

Written Testimony of

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before the

**The House of Representatives Committee on Ways & Means**

on

**“Foreign Influence in American Non-Profits: Unmasking Threats from  
Beijing and Beyond”**

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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am Robert Weissman, co-president of Public Citizen. Public Citizen is a national public interest organization with more than 1 million members and supporters. For more than 50 years, we have advocated with some considerable success for corporate and government accountability, and for ethics and honest government.

The Committee is right to train its sights on foreign influence in U.S. politics and policymaking. Unfortunately, such an examination reveals that the Trump administration is systematically dismantling the agencies, programs, systems and policies designed to identify and monitor foreign influence and to deter and punish improper foreign efforts to impact U.S. policymaking and elections. Even more concerning, President Trump and his family's business partnerships and entanglements with foreign interests are giving foreign interests direct influence over the president, unavoidably and consequentially impacting U.S. policymaking.

This testimony evaluates the ways in which President Trump and his administration are overseeing a collapse of democracy-protecting policies designed and needed to restrain undue foreign influence; threatening to weaponize available tools against First Amendment-protected activity; and inviting unprecedented and dangerous foreign influence into the U.S. government through a series of improper business and donor relationships.

The testimony explains:

- Attorney General Pam Bondi issued a policy memo last February signaling the Department of Justice would not enforce the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA), the most important disclosure system to monitor foreign influence in the United States.
- In September, the administration issued a National Security Presidential Memorandum that effectively called for selective and weaponized use of FARA against political opponents.
- Political Dark Money has risen to astronomical levels, supporting both major parties, and secret spending channels afford foreign interests a means to infuse large sums to influence U.S. elections. The DISCLOSE Act would solve this problem and should be passed into law promptly.
- The Trump administration has undermined the key agencies to combat undue foreign influence, including the Inspector General system, the Internal Revenue Service, the Justice Department's Public Integrity section and anti-foreign disinformation offices at the Departments of Homeland Security and State.
- President Trump's major business and donor involvements with foreign governments and foreign nationals is unavoidably, consequentially and dangerously impacting U.S. policymaking.

## **FAILING TO MONITOR FOREIGN INFLUENCE**

The most important tool to monitor foreign influence in U.S. politics and policymaking is the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA). FARA requires those acting as an "agent of a foreign principal" to register with the Justice Department and disclose their activities if they engage in

“political activities” on behalf of a foreign principal; do public relations for foreign principals; raise money for foreign principals; or represent the interests of a foreign principal before the U.S. government.<sup>1</sup> It establishes an aggressive disclosure framework so that the public and policymakers alike know who is operating as a foreign agent and what they are doing.

The law traces back to 1938. Even as a robust foreign influence industry grew up in Washington, D.C. and around the country, it fell out of fashion, with low levels of compliance and little or no enforcement. That changed during the first Trump administration, with a new assertion of the importance of FARA compliance and some high-profile enforcement actions,<sup>2</sup> continuing into the Biden administration.<sup>3</sup>

Unfortunately, one of Attorney General Pam Bondi’s earliest policy moves was to issue a policy memo announcing minimal enforcement of the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA) and elimination of the National Security Division’s Foreign Influence Taskforce – the office in charge of countering foreign influence.<sup>4</sup> The memo limited FARA enforcement to “alleged conduct similar to more traditional espionage by foreign government actors.” It is reasonable to wonder if AG Bondi took this action because she had been required to register under FARA as an agent of Qatar.<sup>5</sup>

Bondi’s memo scaling back FARA to apply only in cases similar to foreign espionage gravely undermines the very purpose of the law. FARA is a disclosure law, not an anti-espionage law. Its sole purpose is to inform the public of any efforts by foreign governments to influence U.S. domestic or foreign policy or public opinion generally.

Bondi’s memo directly undermined the ability of the public and policymakers to obtain exactly the kind of information with which this Committee is concerned today.

