patel, the F.B.I. director, sued The Atlantic. Credit...Kenny Holston/The New York Times

The F.B.I. director, Kash Patel, sued The Atlantic on Monday, accusing it of defamation over an article that claimed his excessive drinking and unexplained absences were putting his job in jeopardy.

The [article](#), under the headline "The FBI Director Is MIA," was published on Friday and detailed Mr. Patel's behavior in his role leading the Federal Bureau of Investigation, citing more than two dozen anonymous sources. The author, Sarah Fitzpatrick, wrote that Mr. Patel's conduct had "often alarmed officials at the F.B.I. and the Department of Justice." The article said he "has also earned a reputation for acting impulsively during high-stakes investigations."

➤ Homeland Security Secretary Kirsti Noem

See for example: <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/ce94mggvp9do>

➤ **Labour Secretary Lori Chavez-DeRemer**

Trump's labor secretary steps down amid a misconduct investigation.



Labor Secretary Lori Chavez-DeRemer has been accused of having an affair with a member of her security team and using department resources for personal trips. Credit... Al Drago for The New York Times

Lori Chavez-DeRemer, President Trump's embattled labor secretary, stepped down on Monday as multiple scandals and investigations closed in on her.

"Labor Secretary Lori Chavez-DeRemer will be leaving the Administration to take a position in the private sector," Steven Cheung, a White House spokesman, posted on social media. He said Keith Sonderling, the deputy secretary of labor, would serve as acting secretary.

Pressure on Ms. Chavez-DeRemer had mounted in recent weeks, as investigators and congressional leaders homed in on questions about her conduct in office, and that of her aides and members of her family.

The Labor Department's inspector general's office is nearing the end of a monthslong investigation into a whistle-blower's allegations of professional misconduct by Ms. Chavez-DeRemer and her closest aides. The claims include that she was having an affair with a member of her security team and used department resources for personal trips. Ms. Chavez-DeRemer was expected to be interviewed in the matter in the coming days.

Investigators spoke with several dozen witnesses and uncovered evidence that Ms. Chavez-DeRemer and her staff abused federal spending limits on personal trips, several people familiar with the investigation said, including on fancy hotels, S.U.V. rentals and meals. Four people have left or been forced out of their jobs in connection with the investigation.

Investigators had also reviewed text messages sent to young staff members by Ms. Chavez-DeRemer, her former deputy chief of staff, her husband and her father. The messages, reported last week by The New York Times, suggested that the secretary was drinking during the workday and raised questions about professionalism with her staff.

Ethics Pledges by Trump Cabinet Draw Questions and Skepticism

By **Eric Lipton**, Reporting from Washington

The New York Times, Feb. 1, 2025

Publicly released agreements show the vast wealth of President Trump's cabinet picks and the uncharacteristically large list of potential conflicts of interest with which they enter office.

Chris Wright, who for nearly 15 years has run an oil and gas fracking company called Liberty Energy, is slated to get paid his last bonus from the company in March, presumably even after he is running the Energy Department. Credit... Anna Rose Layden for The New York Times



Once Pam Bondi is confirmed as attorney general, she will be free to handle matters involving some of her former lobbying clients, thanks to an agreement she signed with federal government officials.

That agreement will not prove to be unusual in the second Trump administration.

Chris Wright, after his expected confirmation as energy secretary, will oversee federal policy as it relates to oil and gas companies nationwide, even as he expects to receive a million-dollar bonus from the Colorado-based oil-industry service company he currently runs.

Robert F. Kennedy Jr., if confirmed as health secretary, intends to allow a member of his family to accept a cut of the proceeds in a group of lawsuits pending against one of the

world's largest pharmaceutical companies, even as he will have oversight of the Food and Drug Administration. Those are just a few details included in publicly released letters that lay out negotiated agreements between the members of the new administration and federal ethics officials.

These letters, and associated financial disclosures, illustrate the extraordinary wealth of Mr. Trump's cabinet picks, as well as the uncharacteristically large list of potential conflicts of interest with which they enter the government.

Each signed letter is supposed to detail what decisions these officials can be involved in, and which they must stay away from, to avoid violating federal conflict of interest rules.

For example, Ms. Bondi, the former Florida attorney general turned lobbyist, agreed that for one year after her confirmation as U.S. attorney general she will refrain from doing business on "any particular matter" that involve parties represented by Ballard Partners, her former firm. She also agreed not to do business with any clients she personally represented for one year from when she last dealt with them.

That there are so many redlines being identified — and other situations where nominees are being given clearance to remain involved in matters despite outstanding family or past financial ties — is perhaps not surprising. Mr. Trump's cabinet nominees have combined assets worth at least \$1.5 billion, according to counts by The New York Times.

A total of 467 separate conflicts that require recusal, meaning at least temporarily the official cannot handle certain matters, have been identified in 15 of these ethics letters filed so far by senior Trump administration officials or those pending confirmation, according to a tally by Campaign Legal Center. The largest number of these recusal requirements will be imposed on Howard Lutnick, a Wall Street financier and the nominee for Commerce Department secretary, who at least initially must refrain from being involved in certain matters involving 106 different corporate entities.

To outside ethics lawyers, this is a minefield of potential problems, and reason to be apprehensive, given that during Mr. Trump's first term, several of his cabinet members failed to honor ethics promises they made to avoid actions that benefited their families or financial interests.

The White House press office did not respond to a request for comment.

President Trump, as well, has already made clear that he sees nothing wrong with taking official government acts that could benefit his family's finances, such as appointing a crypto-friendly lawyer to oversee the Securities and Exchange Commission, just as his sons helped start two different cryptocurrency businesses.

