

Testimony
House Committee on Homeland Security
Shadow Hearing On: “The Ultimate Grift: How DHS Is Enriching the President and His
Allies at Taxpayer Expense”

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Ranking Member Thompson and members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit this statement on corruption and waste, fraud and abuse at the Department of Homeland Security (DHS).

My name is Donald Sherman, and I am the President and CEO of Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW), a nonpartisan nonprofit organization dedicated to fighting corruption and promoting an accountable, transparent and ethical government. I have spent the majority of my career investigating waste, fraud and abuse throughout the federal government, from my work as counsel on the non-partisan staff of the House Ethics Committee, to my work as Chief Oversight Counsel to the late Elijah Cummings for the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, and as Senior Counsel with the Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee (HSGAC) overseeing nominations. My work at CREW has focused on restoring an ethical government, demanding accountability, preserving democratic institutions and reducing the corrosive influence of money in politics, including through litigation and complaints to prevent violations of the Constitution’s Foreign and Domestic Emoluments Clauses. I submit this statement today to highlight how the Trump administration's actions have both enabled corruption and prevented the DHS from fulfilling its critical mission.

The Department of Homeland Security’s work is being undermined by corruption and chaos

The mission of DHS is to “ensure a safe, secure, and prosperous Homeland” protecting the country from the many threats it faces, ranging from terrorism to natural disasters.¹ DHS has been at the forefront of implementing President Trump’s extreme anti-immigrant agenda since he returned to the White House 14 months ago—an agenda Congress has appropriated billions of dollars to support.² While the administration’s almost obsessive focus on immigration has led to many illegal abuses, questions about national security priorities and how the agency is spending its resources have leaped to the forefront in the past few weeks after President Trump launched a war against Iran.

Mere hours after attacking Iran without congressional authorization, President Trump, in an interview with *Time*, admitted that Americans should be worried about a retaliatory attack

¹ Mission Areas, DHS, <https://www.dhs.gov/homeland-security-careers/mission-areas> (last visited Mar. 19, 2026); Mission, DHS, <https://www.dhs.gov/mission> (last visited Mar. 19, 2026).

² Aaron Reichlin-Melnick, *New Report Details ICE’s Expanding and Increasingly Unaccountable Detention System*, Am. Immigr. Council (Jan. 23, 2026), <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/blog/ice-expanding-detention-system>.

on the homeland.³ Yet, amidst these threats, the Department is in a state of chaos, raising questions of whether it has the resources, expertise and bandwidth to protect Americans in this time of global instability.

Since President Trump returned to the White House, more than 24,000 employees have either voluntarily left or been fired from the Department.⁴ Among these separations are hundreds of employees who work for the Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA) which defends the nation's infrastructure against cyber attacks—a tool that Handala Team, which has ties to the Iranian regime according to cybersecurity companies, is known to employ and has already used in at least one known instance since the start of the war last month.⁵ Perhaps because expertise has been lost—or it just hasn't been prioritized—DHS has not published the annual Homeland Threat Assessment during Trump's second term, nor has it updated the National Terrorism Advisory since last year, which experts described as “shocking” and “baffling.”⁶ Meanwhile, FEMA has experienced gross mismanagement, with the agency undergoing massive funding and staff cuts with billions of dollars of reimbursements postponed and delayed contract approvals that impacted “whether people live or die.”⁷

DHS must address both these significant challenges and also figure out how to deploy a staggering \$170.7 billion in taxpayer funds appropriated for immigration enforcement,⁸ including \$45 billion for detention capacity expansion,⁹ amidst a leadership transition following Secretary Kristi Noem's ouster due to ethical and management failures. During Noem's tenure, the Department has been ensnared in countless corruption scandals

³ Assoc. Press, *Read Trump's full statement on Iran Attacks*, PBS (Feb. 28, 2026), <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/world/read-trumps-full-statement-on-iran-attack>; Eric Cortellessa, *Trump's War*, Time (Mar. 5, 2026), <https://time.com/7382697/trump-iran-war/>.

⁴ Meryl Kornfield & Clara Ence Morse, *Here are the agencies that were cut the most by Trump, new data shows*, Washington Post (Jan. 10, 2026), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2026/01/10/federal-cuts-trump-agencies-data> (data from January to November 2025).

