

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

July 1, 2025

The Honorable Scott Bessent
Secretary
Department of the Treasury
1500 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20220

The Honorable Howard Lutnick
Secretary
Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20230

The Honorable Marco Rubio
Secretary
Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Ambassador Jamieson Greer
United States Trade Representative
Executive Office of the President
600 17th Street NW
Washington, DC 20508

Dear Secretary Bessent, Secretary Lutnick, Secretary Rubio, and Ambassador Greer:

We write to express our grave concerns about the potential misuse of U.S. trade policy to benefit President Donald Trump and his own financial interests over those of the United States and the American people. One week remains until the Trump Administration's deadline for trade negotiations is reached, yet the "many, many deals" that President Trump promised after his reciprocal tariffs have not come to fruition.¹ Instead, reports suggest that the President is aggressively expanding his business enterprise, securing billions of dollars in new investments through the Trump Organization while simultaneously pressuring countries to negotiate on tariffs. As trade discussions stall, transparency is urgently needed to ensure potential conflicts of interest are not compromising the economic and strategic interests of our country.

As you know, on April 2, 2025, President Trump imposed across-the-board tariffs on nearly every country in the world. While tariffs can play a strategic role in national and economic security, these tariffs are largely arbitrary, destabilizing to the U.S. economy, and what many consider an unlawful tax on the American people. Two separate courts, the U.S. Court of International Trade² and the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia,³ have already found that the President's use of emergency authority under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA) to impose expansive, unlimited tariffs was illegal. Despite these rulings, which the Trump Administration is challenging, the President has continued to press forward unilaterally—increasing pressure on countries to negotiate before a self-imposed deadline of July 8, 2025, or else face higher tariffs.⁴ The Administration is now asserting that "many, many deals

¹ Reuters, "White House Advisor Says Three Trade Deals Nearly Done," Reuters, May 29, 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/business/white-house-adviser-says-three-trade-deals-nearly-done-2025-05-29>.

² *V.O.S. Selections, et al., Inc. v. United States, et al.*, 1:25-cv-00066-GSK-TMR-JAR, (United States Court of International Trade), <https://storage.courtlistener.com/recap/gov.uscourts.cit.17091/gov.uscourts.cit.17091.65.0.pdf>

³ *Learning Resources, Inc., et al., v. Donald J. Trump, et al.*, 1:25-cv-01248-RC, (D.C.C. 2025), https://filehost.thompsonhine.com/uploads/USDC_DC_Contreras_IEEPA_Ruling_6263.pdf.

⁴ Reuters, "Trump Says Willing to Extend Trade Talks Deadline, but Says that Won't be Necessary," Jeff Mason, David Lauder, Dan Burns, June 11, 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/world/china/bessent-says-us-may-roll-date-forward-some-after-90-day-tariff-pause-ends-2025-06-11/>.

[are] coming”⁵ despite little consultation with Congress, which holds clear constitutional authority to “regulate Commerce with foreign Nations.”⁶

This dynamic has created an ongoing recipe for corruption in which President Trump personally stands to benefit from lavish gifts, business deals, and favors being showered upon him and his inner circle in exchange for tariff relief. While we remain concerned that this trade strategy imposes immense uncertainty on businesses, workers, and consumers, including many that we represent, we have growing worries that it may also violate federal ethics laws—including the Constitution’s Foreign Emoluments Clause. The Emoluments Clause states that “[No] Person holding any Office of Profit or Trust under [the United States], 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.” Significant attention has been rightfully placed on President Trump accepting a \$400 million luxury jet from Qatar and whether this violates the Clause, but ongoing trade discussions must be investigated in the same vein—as a sweeping effort to use the Office of the Presidency for personal benefit.

I. TRUMP FAMILY’S FAR-REACHING CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS

President Trump has business relationships and assets that span the world, implicating many of the countries that are either in active trade negotiations with the Administration or seeking relief from the President’s tariffs. The President has repeatedly and publicly refused to divest from any of his companies, and while he has assigned direct management to his children, he has retained significant influence over his business operations and materially benefits from their success.

We have particular concerns over the Trump Organization’s efforts to expand its foreign business enterprise, which creates an untold number of opportunities for foreign leaders to manipulate the President and curry his favor. Unlike in President Trump’s first term, the Trump Organization’s so-called ethics agreement, published on January 10, 2025, no longer prohibits the organization from signing private deals with foreign businesses—green-lighting new real-estate projects such as those announced in Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Vietnam, and many other countries.⁷ While the agreement bans deals made directly with foreign governments, it has not stopped the Trump Organization from striking multi-billion dollar deals with businesses backed by sovereign wealth funds and foreign governments, or from seeking permitting and other approvals from governments actively involved in tariff negotiations.