The concern escalated late last week when Mr. Trump moved to fire — perhaps illegally — more than a dozen inspector generals at federal agencies, offices that in the past have investigated allegations of wrongdoing by top political appointees, including several of Mr. Trump's cabinet members when he was serving his first term.

Mr. Trump, at least so far, has not adopted his own formal ethics guidelines, a step every president since President

Obama has taken to supplement criminal and civil conflict of interest laws for top political appointees to attempt to prevent even the appearance of a conflict of interest.

These memos typically include "revolving door" bans that limit the hiring of federal officials who had just left jobs as lobbyists, so they are not overseeing industries they had recently tried to influence. The concern continues, in some cases, even after Mr. Trump's nominees sell ownership stakes in various businesses, as they might still have relationships or perhaps outstanding but more narrow financial ties with their former companies or clients.

"The array of potential conflicts is huge," said Kedric Payne, general counsel at Campaign Legal Center, a nonprofit watchdog group, which shared a copy of its database of all the ethics letters and commitments that the incoming cabinet members have made. "And there is no certainty there will be enforcement. Ethics is not an issue you need to focus on. That is the message so far from the top."

Several requirements of the appointees are designed to reduce conflicts of interest and enhance transparency.

First and foremost, federal criminal law prohibits executive branch employees — with the exception of the president and vice president — from taking any action that financially benefits themselves or family members.

Federal law also requires top federal officials, including all the incoming cabinet members, to submit a financial disclosure report that details the money they made in the prior year or two, the value of all their assets and any stocks or other investments they own.

In addition, every federal agency has a designated agency ethics officer who reviews those filings and then helps the incoming federal employee draft the ethics letter that explains which of these assets the new official must sell off upon confirmation to avoid any conflict and what other steps will be taken to avoid ethics violations.

Image



Howard Lutnick revealed holdings in more than 800 separate corporate entities collectively worth nearly \$1 billion. Credit...Kenny Holston/The New York Times

For example, Mr. Lutnick, who is awaiting confirmation to serve as the new commerce secretary, promised in a 28-page ethics letter he signed on Jan. 21 that for at least one year after he takes office he will "not participate personally and substantially in any particular matter" that involves BGC Group, Newmark Group or Cantor Fitzgerald, all financial firms that he has helped run for years and is selling his interests in.

Mr. Lutnick also agreed to take any bonus payments he was owed by these companies before Jan. 23 — so he no longer would be paid directly by them while in office. As a result, the ethics letter implies, once he has finished selling off his ownership stake, he will still be able to participate in decisions he knows might have “a direct and predictable effect on the financial interests” of his former companies — as long as executives there are not directly involved in pushing for these policies.

The challenge is that Mr. Lutnick’s financial disclosures show holdings in more than 800 separate corporate entities collectively worth nearly \$1 billion, often with obscure names like “CF WG Net Lease Mezz LLC.” That makes it all but impossible for outsiders to police his ethics promises, as the specific nature of these corporate entities, the full list of officers and the investments they are involved in are not often public.

Mr. Lutnick said he will eliminate any of these conflicts with the sale of these holdings.

“I’ve made enough money in my life,” he said at his confirmation hearing this month. “I can take care of myself, I can take care of my family. It is now my chance to serve the American people.”

He still will have ties to at least some of his former firms: Cantor Fitzgerald in December announced that his son, Brandon Lutnick, 27, had been appointed the new chief executive of one of its related entities, Cantor Equity Partners. Mr. Wright, who for nearly 15 years has run an oil and gas fracking company called Liberty Energy that is now publicly traded and has a \$3.1 billion market capitalization, is slated — as detailed in his ethics agreement — to get paid his last bonus from the company in March, presumably even after he is running the Energy Department.

He also has promised to not participate personally and substantially in any matter that directly affects Liberty Energy, at least as it relates to “ability or willingness of Liberty Energy” to pay him this bonus, the ethics agreement he signed on Jan. 14 says.

Mr. Wright was also asked at his confirmation hearing if he was “aware of any personal holdings, investments or interests that could constitute a conflict.” His answer was “I am not.” Senator Ron Wyden, Democrat of Oregon, who until last month was chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, separately questioned Scott Bessent, the financier slated to take over the Treasury Department, during his confirmation hearing if he supports extending the tax cuts Mr. Trump secured during his first term.

The tax cuts broadly benefited wealthy Americans and financial firms, including Mr. Bessent’s hedge fund, known as Key Square Group, as most such funds benefit through a pass-through income provision that lowers federal taxes.

Supporting the extension of the tax cuts would not likely bring a particular interest to his former firm, so there is no limit in his ethics letter on his playing such a role, and Mr. Bessent said he intended to do so.

“This is the single most important economic issue of the day,” Mr. Bessent told senators during the hearing this month. “This is pass/fail. If we do not fix these tax cuts, if we do not renew and extend, then we will be facing an economic calamity.”

Mr. Trump’s appointees, in his first term, were frequently cited by outside ethics lawyers and in some cases even government investigators, for violating promises to act ethically.

Elaine Chao, who served as Mr. Trump’s transportation secretary, was criticized by the department’s inspector general after articles were published in The Times, for repeatedly using her office staff to help family members who ran a shipping business affiliated with China.

And Ryan Zinke, who was interior secretary, continued to negotiate with developers about a real estate project in his Montana hometown that he had an interest in, even after he signed an ethics agreement vowing not to participate in such matters. Mr. Zinke, who more recently was elected as a U.S. representative from Montana, also then lied about his role in the matter, the inspector general concluded.