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<sup>1</sup> Foreign Agents Registration Act of 1938, as amended, 22 U.S.C. § 611 *et seq.*

<sup>2</sup> David Rybicki, “Increased FARA Enforcement is Here to Stay,” K&L Gates Hub, December 17, 2020, <https://www.klgates.com/Increased-FARA-Enforcement-Is-Here-to-Stay-A-Debrief-on-ACIs-Second-National-Forum-on-FARA-12-17-2020>

<sup>3</sup> Adam S. Hickey, Timothy J. Keeler, Jonathan H. Becker, Mickey Leibner and Ravi Shah, “The U.S. Foreign Agents Registration Act: Key Issues to Watch in 2024,” Mayer Brown, January 12, 2024, <https://www.mayerbrown.com/en/insights/publications/2024/01/the-us-foreign-agents-registration-act-fara-key-issues-to-watch-in-2024>

<sup>4</sup> Pam Bondi, “General Policy Regarding Charging, Plea Negotiations and Sentencing,” February 5, 2025, U.S. Department of Justice, <https://www.justice.gov/ag/media/1388541/dl?inline>

<sup>5</sup> FARA Statement, filed 7/23/19, stating that Pamela Bondi was registering to lobby on behalf of the Embassy of the State of Qatar; <https://efile.fara.gov/docs/6415-Short-Form-20190723-106.pdf>; FARA Filing by Ballard Partners, filed 7/23/19, reflecting Pam Bondi’s addition to the lobbying contract; <https://efile.fara.gov/docs/6415-Exhibit-AB-20190723-16.pdf> The contract between Bondi’s lobbying firm, Ballard Partners, and the Embassy of Qatar stated that the scope of services was to “provide Government relations strategic advice and advocacy with respect to enhancing US-Qatar bilateral relations, and further developing trade, investment and business opportunities” and to “provide consulting and advocacy services regarding matters involving anti-human trafficking.” The contract between Qatar and Bondi’s lobbying firm states that Bondi would be a “Key Personnel” who would be “personally and substantially engaged in the delivery of the Services.” The contract stated that, after Bondi and another individual were added, Qatar agreed to pay her lobbying firm \$115,000 per month for its services. <https://www.citizen.org/article/conflicted-justice/>

The Trump administration exacerbated the problem in September with the issuance of National Security Presidential Memorandum-7 (NSPM-7).<sup>6</sup> That memo conjured a non-existent domestic terrorist network operating under the banner of “antifa;” it defined domestic terrorism to be inclusive even of trespass; and it associated terrorism with particular viewpoints, including so-called “extremism” on migration, race, and gender, as well “anti-Christianity.” The memo directed the National Joint Terrorism Task Force and its local offices to investigate organizations and persons connected to this non-existent network and their potential violations of FARA. This suggests the weaponization of FARA to attack politically disfavored organizations.

In combination, then, the Bondi memo and NSPM-7 give us the worst of both worlds: generalized non-enforcement of FARA; but weaponization of its criminal sanctions against disfavored viewpoints and organizations.

Both these policies should be reversed: America should have general, robust enforcement of the statute, with no political targeting.

FARA is an imperfect statute and should be reformed based on decades of experience and changed conditions from the time of its passage. Numerous organizations have made serious and detailed proposals to reform and strengthen the statute. Along with technical matters, reform proposals worthy of consideration include focusing the statute on foreign governments, parties and their proxies; and adding a mechanism for civil enforcement.<sup>7</sup> But the prospect of reform is no basis for either non-enforcement or selective, weaponized enforcement.

The information that has been made available through FARA does reveal a great deal about which countries are seeking to exercise legal influence in the United States and their priorities.<sup>8</sup> That information also suggests at least two important policy reforms:

- Foreign agents should be prohibited from making campaign contributions; and
- Members of Congress and top executive branch officials should be prohibited from serving as foreign agents.