⁵ Meryl Kornfield & Clara Ence Morse, *Here are the agencies that were cut the most by Trump, new data shows*, Wash. Post (Jan. 10, 2026), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2026/01/10/federal-cuts-trump-agencies-data>; Kevin Collier, *Iran appears to have conducted a significant cyberattack against a U.S. company, a first since the war started*, NBC News (Mar. 11, 2026), <https://www.nbcnews.com/world/iran/iran-appears-conducted-significant-cyberattack-us-company-first-war-st-rcna263084>.

⁶ Rhian Lubin, *DHS hasn't published a threat report since Trump took office and has gone silent on dangers from Iran War*, *Indep.* (Mar. 17, 2026), <https://www.the-independent.com/news/world/americas/us-politics/dhs-threat-report-trump-iran-war-b2940137.html>; Maria Sacchetti, *DHS silent on threat status amid war in Iran, spate of violent acts*, Wash. Post (Mar. 16, 2026), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/immigration/2026/03/16/dhs-threats-iran-national-security/>.

⁷ Dharna Noor, *Why US disaster response workers won't miss the 'singularly destructive force' that was Kristi Noem*, The Guardian (Mar. 13, 2026), <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2026/mar/12/a-singularly-destructive-force-us-disaster-response-workers-on-the-legacy-of-kristi-noem>; Gabe Cohen, *Exclusive: 'Rescuers were flying blind': Inside the crucial \$200,000 contract Kristi Noem's team let lapse*, CNN (Mar. 13, 2026), <https://www.cnn.com/2026/03/13/politics/fema-response-tornado-tracking-tool-kristi-noem>.

⁸ *What's in the Big Beautiful Bill? Immigration and Border Security Unpacked*, Am. Immigr. Council (July 14, 2025), <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/fact-sheet/big-beautiful-bill-immigration-border-security/>.

⁹ Aaron Reichlin-Melnick, *New Report Details ICE's Expanding and Increasingly Unaccountable Detention System*, Am. Immigr. Council (Jan. 23, 2026), <https://www.americanimmigrationcouncil.org/blog/ice-expanding-detention-system>.

including a \$220 million dollar advertising contract handed partially to one of Noem's allies,¹⁰ extreme misconduct by DHS officers resulting in the deaths of U.S. citizens¹¹ and obstruction of the Department's Office of the Inspector General, which claims that it has been denied access to records in at least 10 investigations.¹² President Trump's new Secretary of Homeland Security, Markwayne Mullin, does not come with an ethically clean slate, having violated the STOCK Act by failing to report years of stock and bond trades.¹³ In response to questioning at his confirmation hearing, Mullin said he would divest from dozens of investments should he be confirmed.¹⁴ The more significant question is how someone who could not effectively manage a third-party advisor overseeing his investments to ensure compliance with the STOCK Act can effectively lead a massive, over 260,000 person agency with disparate components and contractors that covers everything from aviation, election and border security, to emergency response.¹⁵

Trump's profiteering through the Department of Homeland Security, including acceptance of unconstitutional emoluments

Since returning to office President Trump has perfected the art of profiting off of the presidency by ensuring that funds—including those from foreign partners and countries as well as from domestic contracts—are funneled into his business empire, some in seeming violation of the Constitution's Emoluments Clauses. All told, according to the *New York Times*, Trump has made at least \$1.4 billion since returning to office, with others projecting even higher amounts.¹⁶

The Constitution's Emoluments Clauses are designed to prohibit financial conflicts of interest by sitting presidents and other government officials. The Foreign Emoluments Clause prevents the president from receiving, among other things, profits, gains or

¹⁰ Dharna Noor, *Why US disaster response workers won't miss the 'singularly destructive force' that was Kristi Noem*, *The Guardian* (Mar. 13, 2026), <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2026/mar/12/a-singularly-destructive-force-us-disaster-response-workers-on-the-legacy-of-kristi-noem>; Justin Elliot, Joshua Caplan & Alex Mierjeski, *Firm Tied to Kristi Noem Secretly Got Money From \$220 Million DHS AD Contracts*, *ProPublica* (Nov. 14, 2025), <https://www.propublica.org/article/kristi-noem-dhs-ad-campaign-strategy-group>

¹¹ Gabrielle Corporal, *When DHS operates without oversight, democracy itself is at risk*, *CREW* (Feb. 6, 2026), <https://www.citizensforethics.org/news/analysis/when-dhs-operates-without-oversight-democracy-itself-is-at-risk/>.

¹² Eric Bazail-Eimil, *Internal DHS watchdog: Noem is obstructing our work*, *Politico* (updated Mar. 4, 2026), <https://www.politico.com/news/2026/03/03/dhs-noem-obstruction-00810919>.

