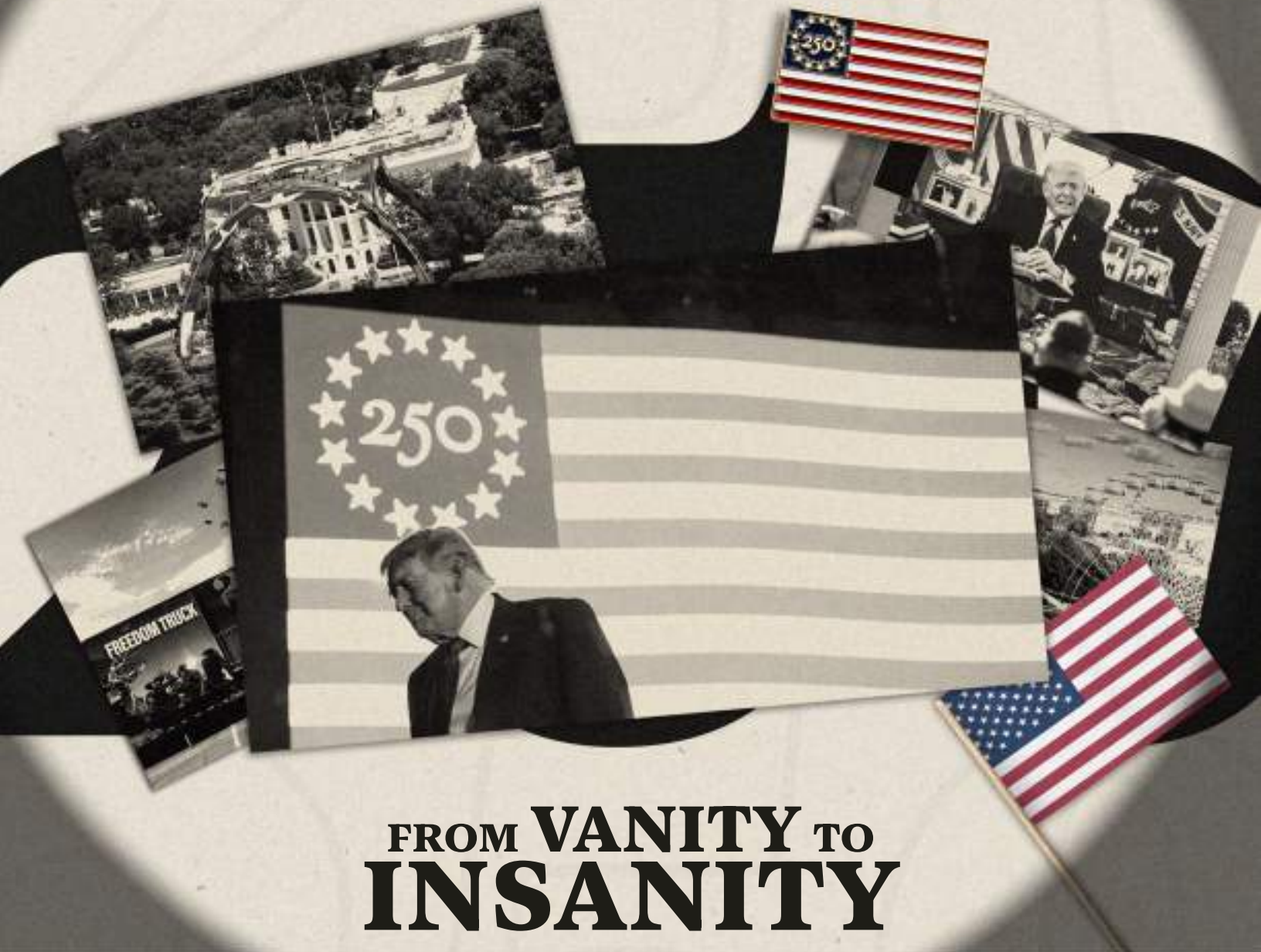




NATURAL RESOURCES
COMMITTEE
DEMOCRATS
RANKING MEMBER JARED HUFFMAN



FROM VANITY TO INSANITY

HOW THE WHITE HOUSE CHEATED THE AMERICAN PEOPLE OUT OF THEIR 250TH BIRTHDAY

INTERIM DEMOCRATIC STAFF REPORT
COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*This report has not been officially adopted by the Committee on Natural Resources
and therefore may not necessarily reflect the views of its Members.*

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2016, Congress established an independent, nonpartisan U.S. Semiquincentennial Commission tasked with organizing celebrations in honor of the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence. America250 was created to lead the celebrations on behalf of every American, insulated from the political whims of any particular administration. It was designed to leverage public-private partnerships without any quid-pro-quo or outsized political influence infecting the celebrations. The National Park Foundation—the official philanthropic partner of the National Park Service for more than five decades—stood ready to channel private generosity toward the parks and public spaces where the nation would gather.