Some of these new business ventures are being negotiated simultaneously with trade discussions. On May 21, 2025, Vietnam held a groundbreaking ceremony to celebrate the Trump Organization’s \$1.5 billion luxury resort—reportedly fast-tracking approval for the project due to a visit from President Trump’s son, Eric Trump.⁸ While this was happening, trade negotiators from Vietnam, which faces one of the highest reciprocal tariff rates, were in Washington, D.C.

⁵ Reuters, “White House Advisor Says Three Trade Deals Nearly Done,” Reuters, May 29, 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/business/white-house-advisor-says-three-trade-deals-nearly-done-2025-05-29>.

⁶ U.S. Constitution, Article 1, Section 8, Clause 3.

⁷ Mother Jones, “Trump Promised No New Business Deals with Foreign Governments. He Lied.,” Judd Legum, May 5, 2025, <https://www.motherjones.com/politics/2025/05/trump-org-foreign-real-estate-deals-unconstitutional-business-ethics-conflict-interest/>.

discussing ways to lower tariffs, modify non-tariff barriers, and address a range of other trade concerns with the United States.⁹

Furthermore, the President's children have been aggressively pitching their cryptocurrency schemes to foreign buyers. According to the *Wall Street Journal*, the Trump family business and their partners have benefited from more than \$300 million in revenue generated by trading of the \$TRUMP cryptocurrency.¹⁰ This a massive conflict of interest for ongoing trade discussions, especially as most buyers of \$TRUMP are overseas.¹¹ Top purchasers were even given access to an exclusive dinner providing them with the valuable opportunity to directly influence the President.¹²

II. ABUSE OF TARIFFS TO SUPPORT ECONOMIC COERCION

President Trump already has a long history of weaponizing trade to secure concessions that align with his and his inner circle's business interests. During President Trump's first term, as the United States threatened new trade barriers and tariffs on billions of dollars of Chinese goods, the President's daughter, Ivanka Trump, was attempting to secure approval from Chinese authorities on several trademarks related to businesses using her name. Once these trademarks were approved, President Trump quickly reversed course—backing down on an embargo of products made by the Chinese telecommunications firm ZTE and vowing to even work with China's President, Xi Jinping, to protect Chinese ZTE jobs.¹³

Public reports so far seem to indicate that President Trump's second term is following the same path, but much more aggressively. On May 7, 2025, *The Washington Post* reported a series of internal messages from the U.S. Department of State that reveal a concerted effort to urge countries to approve access for Elon Musk's company, Starlink. According to reporting, "at least two countries have explicitly discussed or moved toward adopting...Starlink as a means of avoiding Trump's tariffs and negotiating a better trade deal with the United States."¹⁴

To increase the pressure on U.S. trading partners, the Trump Administration has previously accelerated timelines for its negotiations¹⁵ and threatened to reimpose tariffs on any country that

⁸ NBC News, "Trump Organization breaks ground on \$1.5 billion golf club in Vietnam," Reuters, May 21, 2025, <https://www.nbcnews.com/world/asia/trump-organization-breaks-ground-15-billion-golf-club-vietnam-rcna208169>.

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ Wall Street Journal, "The Trump Family Crypto Business," The Editorial Board, May 11, 2025, <https://www.wsj.com/opinion/the-trump-family-crypto-business-meme-coin-conflict-interest-buying-7e841401>.

¹¹ *Id.*

¹² Forbes, "Ivanka's Trademark Requests Were Fast-Tracked in China After Trump Was Elected," Tommy Beer, September 22, 2020, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/tommybeer/2020/09/22/ivankas-trademark-requests-were-fast-tracked-in-china-after-trump-was-elected/>.

¹³ The New York Times, "Ivanka Trump Wins China Trademarks, Then Her Father Vows to Save ZTE," Sui-Lee Wee, May 28, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/28/business/ivanka-trump-china-trademarks.html?smid=url-share>.

¹⁴ The Washington Post, "Nations Facing Tariffs to Approve Musk's Starlink Cables Show," Jeff Stein, Hannah Natanson, May 7, 2025, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2025/05/07/elon-musk-starlink-trump-tariffs/>.

¹⁵ Reuters, "Exclusive: US Pushes Countries for Best Offers by Wednesday as Tariff Deadline Looms," Jarrett Renshaw, June 3, 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/business/us-pushes-countries-best-offers-by-wednesday-tariff->

does not “negotiate in good faith.”¹⁶ What constitutes “good faith” remains uncertain, and in light of the Trump family’s sprawling conflicts of interests, serious questions must be answered to ensure U.S. trade policy does not continue to be a tool for economic coercion meant to increase the personal wealth of President Trump and his allies.