Richard Painter, who served as a White House ethics lawyer during President George W. Bush’s tenure and has written a book on federal ethics policies, said that he expects that the second term of Mr. Trump will feature even less compliance with ethics rules.

“The tone of this administration is going to be a lot more confrontational to the norms of government than even the first Trump administration,” he said, pointing to the recent firing of the inspectors general and the lack of an ethics memo, like every president since Mr. Obama has issued. “It is discouraging. Very discouraging.”

Kate Kelly contributed reporting.

Eric Lipton is an investigative reporter, who digs into a broad range of topics from Pentagon spending to toxic chemicals.

Trump Friend Asked ICE to Detain the Mother of His Child

Paolo Zampolli, a former modeling agent and a longtime Trump ally, was in a custody battle over his son. An ICE official agreed to help.



Paolo Zampolli, right, at Mar-a-Lago with President Trump and his wife, Melania, on New Year's Eve in 2016. Credit...Meghan McCarthy/Glasshouse via ZUMA Wire

By Megan Twohey, Shawn McCreesh and Hamed Aleaziz

The reporters have been examining favors sought in the U.S. immigration system. They welcome tips [nytimes.com/tips](https://www.nytimes.com/tips). *The New York Times*, March 20, 2026 (extract)

Last June, the man credited with introducing President Trump to his wife asked the administration for a favor.

Paolo Zampolli, a former modeling agent turned presidential special envoy, had learned that his Brazilian ex-girlfriend was in a Miami jail, arrested on charges of fraud at her workplace. They had been in a custody battle over their teenage son. Now he saw an opportunity.

He reached out to a top official at Immigration and Customs Enforcement, explaining that his ex was in the country illegally, according to records obtained by *The New York Times* and a person familiar with the communications. Could she be put in ICE detention? That could help him get his son back.

The official, David Venturella, promptly called the agency's Miami office to ensure that ICE agents would pick up the woman from the jail before she was released on bail, according to the records and a person with knowledge of the conversation who requested anonymity to discuss it. During the call, Mr. Venturella noted that the case was important to someone close to the White House.

The woman, Amanda Ungaro, was placed in ICE custody and ultimately deported, an outcome that may well have happened regardless of Mr. Zampolli's meddling. But the ICE official's willingness to spring into action for a Trump ally — even one in a low-level, largely ceremonial role — reflects a recurring theme of the second Trump administration: The levers of the federal government can be pulled to settle a personal score.

CULT OF PERSONALITY? DELUSIONS OF GRANDEUR?



Everything With Trump's Name, Likeness and Signature

By [Ashley Cai](#)

The New York Times, March 28, 2026

As anyone who has ever seen his buildings knows, Donald Trump has always liked to see his name displayed prominently. It's become [a hallmark of his presidency](#), to the point that the Treasury Department announced on Thursday that President Trump's signature [will appear on U.S. dollars later this year](#), a first for a sitting U.S. president.

The move is the latest reflecting a push to imprint his personal brand on Washington and the nation in ways that could outlast his presidency.

In total, since the start of Mr. Trump's second term, there have been more than a dozen instances of his name, image or signature emblazoned on a variety of American initiatives and institutions. Some changes seem as if they could be lasting, some are caught up in the courts, and others may never get off the ground.

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2026/03/28/us/politics/trump-signature-name-image.html>

That ugly ballroom epitomises the story of Donald Trump's presidency

It illustrates his key means, methods, and goals, and reveals the true nature of his achievements



Illustration: David Simonds

The Economist, Apr 9th 2026 - [United States](#) | Lexington

With so many lives at risk in the Middle East in recent weeks, it seemed frivolous if not immoral to care whether the White House got a new ballroom. It just did not seem to matter much, then, now or ever. And yet the president of the United States, who would seem to have more reason than most to obsess over the war, insisted even as bombs were falling that the ballroom was “very important”. And so maybe attention should be paid.

But why? Well, Donald Trump likes to emphasise that “a lot of people are talking about” how beautiful the White House addition will be. Tastes vary, though; more people are talking about how fussy and steroidal the design is. Mr Trump and his aides also keep saying that presidents for 150 years wanted a giant ballroom. That deepens the mystery: what makes it a priority now? Presumably, if those presidents wanted a ballroom yet chose not to build it, they must have wanted even more to devote their attention to other matters. And the present era, like previous ones, offers challenges besides holding big parties.

Then on March 31st a federal judge, Richard Leon, ruled that in demolishing the old East Wing and starting to build his addition, which at 90,000 square feet is nearly double the size of the White House mansion, Mr Trump usurped Congress's authority. Judge Leon, a conservative, peppered his irate opinion with exclamation marks, responding to some of Mr Trump's claims with an eye-rolling “Please!” Still, all Mr Trump needed to do, Judge Leon wrote, was to get Congress's authorisation. Pending that, he blocked construction except as needed for security. Mr Trump's lawyers responded on April 3rd with exclamation points of their own, in an appeal declaring the president to be within his rights. With Trumpian redundancy they thrice called the ballroom “desperately needed”, and they declared it beautiful. But they also insisted it “serves mission-critical national security goals”. The roof, for example, is meant to be proof against drones.

Regardless of who prevails in court, the legal papers help illuminate why the ballroom matters: because it is the most complete model to date of Mr Trump's ambition, methods and means. It is, in short, the Trumpiest thing he has attempted. However vast the ballroom proves to be, it will not provide jobs or health care, or even state-dinner invitations, to the left-behind, anti-elitist, anti-swamp voters Mr Trump relies upon. And yet, though most Americans oppose the project, MAGA adherents overwhelmingly support it, revealing the direction in which MAGA loyalty truly runs. These Republicans are devoted to serving Mr Trump in his great goal, also exemplified by the ballroom: to make his enduring mark. “I'm fighting wars and

other things,” he acknowledged recently, but he wanted to talk to reporters about the ballroom instead “because this is going to be with us for a long time”.