But under President Donald Trump, this anniversary has been hijacked and perverted into a hotbed of corruption and self-enrichment. This interim report documents how the machinery built for a national commemoration was converted, deliberately and over a period of months, into an apparatus for raising and spending money in service of the President’s ego, political ideology, and pet projects.

The White House first attempted to bend America250 to its purposes, demanding spectacles focused on promoting President Trump rather than the country while forcing partisan content, campaign-style fundraisers, and favored contractors onto an organization Congress designed to serve the whole country, not one party or president. America250 pushed back against the President’s demands and their resistance carried a price.

When America250 would not yield, the White House created a replacement: Freedom 250 LLC, a shadow organization capable of infiltrating the celebrations and injecting America’s 250th with Trump’s extreme, partisan agenda. Lodged within the National Park Foundation, the new entity could exploit the credibility and donor relationships of a beloved public charity while operating outside the transparency and accountability requirements Congress wrote into the semiquincentennial framework.



What followed is documented in the body of this report. Freedom 250 may have conducted wire fraud by luring unsuspecting donors who intended to support the congressionally chartered foundation and giving them Freedom 250 bank information instead. Presidential access was sold to those willing to pay for it. A false history of the country was imposed to suit the President's distorted vision of the past. Christian nationalist ideology was injected into events, eroding the wall of church-state separation. Loose logo licensing let Freedom 250 brand deeply racist merchandise under the government's banner. An organization that was once responsible for planning events surrounding the January 6th insurrection has now been contracted for America's 250th celebrations. Taxpayer dollars were funneled to the President's preferred contractors. Americans' private, personal information has been harvested by Trump's allies for political purposes.

This is an interim report. Significant questions remain unanswered, beginning with the complete donor lists and the ultimate disposition of the funds that Freedom 250 has raised and spent. But the record already assembled supports a conclusion that should alarm the American people. The national celebration that belonged to the entire country was hijacked to serve one man's vanity, and the methods they've used and perfected—from capturing nonprofits to exploiting interested donors, diverting public funds, and dismantling independent entities—have paved the way for the ultra-wealthy and politically connected to take advantage of the American people.

Despite Congressional Republicans having an abundance of evidence and knowledge of this corruption, the majority party has refused to conduct oversight to uncover the truth for the American people and hold the Trump administration accountable.

This report seeks to record what was done with America's 250th birthday so we can dismantle this playbook for corruption before it becomes a permanent practice of government.

