

May 13, 2025

The Honorable John Thune
Majority Leader
United States Senate
511 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Majority Leader Thune,

The Foreign Emoluments Clause of the Constitution states, in part, “no Person holding any Office of Profit or Trust under them, shall, without the Consent of the Congress, accept of any present, Emolument, Office, or Title, of any kind whatever, from any King, Prince, or foreign State.”¹ Fearing corruption and foreign influence, the Founders included the Foreign Emoluments Clause in the Constitution—by unanimous agreement of the state delegations—to ensure the President would remain loyal to the nation and the public interest.² The Foreign Emoluments Clause has long been understood to be “‘directed against every kind of influence by foreign governments upon officers of the United States,’ in the absence of consent by Congress.”³

On May 11, it was reported that the Trump administration was preparing to accept a Boeing 747-8 jumbo jet—an estimated \$400 million “palace in the sky”—as a gift from the Qatari government, to be used as Air Force One while President Trump is in office and transferred to the Trump Presidential Library Foundation following his term.⁴ To accept the plane, one of “the biggest foreign gifts ever received by the U.S. government,”⁵ would be a clear violation of the Foreign Emoluments Clause. President Trump has not sought, nor received, the consent of Congress to accept this plane. Nor would Congress’s consent be forthcoming as the gift is clearly intended to personally benefit the President, rather than the American people, and secure his favor, as his foundation will ultimately own the plane for his personal use once he leaves office. Compounding the concerns arising from this blatant corruption, multiple sources say the United States Air Force will pay for all costs relating to the transfer of the plane to the Trump Presidential Library Foundation.⁶ Moreover, the “palace in the sky” is part of a pattern of

¹ U.S. CONST. art. 1, § 9, cl. 8.

² 2 *The Records of the Federal Convention of 1787*, at 389 (Max Farrand ed., 1911).

³ Application of Emoluments Clause to Part-Time Consultant for the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, 10 Op. O.L.C. 96, 98 (1986) (quoting 24 Op. Att’y Gen. 116, 117 (1902)).

⁴ Jonathan Karl & Katherine Faulders, *Trump Administration Poised to Accept ‘Palace in the Sky’ as a Gift for Trump from Qatar: Sources*, ABC NEWS (May 11, 2025), <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/trump-administration-poised-accept-palace-sky-gift-trump/story?id=121680511>.

⁵ Maggie Haberman, Eric Schmitt & Glenn Thrush, *Trump Is Poised to Accept a Luxury 747 from Qatar for Use as Air Force One*, N.Y. TIMES (May 11, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/05/11/us/politics/trump-qatar-jet-gift-air-force-one.html>.

⁶ Karl & Faulders, *supra* note 4.

attempted influence by the Qatari government intended to benefit President Trump personally: The Trump Organization recently announced a new golf course and real estate deal with a Qatari government-owned firm.⁷ These types of gifts and benefits—with their immense potential for corrupt foreign influence—are exactly what the Founders aimed to restrict.

President Trump has brazenly flouted the protections implemented by the Founders to avoid improper influence—his constitutional duty to seek the approval of Congress before accepting benefits from foreign governments—not only with respect to Qatar, but numerous other foreign governments. In addition to his deals with Qatar, President Trump has also pursued new business deals with Abu Dhabi, Saudi Arabia, Oman, and Serbia. On May 1, President Trump’s cryptocurrency firm announced that an Abu Dhabi-based investment fund backed by the government of the United Arab Emirates would be using President Trump’s digital coins to complete a \$2 billion transaction.⁸ Through this deal—touted by President Trump’s firm as “the single largest-ever investment in a crypto company”⁹—President Trump and his family stand to gain hundreds of millions of dollars from a foreign state.¹⁰ Additionally, LIV Golf, backed by the Saudi Arabian government, will host a tournament at Trump National Doral resort in 2025.¹¹ And the Trump Organization has announced new real estate developments on government-owned land in Serbia and Oman.¹² Despite these numerous conflicts of interest, President Trump has refused to divest from his financial interests and remains an owner of the Trump Organization.¹³

The newly announced business deals with foreign governments follow President Trump’s longstanding pattern of shamelessly ignoring the Foreign Emoluments Clause. In his first term, President Trump repeatedly accepted benefits from foreign states without seeking the consent of Congress, in flagrant violation of his constitutional obligation to do so. Through his business holdings, President Trump received, at a minimum, \$7.8 million from at least 20 foreign states, including nearly \$5.6 million from the People’s Republic of China, over \$615,000 from Saudi

⁷ Vivian Nereim & Eric Lipton, *New Mideast Project Is Latest Trump Company Deal Tied to a Foreign Government*, N.Y. Times (Apr. 30, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/04/30/world/middleeast/trump-family-qatar-dubai.html>.

⁸ David Yaffe-Bellany, *At a Dubai Conference, Trump’s Conflicts Take Center Stage*, N.Y. TIMES (May 1, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/05/01/us/politics/trump-cryptocurrency-usd1-dubai-conference-announcement.html>.

⁹ Madeleine May & Jo Ling Kent, *Trump Family’s Net Worth Has Increased by \$2.9 Billion Thanks to Crypto Investments*, *New Report Says*, CBS NEWS (May 2, 2025), <https://www.cbsnews.com/news/trump-family-net-worth-crypto-investments>.

¹⁰ David Yaffe-Bellany, *At a Dubai Conference, Trump’s Conflicts Take Center Stage*, N.Y. TIMES (May 1, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/05/01/us/politics/trump-cryptocurrency-usd1-dubai-conference-announcement.html>.

¹¹ Eric Lipton & Alan Blinder, *Saudi-Backed LIV Golf Will Return to Trump’s Doral Resort in 2025*, N.Y. TIMES (Jan. 7, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/01/07/us/politics/liv-golf-tournament-trump-doral-resort.html>.