## **DARK MONEY AND FOREIGN POLITICAL INFLUENCE**

Apart from direct payments to government officials, the most concerning foreign influence in the United States comes from foreign government expenditures to impact U.S. election results. While foreign governments and persons are prohibited from making direct political contributions, they are able to spend money to influence election results indirectly. The most

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<sup>6</sup> “Countering Domestic Terrorism and Organized Political Violence,” National Security Presidential Memorandum - 7, September 25, 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/09/countering-domestic-terrorism-and-organized-political-violence/>

<sup>7</sup> Task Force on the Foreign Agents Registration Act, “FARA: Issues and Recommendations for Reform,” American Bar Association, October 4, 2021, <https://www.fara.us/task-force-on-fara-releases-report>; Nick Robinson, “FARA Is a Catchall Statute—and That’s a Problem,” Lawfare, January 22, 2025, <https://www.lawfaremedia.org/article/fara-is-a-catchall-statute-and-that-s-a-problem>

<sup>8</sup> See Ben Freeman and Nick Cleveland-Stout, “Foreign Lobbying in the U.S.,” Quincy Institute, July 3, 2024, <https://quincyinst.org/research/foreign-lobbying-in-the-u-s/#>

important vehicle for such funding streams are 501(c)(4) organizations – sometimes called Dark Money or secret spending organizations because they are not required to disclose their funders.

If the Committee is concerned about foreign influence exercised through nonprofits, its top priority should be securing passage of the DISCLOSE Act, which would require 501(c)(4)'s engaged in election activity to disclose their funders above \$10,000 and would eliminate loopholes that enable foreign money to flow into U.S. elections.

These reforms are needed because secret spending has soared since the Supreme Court's *Citizens United* decision – and, because it's secret, we have no way to know the extent of foreign interest funds flowing through Dark Money organizations.

In the 2010 elections, after the *Citizens United* decision, donor disclosure fell to 34 percent for electioneering communications (ads that depict candidates very near an election but do not use the magic words of express advocacy, such as “vote for” or “vote against”) and fell to 70 percent for express advocacy independent expenditures. This was a major shift from years following passage of the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act in 2002; overall donor disclosure collapsed from nearly 100 percent in 2004 and 2006 to about 50 percent in 2010.<sup>9</sup>

In the decade-and-a-half since *Citizens United*, political organizations have learned how to run sophisticated, coordinated efforts among diverse categories of organizations to funnel ever greater levels of undisclosed money into elections. Notably, 501(c)(4)'s and shell companies are directing money to Super PACs, not making direct expenditures, adding another layer of secrecy. All this has supercharged secret spending. Dark Money hit an astounding \$1.9 billion in the 2024 election, with \$1.3 billion in transfers from 501(c)(4)'s and shell companies going to Super PACs.<sup>10</sup> This funding goes to both major parties.

What we don't know is how much foreign money is flowing through these channels.

The DISCLOSE Act would eliminate whatever foreign funding is now entering our elections. Crucially, along with requiring disclosure of all donors over \$10,000 to organizations making election-related expenditures, it would affirmatively close the loopholes that allow foreign nationals to spend in U.S. elections. DISCLOSE Act provisions require certifications that groups are not receiving foreign funding; clarify that the prohibition on foreign funding applies throughout the U.S. election system; establish governmental audits to ensure compliance; and prohibit the creation of shell companies designed to obscure foreign funding, among other measures.

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<sup>9</sup> Taylor Lincoln, “Disclosure Eclipse,” Public Citizen, November 18, 2010, [https://www.citizen.org/wp-content/uploads/eclipsed\\_disclosure111820102.pdf](https://www.citizen.org/wp-content/uploads/eclipsed_disclosure111820102.pdf)

<sup>10</sup> Anna Massoglia, “Dark Money Hit a Record High of \$1.9 Billion in 2024 Federal Races,” Brennan Center, May 7, 2025, <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/dark-money-hit-record-high-19-billion-2024-federal-races>

## TRUMP ADMINISTRATION REMOVES CONTROLS ON IMPROPER FOREIGN INFLUENCE

Preventing improper foreign influence requires not just appropriate law and policy but effective surveillance and enforcement.

Unfortunately, the Trump administration is systematically dismantling the governmental agencies and offices with the technical skill, jurisdiction and authority to prevent and punish improper foreign influence. This includes:

- **Eviscerating Inspectors General:** Inspector Generals (IGs) are the leading edge of anti-fraud and pro-accountability efforts inside the government, including investigations to identify improper foreign influence and activities related to government programs. From the first days of his administration, President Trump launched a full-fledged attack on the government's IGs on a scale and with a persistence that made it clear his objection was not to individual IGs but to the IG system itself.