It is—again—just a ballroom. And yet it also reveals Mr Trump’s contempt for the Framers’ foundational preoccupation with checking executive power. Just as he claimed he could impose tariffs on any country for any reason, also to protect national security, he has asserted awesome power over federal property. His theory is so sweeping, Judge Leon wrote, that it would license him to tear down the White House and replace it with a skyscraper. “No statute comes close to giving the president the authority he claims to have,” the judge wrote. Congress, he pointed out, has historically exercised such close oversight of the White House that it prescribes the number of staff and their pay.

This points to another dimension, and weakness, of the Trump method. Before renovating the White House in 1949, Harry Truman recommended, and Congress created, a commission to oversee the work, with members drawn from the executive and legislative branches. Mr Trump sought approval for his plan from two commissions, but only after Judge Leon ordered him to in a previous ruling—and only after Mr Trump stacked them with allies. As critics have noted, his design included stairs that led nowhere and columns so densely packed they would block the view and admit little light. No doubt construction projects can get mired in bureaucracy. But as Mr Trump has discovered in Iran, there is danger in substituting affirmation from lackeys for intelligent scrutiny.

Master blaster

And the ballroom is proving a very temple of bootlicking. To any doubts, Mr Trump’s aides respond by extolling him as a “master builder” or the best developer “in the entire world”. His lawyers declare the project to be under budget, though the price tag has already quadrupled from the \$100m the president initially declared. They make a virtue of what in previous presidencies would be a vice, that Mr Trump has raised the money from private sources through another signature move—soliciting donors eager for presidential favour, some of whom may never be named. Mr Trump’s allies insist the project will not cost taxpayers anything. That claim values the time of the president and his aides, along with all future maintenance of the colossus, at nothing.

When the Supreme Court considered Mr Trump’s use of tariffs, his lawyers argued, unsuccessfully, that what was done was done: it would be too hard for the government to refund the money. (One might conclude Mr Trump believes in asking for forgiveness rather than permission, if he believed in asking for forgiveness.) They are trying the same move now, lamenting the “large hole beside the Executive Residence”. Here is revealed Mr Trump’s essence, that of a freewheeling pragmatist untethered by any principled attachment to the rule of law. And this is why the hole itself, rather than Trump’s Folly if it is built in the end, would be the most apt monument to this presidency. It has proved far more successful at demolishing venerable if neglected structures than at building anything new, and remotely as beautiful. ■

What we know about White House plans for an 'Arc de Trump'

BBC, October 16 2025 <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/cy7e8lv176go>

Lawrence Vale, urbaniste : « Aux Etats-Unis, beaucoup voient le remodelage de Washington par Trump comme une métaphore de sa politique »

Propos recueillis par [Stéphanie Le Bars](#) , Le monde , 24 avril 2026

Entretien - Arc de triomphe, salle de bal de la Maison Blanche, statues... Le professeur d’urbanisme au Massachusetts Institute of Technology analyse pour « Le Monde » les initiatives du président américain, qui s’efforce d’imprimer sa marque sur la capitale fédérale en multipliant les projets fastueux.

Lawrence Vale est professeur d’urbanisme et de conception urbaine à la School of Architecture and Planning du Massachusetts Institute of Technology, à Cambridge, aux Etats-Unis. Il a ouvert [le symposium « Architecture et identité nationale »](#), organisé par la Société des historiens de l’architecture, les 21 et 22 mars, à Washington.

Jardin des héros, arc de triomphe monumental, immense salle de bal à la Maison Blanche, bannières

géantes à son effigie sur des bâtiments publics... Donald Trump veut marquer Washington, la capitale fédérale américaine, de son empreinte. Y a-t-il d’autres exemples de ce type dans l’histoire américaine ?

Ce que Donald Trump cherche à faire est sans précédent, non par l’ampleur de la refonte de Washington, mais par la variété des lieux sur lesquels il intervient. On a beaucoup parlé des dorures des bureaux de la Maison Blanche, de la destruction spectaculaire de l’aile est et de la transformation de la roseraie en terrasse. Mais, à l’extérieur, Lafayette Square est aujourd’hui entouré de barrières de chantier, alors qu’il s’agit d’un lieu traditionnel de protestation et de rassemblements. Depuis l’installation de barrages de sécurité, en 2025, il est presque impossible de s’approcher de la Maison Blanche.

La « maison du peuple » [*People's House*] s'est isolée du peuple.

Jamais un président n'avait apposé son nom ou son image sur des bâtiments fédéraux alors qu'il était encore en fonctions. C'est pourtant le cas aujourd'hui, notamment aux ministères du travail et de la justice, où d'immenses bannières à l'effigie de Trump ont été déployées. Ajouter son nom à un bâtiment fédéral, comme il l'a fait avec le Kennedy Center [*principal centre culturel de Washington*], relève typiquement des prérogatives du Congrès, qui avait voulu bâtir un mémorial à John F. Kennedy. Ce serait comme si Georges Pompidou avait lui-même décidé de rebaptiser Beaubourg « centre Pompidou » de son vivant, ou si le président actuel venait à le renommer « centre Macron-Pompidou ». Au lieu des *checks and balances*, ce système de contre-pouvoirs prévu par la Constitution, nous avons désormais des conseils ad hoc composés de personnes loyales au président, qui valident ses décisions.