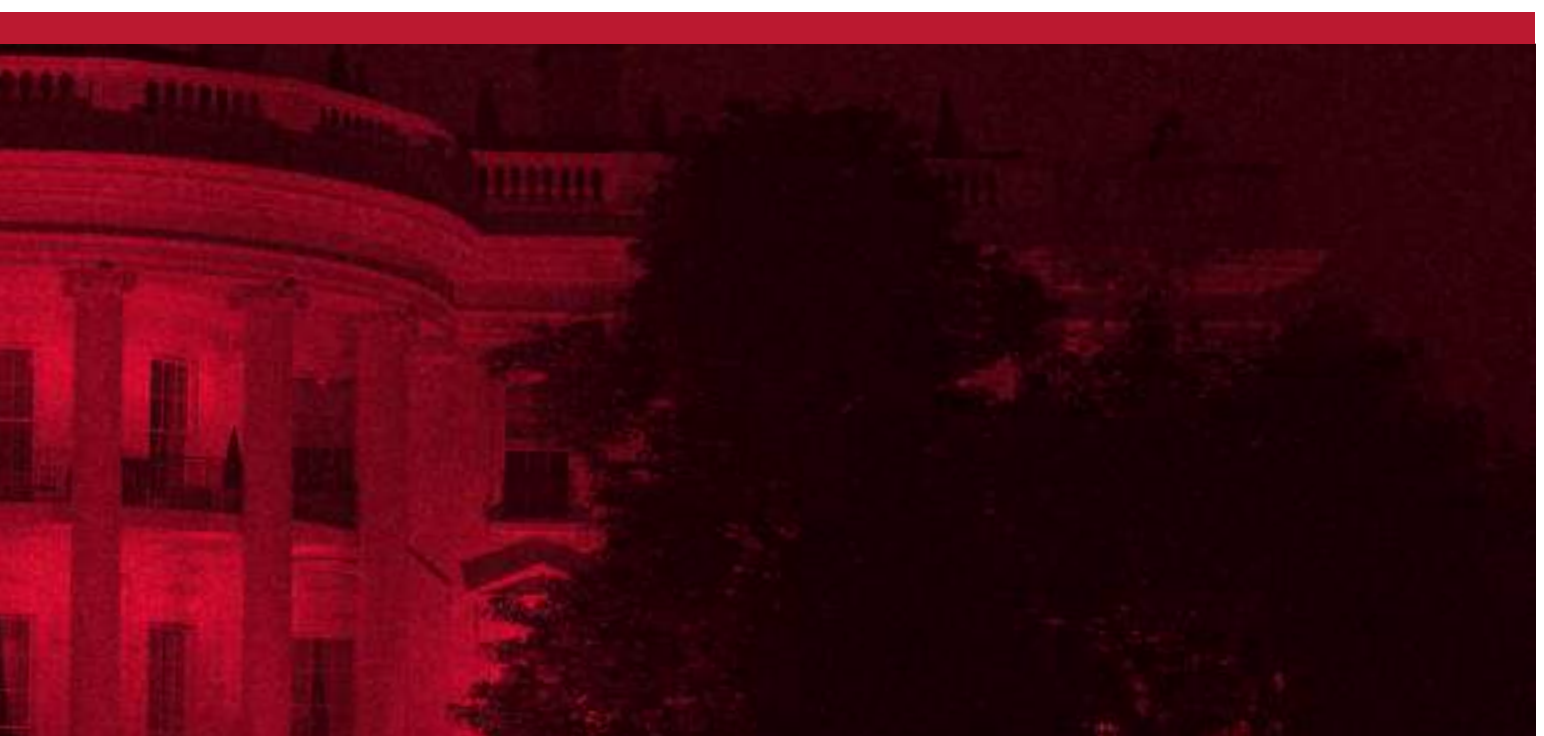




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THE WHITE HOUSE PRESSURE CAMPAIGN AGAINST AMERICA250

The U.S. Semiquincentennial Commission and the America250 Foundation

In 2016, Congress established the nonpartisan U.S. Semiquincentennial Commission, tasking it with organizing celebrations in honor of the 250th anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration of Independence.¹ The Commission is composed of representatives from federal agencies and the private sector, as well as Democratic and Republican Members of Congress. It is currently chaired by Rosie Rios, who served as the U.S. Treasurer under President Barack Obama.

The Commission is also known by the name of its nonprofit partner, the America250 Foundation; for the purposes of this report, both are at times herein referred to as America250. America250's mission is to celebrate and commemorate the 250th anniversary of the nation's founding through the adoption of the Declaration of Independence. The organization aims "to inspire our fellow Americans to reflect on our past, strengthen our love of country, and renew our commitment to the ideals of democracy through programs that educate, engage, and unite us as a nation."² Among the federal agencies involved is the U.S. Department of the Interior, which has played a key role in planning and coordinating with America250.³ America250 initiated its programming ahead of Memorial Day in 2025, which is planned to continue throughout the year with a headline event on July 4, 2026.⁴

Like many large, hybrid public-private initiatives, the Commission experienced periods of internal disagreement in earlier years;⁵ however, this period is well in its past. Under Chair Rios, the Commission has professionalized its planning, issued a national "playbook," strengthened bipartisan buy-in, and—critically—kept its programming focused on broad civic participation rather than partisan, ideological, or sectarian religious messaging.⁶

The White House Takes Aim at America250

Task Force 250

Long before he returned to office, President Donald Trump signaled his intent to place himself at the center of the nation's 250th anniversary. In a May 2023 campaign video, titled "Salute to America250," then-candidate Trump promised "a most spectacular birthday party" for the country's semiquincentennial and pledged that, on his first day in office, he would convene a federal task force to direct a full

year of coordinated festivities.⁷ That pledge came seven years after Congress had already chartered the U.S. Semiquincentennial Commission to plan the anniversary on a bipartisan, nationwide basis.⁸

Despite the progress of the U.S. Semiquincentennial Commission under Chair Rios, President Donald Trump seized on the Commission's earlier turbulence as a public-facing excuse to shift power away from the Congressionally chartered Commission, and toward his own creation.⁹ It was the beginning of the Trump administration's plan to take over the 250th anniversary.¹⁰