At the very outset of the administration, Donald Trump fired at least 17 Inspector Generals, in what has been described as a "Friday night massacre."<sup>11</sup> Through October, President Trump had fired more than 65 percent of presidentially appointed IGs. In total, as of October, more than 75 percent of presidentially appointed inspector general positions are vacant.<sup>12</sup> Additionally, Office of Inspector General (OIG) staffing levels have plummeted in just the first year of the administration, according to Office of Personnel and Management data. At the major governmental departments, OIG staffing is down 12 percent or more – including a shocking 30 percent in the case of the Department of Treasury.<sup>13</sup>

- **Slashing the IRS:** The Trump administration is slashing budgets, staffing and enforcement at the Internal Revenue Service (IRS), undermining the agency's capacity to evaluate nonprofit entities and other vehicles for improper foreign influence.

On top of the clawback of the IRA investments in the IRS, the Trump administration has proposed massive budget cuts to the IRS, aiming to reduce the budget by 40 percent over a two-year period. The just-adopted appropriations bill drops the IRS enforcement budget down nearly 10 percent in nominal terms and even more in real terms.<sup>14</sup> Far more severe has been the decline in overall staffing at the IRS. The Trump administration's aggressive assault on the federal workforce, including threatening buyout offers and mass, blanket

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<sup>11</sup> Megan Messerly, Josh Gerstein, Kyle Cheney and Nahal Toosi, "Trump fires independent inspectors general in Friday night purge," Politico, January 25, 2025, <https://www.politico.com/news/2025/01/25/donald-trump-inspectors-general-firing-00200611>

<sup>12</sup> Chris Piper, "President Trump's firing of inspectors general threatens government accountability and efficiency," Partnership for Public Service, October 21, 2026, <https://ourpublicservice.org/blog/president-trumps-firing-of-inspectors-general-threatens-government-accountability-and-efficiency/>

<sup>13</sup> "Workforce Size & Composition," Federal Workforce Data, Office of Personnel Management (OPM), <https://data.opm.gov/explore-data/analytics/workforce-size-and-composition>

<sup>14</sup> The enforcement budget falls from the \$5.44 billion level in FY 23 to \$4.99 billion in FY26. <https://www.congress.gov/bill/119th-congress/house-bill/7006/text>; <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/IF12647>

layoffs of all probationary employees sank overall staffing levels at the IRS by a quarter in a matter of months. Between January 2025 and May 2025, the number of IRS employees decreased from approximately 103,000 to 77,000.<sup>15</sup> The Tax Exempt and Government Entities Division reflects this hemorrhaging, with staffing down 25 percent as of May 2025.<sup>16</sup>

- **Gutting the DOJ's Public Integrity Section.** The Public Integrity Section's attorneys specialize in public corruption cases against elected officials, including where foreign governments have sought improper influence, as was alleged in the case against former New York City Mayor Eric Adams.<sup>17</sup> Two career attorneys resigned after being ordered to drop the charges against Adams. Three dozen experienced attorneys worked in the section before Trump took office; as of September, there were just two.<sup>18</sup>
- **A Blind Eye to Foreign Disinformation:** The Trump administration has closed key offices and programs designed to monitor foreign disinformation campaigns. These include key programs at the Department of Homeland Security and the State Department.<sup>19</sup>

## PRESIDENT TRUMP'S FOREIGN CONFLICTS

By far the greatest threat of improper foreign influence over U.S. policymaking are the range of business and other ties that President Trump and his family are pursuing with foreign governments. These arrangements contravene the Constitution's Emoluments Clause, the most basic ethics standards and plain common sense. Thanks to their business deals, including with foreign governments, the Trump family's wealth has grown by billions since the president's inauguration, according to multiple evaluations.

President Trump's business partnerships with foreign governments and foreign government-connected business entities, and his acceptance of large foreign gifts at nonprofit organizations connected to him, raise grave concerns about whether U.S. policy is being compromised by the president's private business interests.