Quel sens politique donner à ces initiatives ?

Les interventions de Trump à Washington confondent patriotisme et nationalisme, avec quelque chose qui relève d'abord de son identité personnelle. Il n'y a rien de comparable avec par exemple les grands travaux lancés par François Mitterrand : pyramide du Louvre, Bibliothèque nationale de France, Grande Arche de la Défense, Opéra Bastille...

Sans doute Trump voit-il ses portraits comme un rappel de ses politiques, en y accolant des slogans [*par exemple* « Make America Safe Again » (« *rendre sa sécurité à l'Amérique* »), *sur la façade du ministère de la justice*]. Mais au cours de sa carrière de promoteur immobilier, il s'est fait connaître en vendant sa « marque ». Prenez la tour Trump à Chicago : non seulement elle domine le centre-ville, mais son nom y apparaît en lettres de 6 mètres de haut, illuminées la nuit.

Faut-il y voir une forme de culte de la personnalité ?

Il cherche à s'adresser à une portion de la population plutôt qu'à l'ensemble du pays. Quand près de 40 % des Américains le soutiennent, on ne peut pas parler de culte de la personnalité au sens classique. C'est avant tout une figure qu'un public apprécie et que lui-même écoute en retour, ce qui exacerbe la polarisation du pays.

Au-delà de l'omniprésence de son nom, ce qui frappe est la manière dont il s'affranchit massivement des procédures. Il veut que les choses aillent vite, quitte à passer outre les agences spécialisées ou le Congrès. C'est l'une des raisons pour lesquelles ces projets attirent autant l'attention. Beaucoup y voient une métaphore de la politique Trump, celle d'une administration bafouant les règles avec une forme de jubilation.

S'affranchir des normes, c'est précisément ce que ses partisans aiment – et ce qui gêne ses détracteurs. C'est le cas de son projet d'arc de triomphe : au-delà de ses énormes dimensions, un tel monument demeurerait incontournable alors qu'un nom ou une photo sur un bâtiment public peuvent toujours être retirés.

Que penser de cet arc monumental, présenté par Trump comme « le plus haut du monde » ?

Dans son esprit, l'idée était de surpasser l'Arc de triomphe à Paris [*49,54 mètres*], d'au moins quelques centimètres. Puis il a été séduit par l'idée de construire un bâtiment de 250 pieds [*76 mètres*] pour les 250 ans des Etats-Unis [*le 4 juillet 2026*], ce qui ferait de l'« arc Trump » le plus haut du monde, devant celui de Kim Il-sung, érigé en 1982 en Corée du Nord [*60 mètres*]. Il est heureux que personne ne lui ait parlé de celui [*de 117 mètres*] qu'Hitler envisagea de construire à Berlin !

En pratique, je vois mal comment un tel projet pourrait être mené en quelques mois, d'autant qu'il serait bâti sur un terrain relevant des parcs nationaux, avec des autorisations à obtenir, dans une ville où la hauteur des bâtiments est encadrée et où il est difficile d'apporter des modifications permanentes affectant d'autres monuments. Il devrait presque le faire à la manière de Napoléon Bonaparte en 1810, lors de son mariage avec Marie-Louise : mobiliser des centaines d'ouvriers pour ériger une maquette temporaire de l'Arc de triomphe sur des fondations inachevées [*le monument, terminé en 1836, fut finalement dédié à l'armée française*]. Il est aussi possible que ce projet ne soit qu'une provocation, destinée à irriter ses opposants.

Sur le fond, ce monument est censé représenter la grandeur nationale, le patriotisme, et donner à Washington une allure plus classique ou néoclassique. Parce qu'il serait situé sur la route menant au cimetière militaire d'Arlington, certains y voient aussi une référence aux sacrifices consentis pour la liberté du pays : un hommage aux soldats, comme dans la Rome antique ou dans le Paris du XIX^e siècle. Pour Trump, il s'agit surtout de symboliser le triomphe : il parle en permanence de « victoires », qu'il s'agisse de gagner des guerres, de l'emporter devant des tribunaux ou, face à la bureaucratie, de vaincre ses détracteurs.

Ses initiatives s'inscrivent-elles dans une tradition américaine ?

Pas exactement. Les premier et troisième présidents, George Washington [*1732-1799*] et Thomas Jefferson [*1743-1826*], furent très impliqués dans le modelage de Washington et dans le choix d'architectes comme Pierre L'Enfant. Mais il fallut attendre les années 1880 pour voir l'achèvement du Washington Monument ; puis le XX^e siècle pour les mémoriaux dédiés à Jefferson [*1943*] et à Abraham Lincoln [*1922*].

La ville a connu deux phases de développement : à la fin du XVIII^e siècle, avec l'installation du siège du gouvernement dans une nouvelle capitale, puis au début du XX^e avec la commission McMillan, qui proposa l'extension des parcs et la construction de bâtiments fédéraux néoclassiques. Tout cela relevait de cette commission sénatoriale, et non de la seule volonté d'un président.

Contrairement à Trump, ces présidents ont mis en place des dispositifs de supervision des travaux, avec un

respect pour l'expertise et la consultation. Les plans élaborés en 1901-1902, notamment pour *[les bâtiments officiels du]* « Triangle fédéral », ont mis plus de vingt ans à être réalisés. Les grands changements intervenus à Washington se sont donc étalés sur des décennies, voire des siècles. Rien de ce que fait ou pourrait faire Trump n'est à cette échelle.

Peut-on comparer cette stratégie à d'autres projets architecturaux dans l'histoire récente ?