¹² Nereim & Lipton, *supra* note 7; Eric Lipton & David Yaffe-Bellany, *Trump Sons’ Deals on Three Continents Directly Benefit the President*, N.Y. TIMES (May 5, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/05/05/us/politics/eric-donald-jr-trump-family-deals.html>.

¹³ Eric Lipton & Alan Blinder, *Saudi-Backed LIV Golf Will Return to Trump’s Doral Resort in 2025*, N.Y. TIMES (Jan. 7, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/01/07/us/politics/liv-golf-tournament-trump-doral-resort.html>; Nick Penzenstadler, *Donald Trump’s Company Will Avoid Deals with Foreign governments But Not Foreign Companies*, USA TODAY (Jan. 10, 2025), <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/elections/2025/01/10/trumps-company-new-ethics-rules/77600060007>.

Arabia, and over \$465,000 from Qatar.¹⁴ Not once did President Trump seek congressional approval for these payments.

President Trump's continued flouting of the basic constitutional requirement to seek congressional consent for benefits received from foreign governments—a requirement that no other President had difficulty complying with¹⁵—demonstrates his willingness to use the privileges of his title to enrich himself and his family. Moreover, President Trump has demonstrated susceptibility to the very foreign influence that the Founders feared. During his first presidential campaign, President Trump said, “Saudi Arabia, I get along great with all of them. They buy apartments from me. They spend \$40 million, \$50 million. Am I supposed to dislike them? I like them very much.”¹⁶

In President Trump's first term, 215 members of Congress sued him for violating the Foreign Emoluments Clause, arguing that President Trump accepted, among other benefits, registered trademarks from the Chinese government, payments for hotel rooms and events from foreign officials, and rent payments from the Chinese- and UAE-owned entities and Saudi Arabia for leases in Trump Tower and Trump World Tower without the approval of Congress.¹⁷ The D.C. Circuit held that the members did not have standing to sue as individual members of Congress and instead needed a formal authorization on behalf of the Senate to bring a lawsuit.¹⁸

The foreign business activity of presidents and their families is clearly a matter of great concern for the Republican caucus. For nearly two years, Republicans waged a baseless investigation into whether President Biden accepted benefits from foreign entities through business connected to members of his family—even though there was no evidence that President Biden received *any* payments or other benefits from foreign governments.¹⁹ In contrast, there is clear evidence that President Trump is directly profiting from funds received from foreign governments without the consent of Congress, in direct violation of his constitutional obligation

¹⁴ Democratic Staff, *White House for Sale: How Princes, Prime Ministers, and Premiers Paid Off President Trump*, U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES COMM. ON OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY 9, 14-15 (Jan. 4, 2024), <https://static01.nyt.com/newsgraphics/documenttools/352377138e125817/849dad00-full.pdf>.

¹⁵ See Michael A. Foster & Kevin J. Hickey, *The Emoluments Clause and the Presidency: Background and Recent Developments*, CONG. RSCH. SERV. (Nov. 5, 2019), <https://www.congress.gov/crs-product/R45992> (“Several Presidents in the 19th century—such as Andrew Jackson, Martin Van Buren, John Tyler, and Benjamin Harrison—notified Congress of foreign presents that they had received, and either placed the gifts at its disposal or obtained consent to their receipt. . . . In the 20th century, some Presidents have sought the advice of the Department of Justice’s Office of Legal Counsel (OLC) on whether acceptance of particular honors or benefits would violate the Emoluments Clauses.”).

¹⁶ Drew Harwell & Anu Narayanswamy, *A Scramble to Assess the Dangers of President-Elect Donald Trump’s Global Business Empire*, WASH. POST (Nov. 20, 2016), https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/economy/a-scramble-to-assess-the-dangers-of-president-elects-global-business-empire/2016/11/20/1bbdc2a2-ad18-11e6-a31b-4b6397e625d0_story.html.

¹⁷ First Amended Complaint at 38-45, *Blumenthal v. Trump*, No. 1:17-cv-01154 (D.D.C. 2017).

¹⁸ *Blumenthal v. Trump*, 949 F.3d 14, 16 (D.C. Cir. 2020).

¹⁹ Rebecca Kaplan, Ryan Nobles, Gary Grumbach, Sarah Fitzpatrick & Julie Tsirkin, *GOP-Led House Committees Release Lengthy Report Alleging President Biden Committed Impeachable Offenses*, NBC NEWS (Aug. 19, 2024), <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/congress/gop-led-house-committees-release-lengthy-report-alleging-president-bid-rcna166954>.

and his oath of office. We cannot allow the President to blithely ignore his constitutional duties nor trample on Congress's oversight role in stemming corruption and foreign influence—if the President refuses to seek our approval for the acceptance of foreign benefits, then we must hold him accountable in court. Today, Senate Republicans blocked a resolution that would direct Senate Legal Counsel to file a lawsuit on behalf of the United States Senate to enforce the Foreign Emoluments Clause, shielding the President from necessary accountability. Accordingly, we request the Senate hold a vote to authorize a lawsuit to enjoin the President from accepting any foreign payments, benefits, and other emoluments without congressional approval during his present term in office.

Sincerely,



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator



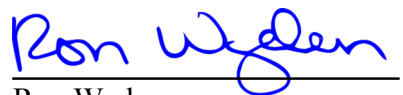
Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator



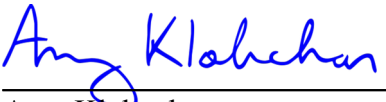
Peter Welch
United States Senator



Jon Ossoff
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Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



Adam B. Schiff
United States Senator