At the end of January, the Wall Street Journal published a jaw-dropping report on a United Arab Emirates (UAE)-linked company entering into a secret partnership with World Liberty Financial, a cryptocurrency company in which the Trump family holds a 38 percent stake (previously 75

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<sup>15</sup> Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration, "Fiscal Year 2026 Management and Performance Challenges," Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration, 2025, [https://www.tigta.gov/sites/default/files/reports/2025-10/FY%202026%20MMC%20\(Final\).pdf](https://www.tigta.gov/sites/default/files/reports/2025-10/FY%202026%20MMC%20(Final).pdf)

<sup>16</sup> Treasury Inspector General for Tax Administration, "Snapshot Report: IRS Workforce Reductions as of May 2025," July 18, 2025, <https://www.tigta.gov/sites/default/files/reports/2025-08/2025ier027fr.pdf>

<sup>17</sup> Ben Penn, "Two Top Justice Officials Resign for Refusing to Drop Adams Case," Bloomberg Law, February 13, 2025, <https://news.bloomberglaw.com/us-law-week/two-top-justice-officials-resign-for-refusing-to-drop-adams-case>

<sup>18</sup> Jose Pagliary, "The Justice Department Had 36 Lawyers Fighting Corruption Full-Time. Under Trump, It's Down to Two," <https://www.notus.org/courts/doj-public-integrity>

<sup>19</sup> Patrick Tucker, "Shuttering of State office leaves US largely defenseless against foreign influence warfare, officials say," Defense One, April 17, 2025, [www.defenseone.com/threats/2025/04/shuttering-state-office-leaves-us-largely-defenseless-against-foreign-influence-warfare-officials-say/404670/](http://www.defenseone.com/threats/2025/04/shuttering-state-office-leaves-us-largely-defenseless-against-foreign-influence-warfare-officials-say/404670/)

percent). The structure of the deal is complicated but, according to the Wall Street Journal, it effectively deposited \$187 million directly into the bank accounts of the president and his family.<sup>20</sup> Defying common sense, the White House says the deal poses no conflict of interest for the president. But if the administration believes that, why was the deal kept secret? Among other matters involving the UAE, the Trump administration has approved the sale of advanced AI chips to the country, despite fears from national security officials that the technology may be diverted to China.

This newly disclosed deal is the most troubling but otherwise just part of a larger set of compromising foreign entanglements involving the president and his family:

- **World Liberty Financial Inc. (WLFI).** In May, MGX, an investment firm controlled by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and based in Abu Dhabi, bought \$2 billion in World Liberty cryptocurrency, supercharging the business, in a deal reportedly brokered by Changpeng Zhao, the billionaire founder of Binance who would later be pardoned for crimes by Trump. Two weeks after the deal concluded, the Trump administration permitted the UAE to access extremely advanced AI chips. Trump's current Middle East envoy, Steve Witkoff, a real estate developer, helped to launch WLFI, and his son Zach Witkoff is a co-founder of WLFI. On January 29, 2026, Politico reported that World Liberty has applied to launch a federally regulated bank in the U.S., further entangling the Trump family's financial fortunes with government regulatory decisions overseen by Donald Trump.<sup>21</sup>
- **\$TRUMP Meme Coin.** In January 2025, days before his second inauguration, Trump launched the \$TRUMP meme coin. So far, the coin, whose true value is nebulous at best, has reportedly garnered more than \$330 million in sales, and a Reuters analysis found 72 percent of those purchasing the coin were foreigners, while an estimated 1 percent were American. Justin Sun, the Hong Kong-based crypto billionaire is one of the largest known purchasers of the \$TRUMP meme coin, according to media reports.<sup>22</sup> In February 2025, the Securities and Exchange Commission paused an enforcement case against the mogul.