On November 14, 2024, America250 Chair Rosie Rios sent a memorandum to President-elect Trump with a status update on America250, as well as a set of recommendations for next steps for celebrating the semiquincentennial.¹¹ One such recommendation was that the President issue an executive order directing all federal agencies and stakeholders to begin their planning efforts for 2026.¹² Indeed, on January 29, 2025, President Trump issued Executive Order 14189 to "provide a grand celebration worthy of the momentous occasion of the 250th anniversary of American Independence on July 4, 2026."¹³ However, the executive order also went beyond Chair Rios' recommendations and established the White House Task Force on Celebrating America's 250th Birthday (Task Force 250). That task force would coordinate with federal agencies to plan, organize, and execute 250th anniversary activities. The executive order made the President and Vice President the Chair and Vice Chair of the Task Force, respectively, with the power to appoint an Executive Director.¹⁴ The draft executive order prepared by America250 and shared with the White House did not include a provision to establish a separate task force, precisely because Congress had already created the U.S. Semiquincentennial Commission that served the same purpose the President had assigned to Task Force 250.¹⁵ Sources interviewed by Committee Democrats said that Trump adviser Chris LaCivita facilitated introductions in early 2025 between America250 and senior White House staff, including Vince Haley, the Director of the Domestic Policy Council, and Mr. LaCivita assisted in "coordination with the White House Task Force on America250."¹⁶

Despite Chair Rios' good faith effort to give President Trump an opportunity to lead America250's bipartisan efforts and coordinate with Task Force 250, helmed by Brittany Baldwin, President Trump appointed Ariel Abergel, a former Fox News producer, as the Executive Director of the U.S. Semiquincentennial Commission in May 2025 serving under Chair Rosie Rios.¹⁷

Army 250

One of the earliest tests of the relationship between America250 and the White House occurred during the planning for Army 250. In 2025, America250 helped to facilitate and manage the 250th Birthday of the U.S. Army Grand Military Parade and Celebration, known as "Army 250." President Trump issued a proclamation marking June 14, 2025, the U.S. Army's 250th birthday, which coincides with his own birthday, as a day of commemoration.¹⁸ Events included a parade, demonstrations, and musical performances.¹⁹

Forward Strategies, led by Meredith O'Rourke, was contracted by America250 in May 2025 to handle some of the fundraising for the event.²⁰ Event Strategies, Inc. (ESI), an event management firm formerly led by Justin Caporale was contracted to help plan the event and handle logistics.²¹ Both ESI and Forward Strategies have partnered with President Trump on some of his most partisan and divisive undertakings.

Meredith O'Rourke is a longtime fundraiser who led President Trump's 2024 campaign fundraising team.²² She has also been involved in fundraising for the

President's highest priority vanity projects, including the White House Ballroom, the Kennedy Center, and the Garden of American Heroes.²³ Justin Caporale was named Executive Producer for Major Events and Public Appearances under the White House Office of Presidential Advance by the President in a TruthSocial post on December 31, 2024.²⁴ ESI—and Justin Caporale specifically—oversaw certain arrangements for the President's rally on January 6, 2021, which subsequently led to an insurrection and attack on the U.S. Capitol. The Select Committee to Investigate the January 6th Attack on the United States Capitol found that, on December 29, 2020, Mr. Caporale sent a text stating that after the President's planned speech there "maybe [sic] a call to action to march to the [C]apitol and make noise."²⁵ According to public reporting, a Trump-aligned political action committee, Save America, paid over \$10 million to ESI for other event coordination after the January 6th attack.²⁶

Even with ESI and O'Rourke inside America250, the White House still seemingly viewed America250 as insufficiently loyal and too independent to shape the nation's 250th birthday in President Trump's image.²⁷ While undermining the Semiquincentennial Commission, the White House was experimenting with other fundraising models to finance the President's priorities.

From Test Drive to Template: The USDA's "Secretary's Priorities" Fund

Concurrently with Army 250, a fundraising mechanism was being test driven at the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), using the congressionally-chartered nonprofit partner of the U.S. Forest Service, the National Forest Foundation (NFF), as the enabling fundraising nonprofit.