Toutes sortes de régimes y ont eu recours. En France, Paris est remodelé sous la monarchie puis, surtout, sous le Second Empire. Napoléon III et le baron Haussmann modernisent la ville, mais déplacent aussi de nombreux habitants. Au XX^e siècle, de Mussolini en Italie à Mao en Chine, en passant par Hitler en Allemagne, des dirigeants transforment Rome, Pékin et Berlin pour affirmer leur pouvoir politique. Pour les régimes forts, c'est aussi un moyen de contrôler les populations.

Plus récemment, en 2024, le Nord-Coréen Kim Jong-un a annoncé qu'il renonçait à la réunification des deux Corées. Il l'a signifié de manière encore plus explicite qu'un discours, en faisant démolir l'arche monumentale qui symbolisait cette réunification. De grands projets surgissent aussi dans les démocraties, comme en Inde, où *[le premier ministre Narendra]* Modi a lancé son projet de développement « Central Vista » à New Delhi, qui redessine l'espace le plus symbolique du pouvoir au cœur de la capitale.

Quelles sont les inspirations architecturales de Trump ?

En août 2025, Trump a publié le décret Making Federal Architecture Beautiful Again [*« rendre sa beauté à l'architecture fédérale »*], reprenant un projet présenté à la fin de son premier mandat *[2017-2021]*, qui exprimait sa préférence pour le « style classique ». Pour lui, le beau relève du classique, même si ses réalisations en tant que promoteur immobilier ne correspondent pas à ce style et paraissent au contraire ouvertes à des tendances contemporaines – comme s'il voulait distinguer les bâtiments fédéraux de ceux destinés au marché privé. Je suppose que ce goût pour le « classique » repose sur l'idée, déjà présente chez Jefferson, que la tradition néoclassique est une métaphore de la démocratie et renvoie aux grands moments de la Grèce antique et de la Rome ancienne. Il sera intéressant de voir les plans prévus pour le Kennedy Center : veut-il régler des

problèmes réels de ce bâtiment ou le transformer pour qu'il ne ressemble plus à un temple moderniste des années 1960, mais plutôt à une sorte de Parthénon ?

Quels projets pourraient lui survivre ?

Les principaux sont les modifications de la Maison Blanche, en particulier l'aile est et la salle de bal. En revanche, il ne faudra sans doute pas longtemps à son successeur pour en faire disparaître les dorures. Et, bien sûr, l'arc de triomphe, s'il voit le jour. Nombre de projets portés par Trump font cependant l'objet de contestations qui entraînent des retards. Un juge a suspendu une grande partie de la construction de la salle de bal, le 31 mars *[elle a été autorisée par la cour d'appel, le 18 avril]*, mais le projet a reçu l'accord de la National Capital Planning Commission trois jours plus tard – dont le président, nommé par Trump, a tenu à préciser qu'il n'était pas partie à la plainte.

Comment peut-il marquer les esprits lors des commémorations du 250^e anniversaire de l'indépendance des Etats-Unis ?

Pour 2026, on peut s'attendre à des défilés géants, des expositions et des feux d'artifice, plus qu'à de grands projets de constructions permanentes. En 1976, pour le bicentenaire, une partie du métro de Washington avait été, elle, achevée à temps.

Où en est le projet de Jardin national des héros américains, et de ses 250 statues, relancé en avril 2025, après une tentative lors du premier mandat de Donald Trump ?

A l'approche du 4 juillet, on ne sait toujours pas clairement si un lieu, des artistes ou une liste définitive de personnalités ont été arrêtés pour le Jardin des héros. Le décret laisse aux responsables de la Maison Blanche le soin de choisir les figures honorées, ce qui suggère qu'elles refléteront le récit historique qu'ils souhaitent promouvoir. Dans ce contexte, il serait judicieux que les gens regardent le travail de Ken Burns *[réalisateur américain célèbre pour ses longs documentaires sur l'histoire du pays]* sur la révolution américaine, qui commémore à la fois l'événement et la complexité des personnages et des alliances de l'époque. Je reste convaincu que ce qui a été construit depuis deux cent cinquante ans est un système solide, conçu pour empêcher le retour des rois. La majorité des Américains et la force des institutions finiront par s'imposer.

See also this really state-of-the-art infographic from Le Monde, April 24, 2026

https://www.lemonde.fr/international/visuel/2026/04/25/en-cartes-comment-donald-trump-transforme-washington-en-scene-de-son-pouvoir-personnel_6683213_3210.html

News Analysis

Trump's Relentless Self-Promotion Fosters an American Cult of Personality

President Trump has engaged in a spree of self-aggrandizement unlike any of his predecessors, fostering a mythologized superhuman persona and making himself the inescapable force at home and around the world."

By [Peter Baker](#) (Peter Baker, the chief White House correspondent, is covering his sixth presidency. He reported from Washington.)

The New York Times, Feb. 15, 2026 - [Leer en español](#)

<https://www.nytimes.com/2026/02/15/us/politics/trumps-american-cult-of-personality.html>

The racist online video that President Trump recently shared and then deleted generated a bipartisan furor because of its portrayal of Barack and Michelle Obama as apes. What was little remarked on was how it presented Mr. Trump himself — as the “King of the Jungle.”

After a year back in the White House, Mr. Trump’s efforts to promote himself as the singularly dominant figure in the world have become so commonplace that they no longer seem surprising. He regularly depicts himself in a heroic, almost godly fashion, as a monarch, as a Superman, as a Jedi knight, as a military hero, even as a pope in a white cassock.