¹³ Dave Levinthal, *Sen. Markwayne Mullin violates STOCK Act by failing to report years of stocks, trades*, *OUdaily* (Aug. 5, 2025), https://www.oudaily.com/news/sen-markwayne-mullin-violates-stock-act-by-failing-to-report-years-of-stocks-trades/article_4b70eb4c-7b0f-48bf-b0ab-39bbdb2f6233.html.

¹⁴ Taylor Giorno, *Markwayne Mullin Pledges to Sell His Massive Stock Holdings if Confirmed*, *NOTUS* (Mar. 18, 2026), <https://www.notus.org/trump-white-house/markwayne-mullin-dhs-stock-holdings-sell>.

¹⁵ *Mission Areas*, DHS, <https://www.dhs.gov/homeland-security-careers/mission-areas> (last visited Mar. 19, 2026); Taylor Giorno, *Markwayne Mullin Pledges to Sell His Massive Stock Holdings if Confirmed*, *NOTUS* (Mar. 18, 2026), <https://www.notus.org/trump-white-house/markwayne-mullin-dhs-stock-holdings-sell>.

¹⁶ N. Y. Times Ed. Bd., *How Trump Has Pocketed \$1,408,500,000* (Jan. 20, 2026), <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2026/01/20/opinion/editorials/trump-wealth-crypto-graft.html>; Eric Petry, *Money in Politics Roundup — February 2026 (Unprecedented White House Profiteering)*, *Brennan Ctr.* (Feb. 26, 2026), <https://www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/money-politics-roundup-february-2026>; *Trump's Take*, *Ctr. Am. Progress*, <https://www.americanprogress.org/feature/trumps-take/> (last visited Mar. 19, 2026).

advantages from foreign governments, without the consent of Congress. The Domestic Emoluments Clause prevents the president from receiving under any circumstances profits, gains or advantages from the federal government itself, outside of his or her government salary and benefits, or from the individual states. The framers of our Constitution drafted both Emoluments Clauses broadly, because they were concerned about the many ways a president's loyalty could be compromised by his or her personal financial interests.

Since returning to office, much focus has been placed on the president's Foreign Emoluments Clause violations and their national security implications—something that should be of concern to this committee. Perhaps most notably, an Abu Dhabi investment vehicle called Aryam Investment 1, owned by Deputy Ruler of Abu Dhabi and UAE National Security Adviser Sheikh Tahnoon bin Zayed Al Nahyan, sometimes referred to as the “Spy Sheikh” because he oversees the UAE's vast spying operation, purchased a 49% stake in Donald Trump's crypto venture, World Liberty Financial, for \$500 million, making Aryam the largest outside stakeholder in the firm.¹⁷ Within months of that transaction, the UAE gained access to around 500,000 tightly guarded, highly advanced American AI chips. Previous attempts by the UAE to access these chips had been blocked over fears the UAE would share the technology with China.¹⁸

On the domestic front, DHS leadership has allowed taxpayer funds to flow to President Trump and his associated businesses, raising concerns under the Domestic Emoluments Clause.

Last month, CREW filed a complaint with DHS Inspector General Joseph Cuffari questioning whether the sale of Trump-branded wine and cider at Coast Guard Exchange System (CGES) stores violated the Domestic Emoluments Clause.¹⁹ CGES stores at the Coast Guard's headquarters in Washington, D.C. and in Centreville, Virginia recently stocked and sold Trump-branded wine and cider for sale to federal employees.²⁰ According to President Trump's latest financial disclosures, the Donald J. Trump Revocable Trust owns 100% of the winery's land and an LLC holding wine-related trademarks.²¹ President Trump is the sole

¹⁷ Sam Kessler et al., *'Spy Sheikh' Bought Secret Stake in Trump Company*, Wall St. J. (Jan. 31, 2026), <https://www.wsj.com/politics/policy/spy-sheikh-secret-stake-trump-crypto-tahnoon-ea4d97e8>; Eliot Brown & Berber Jin, *The 'Spy Sheikh' Taking the AI World by Storm*, Wall St. J. (Feb. 26, 2025), <https://www.wsj.com/tech/ai/abu-dhabi-spy-sheikh-ai-c4a9d48c>.

¹⁸ Sam Kessler et al., *'Spy Sheikh' Bought Secret Stake in Trump Company*, Wall St. J. (Jan. 31, 2026), <https://www.wsj.com/politics/policy/spy-sheikh-secret-stake-trump-crypto-tahnoon-ea4d97e8>.