The test drive centered on the Great American Farmers Market (GAFM), which was staged in 2025 and billed as "a weeklong celebration of food, family, and farming."²⁸ Planning meeting agendas for the staff of USDA Secretary Brooke Rollins—which were obtained by Committee Democrats—showed that she or her staff intended to solicit donations for the event from companies with business before the federal government, since USDA was a sponsor of the event.²⁹ The Executive Director of NFF, Dieter Fenkart-Froeschl, addressed the origin of NFF's role as banker for the GAFM in written responses to Rep. Maxine Dexter, the Ranking Member of the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee of the House Natural Resources Committee, with the following incomplete answer:

Q: Who at the U.S. Department of Agriculture, including the Office of Secretary, directed, requested, or suggested that the National Forest Foundation accept or receive any contribution, gift, in-kind support, or other transfer from any of the entities identified in 3(a)–(d) [Chobani LLC, Visa, Inc., John Deere, and Tractor Supply Company]?

A: No USDA official or employee directed the National Forest Foundation to accept any contributions.³⁰

NFF aims to "bring people together to restore and enhance National Forests and Grasslands."³¹ But NFF could not serve as the GAFM's bank as long as the event lacked a connection to forests. So, they manufactured a connection. According to an NFF statement to E&E News: "In order to participate, there needed to be an educational component related to National Forests, which we collaborated on with USDA," [NFF spokesperson] Cody said. "We then established a fund to support and staff the event."³²

Four companies—Chobani LLC, Visa, Inc., John Deere, and Tractor Supply Company—each contributed between \$100,000 and \$499,999,³³ routing the money to the "Secretary's Priorities" fund, which gives the USDA Secretary wide latitude to spend on "initiatives that are directly aligned with the mission and priorities of the USDA Forest Service."³⁴

At least three of the four contributors held clear business interests before the government. Chobani holds over \$12 million in contracts with USDA that are described as “commodities for [U.S. government] food donations” and are derived from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Child Nutrition Programs, Food and Nutrition Service accounts.³⁵ Visa was fighting an antitrust lawsuit brought by the U.S. Department of Justice.³⁶ John Deere was fighting an antitrust lawsuit brought by the Federal Trade Commission.³⁷ The company had also been singled out in 2024 by then-candidate Trump with a threatened 200 percent tariff if John Deere moved its manufacturing to Mexico.³⁸ Put plainly, companies with matters pending before the federal government paid into a fund controlled by a Cabinet secretary, routed through a conservation charity that had to manufacture a forestry rationale to accept the checks.

The case of the 2025 Great American Farmers Market served as a valuable proof of concept, showing that capturing the fundraising apparatus of a reputable nonprofit organization allows the federal government to raise large sums of money from companies that need something from them. The equation is simple. The President gets money for vanity projects. The companies get a private channel to seek favor while contracts, grants, enforcement actions, or other federal matters are pending. And taxpayers are left with a government that operates less like a public trust and more like a pay-to-play scheme.

Having tested this model with the Great American Farmers Market, President Trump proceeded to leverage the same practice with the Trust for the National Mall, which he hijacked to solicit White House ballroom donations from entities with business before the federal government.³⁹ According to meeting minutes prepared by Clark Construction and obtained by Committee Democrats, the White House has also used the Trust for the National Mall to renovate Lafayette Square⁴⁰—the latest of the President’s vanity projects⁴¹ and the same project that involved a no-bid contract to Clark Construction whose cost ballooned from an estimate of \$3.3 million to \$17.4 million.⁴²

The Trump administration had officially test driven the strategy at USDA, and the White House and was ready to deploy it again. But before settling on the National Park Foundation (NPF) as the fundraising vehicle for his vanity-project-laden vision of the nation’s 250th birthday, President Trump first tried to hijack America250. That effort failed.

“

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The White House's First Attempted Hostile Takeover of America250

In July 2025, former America250 Executive Director Ariel Abergel, in concert with Speaker Mike Johnson, attempted to remove four Republican commissioners from the U.S. Semiquincentennial Commission to allow the House Speaker and Senate Majority Leader to appoint commissioners more aligned with the President.⁴³ Administration officials and Speaker Johnson also reportedly encouraged longtime Republican commissioners to resign for the same purpose.⁴⁴ Those Republican commissioners refused to resign, and Mr. Abergel was fired from the Commission in September 2025 for having requested the commissioners' resignation.⁴⁵ Accordingly, sources interviewed by Committee Democrats said that Ms. O'Rourke's firm stopped fundraising for America250 in September 2025.