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<sup>20</sup> Sam Kessler, Rebecca Ballhaus, Eliot Brown and Angus Berwick, "'Spy Sheikh' Bought Secret Stake in Trump Company," Wall Street Journal, January 31, 2025, <https://www.wsj.com/politics/policy/spy-sheikh-secret-stake-trump-crypto-tahnoon-ea4d97e8>

<sup>21</sup> Dan Alexander, "Trump Company Reduces Stake In Crypto Venture: As the MAGA faithful continue to throw money at Trump's crypto projects, the first family appears to be walking off with some of its profits," Forbes, June 19, 2025, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/danalexander/2025/06/19/trump-company-reduces-its-stake-in-crypto-venture/>; Tom Wilson, Tom Bergin, Lawrence Delevingne and Michelle Conlin, "Insight: How the Trump family took over a crypto firm as it raised hundreds of millions," Reuters, March 31, 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/business/finance/how-trump-family-took-over-crypto-firm-it-raised-hundreds-millions-2025-03-31/>; Alan Jaffe, "Addressing Trump's Claims About the Pardon of Binance Founder," *FactCheck.Org*, November 12, 2025, <https://www.factcheck.org/2025/11/addressing-trumps-claims-about-the-pardon-of-binance-founder/>; and Declan Harty, "Donald Trump promised to make the US the world's crypto capital. His businesses are seizing on it," Politico, January 29, 2026, <https://www.politico.com/news/2026/01/29/donald-trump-crypto-currency-00753616>

<sup>22</sup> David Gauthier-Villars, Tom Bergin, Michelle Conlin, Lawrence Delevingne and Tom Wilson. "A REUTERS SPECIAL REPORT: Inside the Trump family's global crypto cash machine," Reuters, October 28, 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/investigations/inside-trump-familys-global-crypto-cash-machine-2025-10-28/>; Jonathan Stempel, "US SEC, Tron founder Justin Sun explore resolution of civil fraud case," Reuters, February 26, 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/legal/us-sec-tron-founder-justin-sun-explore-resolution-civil-fraud-case-2025-02-26>

- **Qatari Government’s \$400 Million Boeing 747-8 Aircraft Gift to President Trump.** In 2025, the Qatari government offered to donate a used Boeing 747-8 aircraft, valued at about \$400 million, to Donald Trump for use as a replacement for Air Force One. The aircraft will require an estimated \$1 billion of American taxpayer funded retrofits. News reports have indicated that the President’s plan is to transfer the plane to the Trump presidential library foundation, a 501(c)(3) organization, once he leaves office for his personal use. The plane is expected to be delivered to the United States by this summer.<sup>23</sup>
- **Trump Organization Golf Resort in Qatar.** In April 2025, the Trump Organization sealed a deal with the Qatari government to have a Saudi Arabian company named Dar Global build an 18-hole golf resort in Qatar, along with “Trump-branded” beachside villas. The complex will be developed by a Qatari government-owned company called Qatari Diar and the facility will be located north of Doha, the Qatari capital. At the time, Eric Trump, Executive Vice President of The Trump Organization, said: “We are incredibly proud to expand the Trump brand into Qatar.” In May 2025, President Trump traveled to the Persian Gulf, visiting Qatar, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Saudi Arabia, where he announced a \$142 billion arms deal with the kingdom, as well as arms sales to the UAE.<sup>24</sup>
- **Trump-Dar Global Saudi Project and F-35 Sales.** In January 2026, the Trump Organization announced a deal with Saudi real estate developer Dar Global that will include two Trump-branded luxury projects in Riyadh and Jeddah as part of a \$10 billion development project. The deal includes a Trump National Golf Course and a Trump International Hotel located just outside Riyadh. In Jeddah, on the Red Sea, a mixed-use development named Trump Plaza is intended to feature office space and luxury residential units.<sup>25</sup> In November, President Trump announced that he will approve the sale of F-35s to Saudi Arabia, despite concerns from the Pentagon that the sale may lead to the siphoning of advanced technology to China and despite Saudi Arabia’s abysmal human rights record.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> See: Anne Flaherty, “US accepts 'unconditional donation' of Qatari jet, cost of retrofitting is classified,” ABC News, July 28, 2025, <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/us-accepts-unconditional-donation-qatari-jet-cost-retrofitting/story?id=124150583>; Geoff Bennett and Ian Couzens, “Qatar gifting Trump \$400M luxury jet raises ethical and legal concerns,” PBS News Hour, May 12, 2025, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/qatar-gifting-trump-400m-luxury-jet-raises-ethical-and-legal-concerns>; and Maya Yang, “Boeing jet gifted to Trump by Qatari royal family to be delivered by summer,” The Guardian, January 22, 2026, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2026/jan/22/boeing-jet-trump-qatari-royal-family-delivery>