While Mr. Trump has spent a lifetime promoting his personal brand, slapping his name on hotels, casinos, airplanes, even steaks, neckties and bottled water, what he is doing in his second term as president comes closer to building a cult of personality the likes of which has never been seen in American history. Other presidents sought to cultivate their reputations, but none went as far as Mr. Trump has to create a mythologized, superhuman and omnipresent persona leading to idolatry.

His picture has been splashed all over the White House, on multistory banners on the side of federal buildings, on annual passes to national parks and maybe even soon on a one-dollar coin. His name has been etched on the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, on the U.S. Institute of Peace, on federal investment accounts, special visas and a discount drug program and, if he has his way, on Washington Dulles International Airport, Penn Station in New York and the future stadium of the Washington Commanders.

His White House is pressuring the Smithsonian Institution’s National Portrait Gallery to display portraits of Mr. Trump by his supporters. A group of cryptocurrency investors has shelled out \$300,000 to forge a 15-foot-tall gold-covered bronze statue of Mr. Trump called “Don Colossus” to be installed at his golf complex in Doral, Fla. His administration is considering designating a new class of battleships in Mr. Trump’s name. His allies are pressuring foreign leaders to endorse his bid for the Nobel Peace Prize and threatening consequences for resisting. Some supporters in Congress have even proposed adding his face to Mount Rushmore, an effort that, for the moment, has gained little traction.

This spree of self-aggrandizement goes beyond mere vanity, although Mr. Trump suffers from no particular

shortage in that department. “I really have a big ego,” he noted at the National Prayer Breakfast this month, an assessment that drew no disagreement. What Mr. Trump is actually doing, though, is making himself the inescapable force in American life.

“This is not just egotistical self-satisfaction, it’s a way of expanding presidential power,” said Michael Beschloss, the presidential historian. “A president is more powerful, I assume he believes, if he is ever-present than if he keeps his head down.”

Cults of personality are traditionally associated with dictators and demagogues, not democrats. They are figures like Joseph Stalin, Mao Zedong, Benito Mussolini and more recently the shirtless, horseback-riding Vladimir V. Putin of Russia. But Mr. Trump does not seem concerned that he might be heading down a dangerous path.

Indeed, last month at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, he suggested that authoritarianism was not necessarily something to eschew. “Usually they say, ‘He’s a horrible dictator-type person, I’m a dictator,’” he said after delivering a rambling speech. “But sometimes, you need a dictator.”

His staff did not reject the notion that he was fostering a cult of personality when asked for comment. Indeed, it released a statement seeming to argue that one would be deserved.

“President Trump is going to go down in history as the most successful and consequential president in our lifetime,” Steven Cheung, the White House communications director, said in the statement. “He built the most powerful political and cultural movement ever. His successes on behalf of the American people will be imprinted upon the fabric of America and will be felt by every other White House that comes after him.”

But even some former Trump aides said his fixation on glorifying himself served a hunger for dominance that had not translated into making the lives of everyday Americans better.

“This is a man drunk on power with an already enormous ego that was further inflated by winning the presidency again — and the popular vote,” said Sarah Matthews, who was a deputy White House press secretary for Mr. Trump in his first term before resigning in protest after the attack on the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021.

"Don Colossus": une statue dorée de Trump paralysée par un différend financier

La Croix, AFP, 7 février 2026

Allongée sur le dos dans un atelier de l'Ohio, dans le nord des Etats-Unis, la statue dorée de 4,6 mètres de haut de Donald Trump, baptisée « *Don Colossus* » par ses créateurs, n'est pas sous son meilleur jour.



Cette oeuvre monumentale en bronze, recouverte de feuilles d'or, a été conçue pour s'élever sur deux étages une fois installée sur un socle de 2.720 kg.

Mais la statue à 360.000 dollars, qui représente le républicain le poing levé, après la tentative d'assassinat dont il a été victime en juillet 2024, attend depuis plus d'un an d'être érigée.

Son sculpteur, Alan Cottrill, n'a toujours pas été payé par les entrepreneurs en cryptomonnaies qui lui ont passé commande.



Le sculpteur américain Alan Cottrill, 73 ans, dans son atelier de Zanesville, dans l'Ohio, le 5 février 2026 Eli Hiller / AFP

« *Je serais un idiot de l'installer sans que le paiement ait été effectué, et je ne suis pas un idiot* », affirme cet artiste américain de 73 ans, qui affirme qu'on lui doit encore environ 92.000 dollars.

Conçue au départ pour promouvoir un « *memecoin* » - un actif virtuel qui n'a aucune valeur intrinsèque mais qui capitalise sur un moment culturel pour faire monter son prix grâce à la spéculation et à la création d'une communauté -, l'oeuvre est devenue un symbole de l'instabilité de ces jetons particulièrement volatiles.

Mis en vente alors que Donald Trump remportait l'élection présidentielle, en novembre 2024, \$PATRIOT a d'abord suscité un fort engouement chez les trumpistes.

Mais son élan a été rapidement interrompu par le lancement par le président américain, lui-même féru de cryptomonnaie, de son propre actif virtuel.



La statue dorée de Donald Trump dans l'atelier du sculpteur Alan Cottrill à Zanesville, dans l'Ohio, le 5 février 2026 Eli Hiller / AFP

Ce dernier, baptisé \$TRUMP, a été lancé quelques jours avant l'investiture de janvier 2025, et le dévoilement prévu de « *Don Colossus* ».

La valeur de \$PATRIOT, qui continue d'être échangée aujourd'hui, s'est effondrée de plus de 95% par rapport à son pic.

Les liens étroits de Donald Trump avec le secteur des cryptomonnaies ont suscité des accusations de conflits d'intérêts majeurs. L'agence spécialisée Bloomberg estime que la fortune de la famille Trump a augmenté de 1,4 milliard de dollars l'an dernier grâce aux seuls actifs numériques.