Having failed to capture America250 outright, the Trump administration then tried to pursue its vision through pressure from within. According to sources with knowledge of the situation, America250 continued to coordinate closely with Task Force 250 and the Trump administration to facilitate the President's vision for the celebrations. Those sources confirmed that senior administration officials, including Vince Haley, the Director of the White House Domestic Policy Council; Ambassador Monica Crowley, the Chief of Protocol of the United States; and Brittany Baldwin, the Executive Director of Task Force 250, participated in meetings with America250 since at least March 3, 2025. According to sources familiar with the meeting, White House officials pressed the Commission to fold Trump-aligned programming into its slate of events, including the National Day of Prayer, UFC Fight, and Patriot Games. According to one source, America250 received increasing pressure from the White House to transform America250's nonpartisan events into "Trump rallies." President Trump recently confirmed as much on TruthSocial, posting that "On July 4th, at The Lincoln Memorial and Washington Monument [...] we are going to host the most spectacular TRUMP RALLY of them all."⁴⁶

According to confidential disclosures shared with the Committee, after a July 30, 2025, America250 planning meeting, America250 Chair Rios recommended that certain activities remain with Task Force 250 and that the Task Force consider standing up a parallel organization to facilitate private fundraising for the President's priority projects moving forward. This encouragement, along with the Executive Order 14189's framework, led to the creation of Freedom 250 and, ultimately, the sidelining of the congressionally chartered Commission.

After the President failed to take actual control of the Commission through its leadership, or effective control through its programming in 2025, Freedom 250 was created as a subsidiary of NPF, operating distinctly from America250. According to Freedom 250 talking points obtained by the Committee, Freedom 250 was to tell the public that "the America250 Commission and Freedom 250 play distinct but complementary roles," and "[t]he Commission focuses on civic and community-based programming, while Freedom 250 leads the delivery of the President's national signature events and provides the national platform that brings local efforts together into a unified celebration."⁴⁷ Yet Freedom 250's explicit mandate to execute the President's priority programming has resulted in exactly the opposite. Instead, the events and branding associated with the 250th celebrations have taken on an increasingly partisan and ideological cast, a stark departure from the nonpartisan directive Congress established for the semiquincentennial.

The White House's Ideological Project of Christian Nationalism and Revisionism

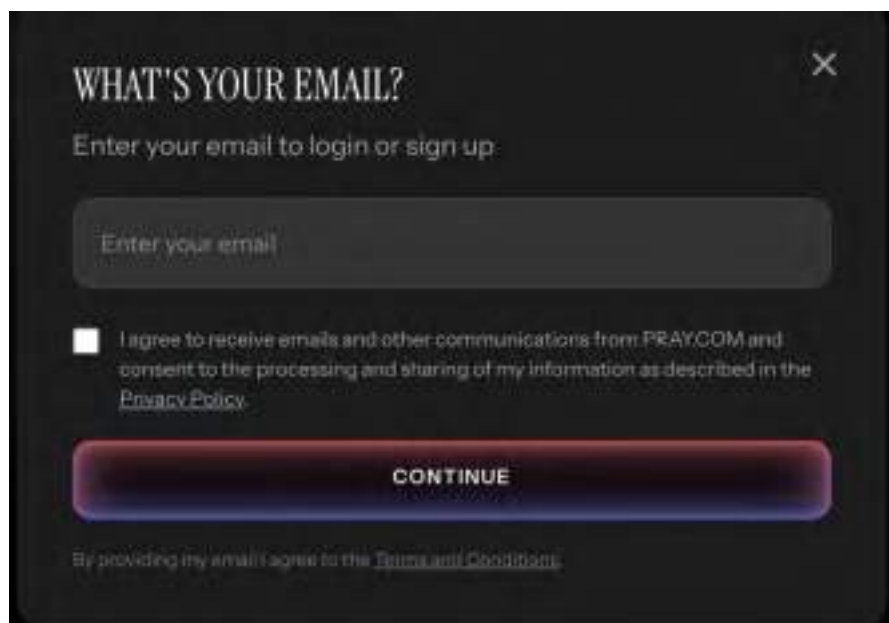
The preceding sections describe how the White House seized the nation's 250th anniversary. They do not, by themselves, explain why an administration would

invest such effort in capturing the semiquincentennial. Part of the answer lies in the President's appetite for vanity and self-enrichment, addressed elsewhere in this report. But the record reveals a second, programmatic goal—one which the U.S. Semiquincentennial Commission's nonpartisan mandate could never accommodate. The White House set out to refashion the semiquincentennial into a mouthpiece for those who want to break down the firewall between church and state and enshrine their preferred kind of Christianity as the de facto national religion. Their agenda fuses Christian, white supremacist identity with history revisionism, insisting that the nation's founding, its laws, and our fundamental rights are rooted in the Christian Bible, rather than the revolutionary principle of self-government. This was part of the White House's broader theocratic creep, including its establishment of the White House Commission on Religious Liberty, which was created by executive order on May 1, 2026, stacked with extreme Christian nationalists, and tasked with producing a report by July 4, 2026.⁴⁸ The White House paired its extreme religious doctrine with a sustained effort to erase from public memory the parts of American history the President would rather forget, including slavery.