¹⁹ *CREW requests IG investigations into possible emoluments violations at DHS and State Department*, CREW (Feb. 3, 2026), <https://www.citizensforethics.org/legal-action/legal-complaints/crew-requests-ig-investigations-into-possible-emoluments-violations-at-dhs-and-state-department/>.

²⁰ See Zach Everson, *Trump Wine Hits Government Shelves*, Forbes (Nov. 7, 2025), <https://www.forbes.com/sites/zacheverson/2025/11/06/trump-wine-coast-guard-exchanges-stores-federal-property-government/>; see also Joe Sommerlad, *Military members offered Trump wine as First Family's latest cash grab hits shelves*, *Indep.* (Nov. 7, 2025), <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/us-politics/trump-wine-cider-coast-guard-exchanges-b2860989.html>.

²¹ Exec. Branch Pers. Pub. Fin. Disclosure Rep., OGE Form 278e (June 13, 2025), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/06/President-Donald-J.-Trump.pdf>.

donor and beneficiary of the trust, while his son Donald Trump Jr. serves as the trustee.²² Although the White House has declined to provide further information on the sale of Trump-branded products at CGES stores, the now-former DHS Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs Tricia McLaughlin reportedly confirmed their availability, telling *Forbes*, “The brave men and women of the USCG are pleased to be able to buy Trump wine and cider tax free.”²³ Because revenues generated by businesses administered by the trust may result in Trump personally earning income during his term, any profit, gain or advantage earned by President Trump or his businesses from the procurement and sale of Trump-branded wine and cider at CGES stores likely violate the Constitution’s Domestic Emoluments Clause.²⁴

DHS is facilitating other methods of Trump profiteering besides Trump-branded wine. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) recruitment advertisements have appeared on the Truth Social platform,²⁵ which is owned by Trump Media & Technology Group Corp. (TMTG), in which President Trump has an ownership interest through a trust.²⁶ Although it is unclear how much taxpayer money DHS has paid Truth Social, payments from DHS to TMTG for advertising on Truth Social would also likely violate the Domestic Emoluments Clause. Last October, CREW filed a FOIA request with ICE for all invoices and communications relating to advertising ICE recruitment efforts through social media, including Truth Social.²⁷

Lastly, building on a theme we saw during Trump’s first term in office, significant funds are being spent at Trump properties.

In his first 365 days back in office, President Trump visited his properties 198 times, and visited his golf courses 116 times, sending a message to those looking to influence his administration that his properties are open for business.²⁸ Foreign government officials visited his properties 55 times, pouring money into Trump’s pockets, and special interest groups held 57 events at them.²⁹ On multiple occasions, DHS has posted photos from Mar-a-Lago, including from the American Patriot Gala where the President of Argentina,

²² Zach Everson, *Trump Wine Hits Government Shelves*, *Forbes* (Nov. 7, 2025), <https://www.forbes.com/sites/zacheverson/2025/11/06/trump-wine-coast-guard-exchanges-stores-federal-property-government/>.

²³ *Id.*

²⁴ *Id.*

²⁵ Johana Bhuiyan, *From Uncle Sam to social media memes: inside homeland security’s push to swell Ice ranks*, *The Guardian* (Sept. 3, 2025),

<https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2025/sep/03/trump-memes-immigration-deportation;>

@SisyphusUnleas, X (Sept. 8, 2025 at 7:28 PM ET), <https://x.com/SisyphusUnleas/status/1965195671675482452>.

²⁶ Matthew Goldstein, *Trump puts \$4 billion in shares of his media company in a trust*, *N.Y. Times* (Dec. 20, 2024),

<https://www.nytimes.com/2024/12/20/business/trump-media-donald-trump-trust.html>.

²⁷ *CREW requests records on DHS recruitment spending on Truth Social*, *CREW* (Oct. 17, 2025),

<https://www.citizensforethics.org/reports-investigations/foia-requests/crew-requests-records-on-dhs-recruitment-spending-on-truth-social/>.

²⁸ Rebecca Jacobs, *Trump’s properties remain an epicenter of his conflicts and corruption in second term*, *CREW* (Feb. 24, 2026),

<https://www.citizensforethics.org/reports-investigations/crew-reports/trumps-properties-remain-an-epicenter-of-his-conflicts-and-corruption-in-second-term/>.