« *Ecrasant* »

Dans son atelier de Zanesville, dans l'Ohio, Alan Cottrill parle de son travail avec fierté.

Il a réalisé au moins 17 présidents américains, ainsi qu'une statue de l'inventeur Thomas Edison, exposée au Capitole de Washington, le siège du Congrès américain.

Il était donc enthousiasmé par l'ampleur du projet Trump: « *Quand ils ont parlé de 15 pieds (environ 4,6 mètres) de haut, on commençait à arriver au niveau de mon ego* », plaisante-t-il.

Il lui a fallu un mois pour réaliser la figure grandeur nature, puis trois autres pour la mettre à l'échelle, la couler en bronze et permettre à son équipe de polir et lustrer minutieusement la surface.

« *C'est simplement écrasant. C'est gigantesque* », dit-il.

L'artiste dit avoir conservé le « *cou de dindon* » du dirigeant républicain de 79 ans, mais les commanditaires ont été affolés et ont demandé une version plus flatteuse, moins réaliste.

Le plus grand défi, selon lui, aura été de réaliser la célèbre coiffure de Trump.

« *On ne peut pas sculpter et couler quelque chose qui est... Vaporeux* », lâche-t-il après une hésitation.

Plus d'un an après qu'elle a été terminée, la statue semble enfin avoir trouvé un lieu d'accueil: le complexe de golf Trump National Doral, à Miami, où Alan Cottrill s'est

rendu le mois dernier pour installer le socle. La date d'inauguration reste toutefois incertaine.

Interrogé sur son expérience avec le monde des cryptomonnaies après autant de péripéties, l'artiste se

montre catégorique: « *La réponse courte, c'est que je ne recommencerais pas.* »

Reactions to the president's erratic behaviour and declarations

Explainer-Why Are People Talking About the 25th Amendment to the US Constitution?

By [Reuters](#) - April 10, 2026

President Donald Trump's profanity-laced threats to wipe out Iran's civilization have led some Democrats to discuss attempting to remove him from office by using the 25th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

Such an effort would be an uphill struggle, since doing so would require the support of Trump's fellow Republicans, who control both chambers of Congress. Despite his falling overall public approval, some 82% of Republicans are happy with his presidency.

Trying to remove him from office could also hold political peril for Democrats - who twice tried and failed to remove Trump from office by impeaching him during his first term.

Here is a look at the amendment and the issues:

WHAT IS THE 25TH AMENDMENT?

The 25th Amendment was ratified in 1967. It was introduced after the assassination of President John F. Kennedy in 1963 and is intended to clarify the process of presidential succession, ensuring that the United States always has a functioning president and vice president.

The Constitution's original presidential succession clause did not address vice presidential vacancies. Between President George Washington's first term in 1789 and 1967, the vice presidency was vacant for more than 37 years cumulatively because of death, resignation, or succession to the presidency, according to the Congressional Research Service.

HAS THE 25TH AMENDMENT EVER BEEN INVOKED?

Presidents have invoked Section 3 of the amendment - dealing with circumstances in which the president is unable to discharge their responsibilities - when they knew they would be incapacitated due to medical procedures, such as in 2021, when then-President Joe Biden underwent a colonoscopy.

But Section 4, covering the involuntary removal of a president, has never been invoked. Section 4 allows the vice president and a majority of the president's cabinet, or, alternatively, the vice president and a majority of another

unspecified body designated by Congress, to declare a president unable to discharge the powers and duties of their office.

However, if the president contests that decision, Congress must assemble to decide the issue within 48 hours and two-thirds majorities of both the Senate and House of Representatives must agree that the president is incapable. If not, the president resumes their duties.

HAS THIS BEEN TRIED BEFORE?

Some Democrats, including Senate Democratic Leader Chuck Schumer of New York and then-House Speaker Nancy Pelosi of California, called for then-Vice President Mike Pence to invoke the 25th Amendment after Trump supporters stormed the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021.

But the calls came to nothing. Trump also was impeached twice by the Democratic-majority House, over charges he improperly withheld aid to Ukraine and over the Capitol riot, but there were too few Republican senators willing to back the charges to muster the two-thirds majority necessary to convict him either time.

Trump was elected to a second term in November 2024, winning 312 Electoral College votes to 226 for Biden's vice president, Kamala Harris.

Scott Anderson, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, said an attempt to use the 25th Amendment would fail without a massive Republican defection, as it would need the approval of two-thirds majorities in both the House and Senate.

"It's a political no-go," he said.

Trump's Republicans hold slim majorities in both the Senate and House.

WHAT IS THE POLITICAL RISK?

House Democrats planned a members-only briefing on Friday on "Trump administration accountability" and the 25th Amendment.

But as they fight for control of the House and Senate in November's midterms, Democratic lawmakers have been trying to focus on policy - such as promoting job growth, fighting inflation and broadening the availability of

childcare - rather than presenting themselves mostly as the resistance to Trump.

"We are in the minority. So bringing forward impeachment right now, while he is guilty of a litany of high crimes and misdemeanors, I don't think is the best use of our time," Democratic Representative Madeleine Dean of Pennsylvania told a news conference on Thursday.

Republican House Speaker Mike Johnson, a close Trump ally, criticized Democrats over the issue in a statement on Friday. "Congressional Democrats have no message, no vision, and no leadership, and they are offering nothing to the American people except an irrational hatred of President Donald Trump," Johnson said.

(Reporting by Patricia Zengerle; editing by Michael Learmonth and Rosalba O'Brien)