<sup>24</sup> See: Bernard Condon, “Trump company strikes Qatari golf resort deal in a sign it’s not holding back from foreign business,” Associated Press, April 30, 2025, <https://apnews.com/article/trump-qatar-deal-conflicts-saudi-arabia-empliments-7379bee2e307d39bd43b534a05ae3207>; “Dar Global and The Trump Organization Expand Partnership with New Luxury Golf and Villa Project within Simaisma Masterplan,” The Trump Organization, April 30, 2025, <https://www.trump.com/media/qatari-diar-signs-strategic-agreement-with-dar-global-to-develop-trump-international-golf-club-and-trump-villas-a-beachside-ultra-luxury-community-within-simaisma-masterplan>

<sup>25</sup> “Trump Organization teams with Saudi developer for \$10 billion projects. The projects include the Trump National Golf Course and Trump International Hotel in Riyadh’s Diriyah.” *Middle East Online*, January 11, 2026, <https://middle-east-online.com/en/trump-organization-teams-saudi-developer-10-billion-projects>;

<sup>26</sup> Karoun Demirjian, “Trump Administration Live Updates: U.S. Will Sell F-35 Jets to Saudi Arabia, President Says,” *New York Times*, November 17, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/live/2025/11/17/us/trump-news#trump-f35-jets-saudi-arabia>; Vivian Nereim, “Trump Family’s Business Ties to Saudi Arabia Raise Ethics Worries,” *New York Times*, November 18, 2025, <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/11/18/world/middleeast/trump-family-business-saudi-arabia.html>

- **Jared Kushner & Affinity Partners.** In 2021, Donald Trump’s son-in-law, Jared Kushner, secured a \$2 billion investment in his company Affinity Partners from Saudi Arabia’s Public Investment Fund. In 2023, it was reported that a panel that screens investments for the Saudi sovereign wealth fund (Public Investment Fund) expressed serious concerns about investing in Kushner’s firm, citing the firm’s lack of experience, lack of a thorough due diligence review, excessive management fees charged by Affinity Partners, and potential public relations risks given Kushner’s familial ties to Donald Trump. Despite that, the deal moved forward. In September 2025, Affinity Partners, along with the Saudi sovereign wealth fund, Public Investment Fund, paid \$55 billion to acquire the American video gaming giant Electronic Arts.<sup>27</sup>

The through line for these deals is that foreign governments are directing enormous sums to President Trump and his family in exchange for little (e.g., branding rights, investment strategies that they ridicule) or nothing (outright gifts, meme coins with nebulous value). There should be little doubt that their purpose is to gain favor and influence. If the committee is worried about foreign influence over U.S. policy and policymaking, it should focus on this issue, which overshadows all other channels of influence.

## **BALLROOM DONORS FEAST ON FAVORS**

Americans reacted with shock and dismay to the video showing President Donald Trump’s October demolition of the East Wing of the White House to build a new ballroom, a project the White House estimated would cost \$300 million but for which estimated costs have steadily risen. The funding for the ballroom is coming from giant corporations and super-rich individuals and being routed through a tax-exempt entity, the Trust for the National Mall.<sup>28</sup> The White House released a list of 36 donors to the ballroom project, including 21 corporations and 15 individuals and family foundations; CBS News identified at least three additional corporate donors and there may be others.