The result of the White House's program is that a commemoration Congress designed to educate, engage, and unite the country has, under Freedom 250, become a vehicle for a Christian nationalist, partisan, and Trump-centered vision of American identity. Unfettered from any oversight by Congressional Republicans—whose leader recently pledged to protect “the President's family, the cabinet, his donors, [and] friends”⁴⁹—the White House has launched a frontal assault on what Thomas Jefferson called the constitution's “wall of separation between Church & State.”⁵⁰ On June 26, 2026, the White House Commission on Religious Liberty released a draft of its stunningly theocratic report, which renounces church-state separation, promotes a religiously-infused version of history, and recommends policy changes long sought by right-wing Christians, including repealing the Johnson Amendment to enable them to engage in partisan politics while keeping their tax-exempt status; special exemptions from anti-discrimination and healthcare laws; and directing the public funding of churches.⁵¹ In yet another parallel Christian nationalist initiative, the White House's “America Prays” project appears to be harvesting sensitive personal information on behalf of PRAY.COM—which has been criticized by theologians,⁵² privacy experts,⁵³ and disinformation analysts.⁵⁴

Right

Screen capture of the
America Prays website.



WHAT'S YOUR EMAIL?

Enter your email to login or sign up:

Enter your email

☐ I agree to receive emails and other communications from PRAY.COM and consent to the processing and sharing of my information as described in the [Privacy Policy](#).

CONTINUE

By providing my email I agree to the [Terms and Conditions](#).

While the U.S. Semiquincentennial Commission was directed to keep its programming focused on broad civic participation rather than religious messaging, Freedom 250 has done the opposite. It staged a government-backed prayer rally on the National Mall steeped in conservative Christian theology,⁵⁵ distributed an internal playbook instructing event organizers to deliver Christian nationalist content,⁵⁶ deployed a fleet of federally-funded mobile museums that present a Christianized—and frequently false—account of the nation’s founding to schoolchildren across the country,⁵⁷ and advanced this program alongside a parallel effort to whitewash American history.⁵⁸

Christianity-only Was Baked In

Before any ceremony took place, President Trump broadcasted his intention to give the nation’s birthday an explicitly religious character. In July 2025 the President said:

As we prepare to celebrate two and a half centuries of freedom, I am inviting America’s great religious communities to pray for our nation and for our people. From the beginning, this has always been a country sustained and strengthened by prayer. So important, if we bring religion back stronger, you’re going to see everything get better and better and better. You are going to see it get better and better. So, as we chart our course for the next 250 years, let us rededicate ourselves to one nation under God.⁵⁹

A Freedom 250 launch video later announced that a major prayer event would be held on the National Mall in the spring to “rededicate our country as one nation under God.”⁶⁰ Christian nationalist worship leader and political activist Sean Feucht publicly claimed to have met with the federal “America250” team to plan “revival meetings sponsored by the U.S. government,” including a large-scale “Let Us Worship” rally.⁶¹

Rededicate 250

On May 17, 2026, Freedom 250 staged “Rededicate 250,” a daylong prayer gathering on the National Mall billed as an occasion to rededicate the United States as “one nation under God.”⁶² The program featured worship music and remarks from a roster of overwhelmingly conservative Christian clergy—among them Franklin Graham, Paula White-Cain, who leads the White House Faith Office, Robert Jeffress, and Samuel Rodriguez—alongside video addresses from President Trump, Vice President Vance, Secretary of State Rubio, and Defense Secretary Hegseth, and with House Speaker Johnson appearing in person.⁶³ Of the faith leaders on the program, only one—an Orthodox rabbi—represented a non-Christian tradition.⁶⁴ In his video message, Secretary Hegseth devoted his remarks to George Washington “as a leader and man of God,” and recited a long-debunked story of Washington praying at Valley Forge, while Speaker Johnson led a prayer asserting that people’s rights derive from their “Creator,” not the government.⁶⁵ Rededicate 250 was the realized centerpiece of Freedom 250’s “America Prays” initiative.⁶⁶ Task Force 250 Executive Director Brittany Baldwin previewed Rededicate 250 as an event to tell the story “of God’s hand in America” and to rededicate the nation as “one nation under God,” and described it as a statement that the administration “celebrates our Judeo-Christian roots.”⁶⁷