III. TRADE DISCUSSIONS SHROUDED IN SECRECY

Near the end of his recent international trip to the Middle East, President Trump noted that nearly 150 countries had contacted the Administration in order to negotiate a new trade agreement.¹⁷ However, so far, only a handful of these countries have been publicly identified, and only one preliminary framework for a trade agreement—with the United Kingdom—has been published.¹⁸

In addition, the Administration has granted a number of exclusions to its tariffs with little to no explanation to the public.¹⁹ No formal mechanism has been established to seek tariff relief, yet new tariff categories have been excluded since publication of the official April 2nd tariff exemption list, protecting goods that appear to benefit firms connected to the Trump Administration and its closest political allies.²⁰

Not knowing the circumstances under which these tariffs have been levied, which subsequent trade negotiations have been carried out, and the unprecedented degree to which many countries have chosen to personally enrich the President and his family during these negotiations have resulted in a crisis of public confidence. There is no compelling rationale for keeping the details of trade negotiations—or the President’s potential conflicts of interest—secret and the American public in the dark. As former Supreme Court Justice Louis Brandeis once famously observed, sunlight is the best disinfectant. The American people deserve transparency and oversight.

Given the severity of this matter, we request written answers to the following:

1. The names of all countries with which the Trump Administration is actively negotiating a trade agreement or tariff adjustment with.

[deadline-looms-2025-06-02/](#).

¹⁶ CNN, “Scott Bessent Says Tariff Rates Will Return to ‘Reciprocal’ Levels if Countries Don’t Reach Trade Deals with US,” Auzinea Bacon, May 18, 2025, <https://www.cnn.com/2025/05/18/business/scott-bessent-trump-tariffs-china>.

¹⁷ CNN, “Trump Says the Clock is Ticking for 150 Countries to Make a Deal or Face Higher Tariffs,” David Goldman, Betsy Klein, May 16, 2025, <https://www.cnn.com/2025/05/16/business/trade-deals-trump>.

¹⁸ Reuters, “White House Adviser Says Three Trade Deals Nearly Done,” Reuters, May 29, 2025, <https://www.reuters.com/business/white-house-adviser-says-three-trade-deals-nearly-done-2025-05-29/>.

¹⁹ The Washington Post, “How Tim Cook Helped Apple Out of Trump’s Tariff Storm — For Now,” Jeff Stein, Elizabeth Dwoskin, Cat Zakrzewski, April 17, 2025, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2025/04/17/apple-iphone-tariff-exemption-trump/>.

²⁰ ProPublica, “Politically Connected Firms Benefit from Trump Tariff Exemptions Amid Secrecy, Confusion,” Robert Faturechi, April 22, 2025, <https://www.propublica.org/article/trump-tariffs-exemptions-pet-lobbyists-asbestos-confusion-secrecy>.

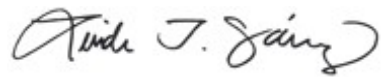
2. The status and nature of current trade negotiations, including what objectives have been defined for these discussions and the text of any written agreements made as part of these negotiations.
3. The names of all individuals who have participated or will participate in negotiations on tariff adjustments on behalf of the Trump Administration since April 2, 2025.
4. Steps that the Department of the Treasury, Department of State, Department of Commerce, the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, and the Office of Government Ethics have taken or are taking to confirm that any individuals involved in trade negotiations do not possess a financial conflict of interest or stand to privately benefit from trade agreements.
5. A list of all members of the Trump Administration and President Trump's family and business affiliates that have received gifts or items of value from foreign governments with which the Administration is negotiating or has negotiated a trade agreement, and a list of the gifts or items of value.

We thank you for your urgent consideration of this request and look forward to your response no later than **July 15, 2025**.

Sincerely,




Dave Min
Member of Congress



Linda T. Sánchez
Member of Congress



Bonnie Watson Coleman
Member of Congress



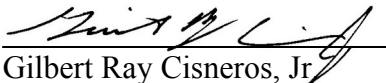
Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress



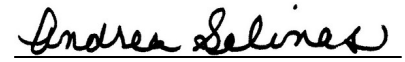
Cleo Fields
Member of Congress




Donald S. Beyer Jr.
Member of Congress




Gilbert Ray Cisneros, Jr.
Member of Congress



Andrea Salinas
Member of Congress




Jared Huffman
Member of Congress




John Garamendi
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Al Green
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Summer L. Lee
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Stephen F. Lynch
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