The contributions from the corporate and super-rich donors constitute massive, inescapable and irremediable conflicts of interest. These giant corporations – one of which, Tether America, is the subsidiary of an El Salvador-based corporation -- are not funding the Trump ballroom project out of a sense of civic pride. Collectively, these companies have massive interests before the federal government and they undoubtedly hope to curry favor with, and receive favorable treatment

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<sup>27</sup> See: Jeannine Mancini, “Jared Kushner's Post-White House \$2 Billion Saudi Investment Sparked Ethical Debate and Saudi Skepticism Due to 'Inexperience' and 'Public Relations Risks,’” yahoo!finance, September 8, 2023, <https://finance.yahoo.com/news/jared-kushners-post-white-house-211939446.html>; Arnaud Leparmentier. “The double life of Jared Kushner, mixing business with politics as emissary for his father-in-law Donald Trump,” *Le Monde*, October 7, 2025, [https://www.lemonde.fr/en/economy/article/2025/10/07/the-double-life-of-jared-kushner-mixing-business-with-politics-as-emissary-for-his-father-in-law-donald-trump\\_6746194\\_19.html](https://www.lemonde.fr/en/economy/article/2025/10/07/the-double-life-of-jared-kushner-mixing-business-with-politics-as-emissary-for-his-father-in-law-donald-trump_6746194_19.html); and “Electronic Arts Faces Legal Hurdles: Potential Lawsuits Threaten Merger Plans,” *The Globe and Mail*, November 2, 2025, <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/investing/markets/stocks/EA/pressreleases/35855189/electronic-arts-faces-legal-hurdles-potential-lawsuits-threaten-merger-plans/>

<sup>28</sup> Catherine Townsend, Trust for the National Mall, letter to Sen. Elizabeth Warren, November 7, 2025, [https://www.warren.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/response\\_from\\_the\\_trust\\_for\\_the\\_national\\_mall\\_to\\_senator\\_warren\\_11725.pdf](https://www.warren.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/response_from_the_trust_for_the_national_mall_to_senator_warren_11725.pdf)

from, the Trump administration. Millions to fund Trump’s architectural whims are nothing compared to the billions at stake in procurement, regulatory and enforcement decisions.

Public Citizen analyzed the government interests of the disclosed corporate donors, including the 21 corporations released by the White House and three identified by CBS News, for a total of 24.<sup>29</sup> (Two other funding corporations were later revealed.) The analysis found that two-thirds of corporate donors – 16 out of a total of 24 – have entered into government contracts; altogether, the corporate donors received \$279 billion in government contracts over the last five years. Most of the corporate donors – 14 out of 24 – are facing federal enforcement actions and/or have had federal enforcement actions suspended by the Trump administration. The companies and wealthy individual donors have invested gargantuan sums in combined lobbying and political contributions, totaling more than \$960 million during the last election cycle and \$1.6 billion over the last five years. The companies – including Tether America – self-report a stunningly wide array of interests before the federal government, involving everything from taxation to trade policy, battlefield domain awareness to telephone poles, consumer privacy to product liability rules, appropriations to cybersecurity – and much more.

## CONCLUSION

Addressing the challenge of improper foreign influence in the United States requires a major U-turn from the administration, as well as work from this Congress. It involves restoring and revitalizing the policies and programs designed to address foreign influence that the administration has undermined. It requires passage of the DISCLOSE Act to deal with the problem of secret spending in elections, including by foreign parties.

Above all, addressing undue foreign influence demands the president end his foreign business and donor entanglements.

Addressing improper foreign influence is necessary to ensure our democracy works – so that we have a government representative of and responsive to the people of the United States.

But protecting our democracy also requires due regard for the First Amendment rights of all people in the United States, regardless of viewpoint. There’s no place for reckless labeling of political opponents as foreign controlled nor for the government to weaponize its tools to address foreign influence against political opponents.

We can and should have effective instruments to address foreign influence, administered robustly and fairly. Right now, however, the Trump administration is actively degrading those tools while simultaneously threatening to use them as weapons against political adversaries. Our democracy demands a complete reversal.

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<sup>29</sup> Robert Weissman, Michael Tanglis, Eileen O’Grady, Jon Golinger, Rick Claypool and Alan Zibel, “Banquet of Greed: Trump Ballroom Donors Feast on Federal Funds and Favors,” Public Citizen, November 3, 2025, <https://www.citizen.org/article/banquet-of-greed-trump-ballroom-donors-feast-on-federal-funds-and-favors/>