²⁹ *Id.*

Javier Milei, took pictures with then-Secretary Noem.³⁰ Newly confirmed DHS Secretary Mullin has also visited and promoted the president's property.³¹

Donald Trump's near-constant presence at his properties means that the Secret Service is also spending a lot of time there as well. After spending nearly \$2 million at Trump properties over the course of Trump's first term, the Secret Service spent nearly another \$100,000 within the first months of his second.³² In this time of heightened political violence, it is imperative that the Secret Service provides President Trump and his family the best protection possible. Protecting the president is always a good use of taxpayer funds. That protection and the Secret Service's "zero-fail mission," however, should not be exploited to channel taxpayer funds into the president's bank account.³³

This is especially true given the rates that Trump's properties have charged taxpayers. Despite Eric Trump's claims that the Trump organization charged the Secret Service "like \$50,"³⁴ records from his first term demonstrate rates sometimes exceeded government rate limits, including rates as high as \$1,185 per night at Trump's D.C. hotel (more than five times the per diem rate of \$201 and over \$1,000 more than it charged for other rooms that same day)³⁵ and \$17,000 per month for a cottage at Trump's golf club in Bedminster, New Jersey.³⁶ One particularly egregious example occurred in 2017, when Trump profited off his visit to victims of the mass shooting in Las Vegas, staying at the Trump Hotel Las Vegas and charging the Secret Service over \$30,000.³⁷ This appears to be an active choice to grift the Secret Service, which is required to protect him, and the Secret Service has played along. The president's choice to host the G-20 summit at his resort at Doral later this year presents another opportunity for foreign governments and the Secret Service to pay his business in potential violation of the Constitution's Emoluments Clauses.³⁸

³⁰ *Id.*; Rebecca Jacobs, *Trump's term 2 corruption by the numbers: More golf trips, more foreign visitors and more profits*, CREW (July 21, 2025),

<https://www.citizensforethics.org/reports-investigations/crew-reports/trumps-term-2-corruption-by-the-numbers-more-golf-trips-more-foreign-visitors-and-more-profits/>.

³¹ Image posted by Markwayne Mullin (@markwaynemullin), Instagram,

https://www.instagram.com/p/CjRE_-fPOpO/.

³² Rebecca Jacobs, *Secret Service has spent nearly \$100k at Trump properties*, CREW (Oct. 14, 2025),

<https://www.citizensforethics.org/reports-investigations/crew-investigations/secret-service-has-spent-nearly-100k-at-trump-properties/>.

³³ *Training*, U.S. Secret Service, <https://www.secretservice.gov/careers/special-agent/training> (last visited Mar. 19, 2026).

³⁴ Adam Shapiro, *G-7 at Trump golf resort saves the US money: Eric Trump*, Yahoo!finance (Oct. 17, 2019),

<https://finance.yahoo.com/news/g-7-at-trump-golf-resort-saves-the-us-money-eric-trump-192655739.html>.

³⁵ H. Comm. Oversight & Accountability Democrats, *Room Rates May Vary: How Donald Trump Violated the Constitution by Fleecing Taxpayers with Unlawful and Exorbitant Hotel Charges*, at 19 (Oct. 18, 2024),

https://oversightdemocrats.house.gov/imo/media/doc/2024-10-18COA-DEM-Staff-Report-Domestic-Emolument_s.pdf.

³⁶ Rebecca Jacobs, *Secret Service has spent nearly \$100k at Trump properties*, CREW (Oct. 14, 2025),

<https://www.citizensforethics.org/reports-investigations/crew-investigations/secret-service-has-spent-nearly-100k-at-trump-properties/>.

³⁷ Meghan Faulkner, *Trump profited off visit to Vegas shooting victims*, CREW (May 23, 2022),

<https://www.citizensforethics.org/reports-investigations/crew-investigations/trump-profited-off-visit-to-vegas-shooting-victims/>.

³⁸ Alexandra Koch, *Trump picks his Miami Doral resort to host 2026 G20 summit in Florida during nation's anniversary year*, Fox News (Sep. 5, 2025),

<https://www.foxnews.com/politics/trump-picks-his-miami-doral-resort-host-2026-g20-summit-florida-during-nations-anniversary-year>.

Conclusion

Corruption harms our national security and makes us all less safe. The outright profiteering we are seeing in DHS has sent the agency into turmoil and has resulted in national security needs, like threat assessments and cybersecurity needs, being seemingly deprioritized. There are things Congress can do, including conducting vigorous oversight, passing legislation to enforce the Emoluments Clauses and making clear in appropriations language that DHS must spend money on urgent national security priorities. I urge Congress to take action to rein in this administration's profiteering and restore oversight and accountability to the executive branch and, in the process, protect our national security.