The sectarian character of Freedom 250’s programming has also extended to events beyond Rededicate 250. A Freedom 250 “Events Toolkit” obtained by Committee Democrats instructs organizers of Freedom 250-affiliated events to incorporate “Faith-Based Messaging” and recommends “pro-life” messaging.⁶⁸ It also

proposes “Faith & Family” events such as a “worship night” and a “family devotional picnic,” as well as “scripture readings paired with quotes from the Founding Fathers.”⁶⁹

The same document fuses this religious content with explicitly partisan political organizing. It encourages organizers to hold a “rally around a core America First issue: parental rights, free speech, election integrity,” and even includes sample event guidance directing guests to the America First Policy Institute, a Trump-funded conservative group, noting that “AFPI Staff will be downstairs to escort you up once you arrive.”⁷⁰ Freedom 250’s public partnerships reflect the same orientation. Freedom 250 has partnered with religious and partisan groups, including the America First Policy Institute, Moms for Liberty, Hillsdale College, and PragerU.⁷¹

“Freedom Trucks”

One result of these partnerships is the so-called “Freedom Trucks,” a fleet of six mobile museums featuring content developed by PragerU and Hillsdale College.⁷² Their content was largely written by Matthew Spalding, who runs Hillsdale College’s Washington program and directed the 1776 Commission.⁷³ The trucks were dispatched by Freedom 250 to schoolchildren across the country to deliver Christian nationalist revisionism, and outright falsehoods.⁷⁴ These mobile museums were financed by a \$10 million taxpayer-funded grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) to the NPF.⁷⁵

According to extensive reporting, the exhibits inside these “Freedom Trucks” systematically recast the nation’s founding as a Christian project while erasing the Deism, rationalism, and religious skepticism embraced by many of our most influential founders.⁷⁶ An artificial-intelligence rendering of George Washington—presented to visitors as the voice of the founder—says that “our rights are a gift from God,”⁷⁷ a statement that George Washington is not documented to have made.⁷⁸ Another display presents the obscure Aitken Bible as “the only edition of the Bible authorized by Congress”—a long-debunked claim, as the supposed 1782 congressional resolution cited to support the claim did no such thing—and routes visitors by QR code to PragerU videos elaborating on the same revisionist claim.⁷⁹

The trucks contain demonstrable falsehoods that track with Antisemitic, Islamophobic, and Christian nationalist revisionism.⁸⁰ A display on supporters of the Revolutionary cause credits “Jewish merchants funding the cause” while omitting that Jews fought and died in the war, echoing two antisemitic tropes that Jews financed rather than fought, and that they fled from danger.⁸¹ An exhibit on Muhammad Ali—among the most prominent Muslims in American history—falsely states that he “later disavowed” Islam, a claim the Council on American-Islamic Relations publicly refuted, calling Ali “a devout Muslim” and urging Freedom 250 to correct the record.⁸² At least one scheduled truck appearance was canceled after local officials learned of PragerU’s role.⁸³

Revision of Non-religious History

This revisionist programming comes amid a concerted effort by the Trump administration to whitewash history at national park sites and other federally protected areas. On March 27, 2025, President Trump issued Executive Order 14253, titled “Restoring Truth and Sanity to American History.”⁸⁴ The executive order requires the Secretary of the Interior to “ensure that all public monuments, memorials, statues, markers, or similar properties within the Department of the Interior’s jurisdiction do not contain descriptions, depictions, or other content that inappropriately disparage Americans past or living (including persons living in colonial times),” and to revoke changes to landmarks and monuments that

“perpetuate a false reconstruction of American history, inappropriately minimize the value of certain historical events or figures, or include any other improper partisan ideology.”⁸⁵ According to the White House, “President Trump is ensuring that we are celebrating true American history and ingenuity instead of corrupting it in the name of left-wing ideology.”⁸⁶ The order has resulted in the targeted removal of interpretive signage, brochures, and exhibits related to colonization, slavery, forced removal of Indigenous peoples, LGBTQ and women’s rights, and climate change.⁸⁷

The executive order was met with strong opposition and litigation from historians and nonprofit groups. The Organization of American Historians characterized the order as “a disturbing attack on core institutions and the public presentation of history.”⁸⁸ According to the National Parks Conservation Association, the order’s efforts to eliminate information at national parks will damage agency efforts to update educational materials and undermine the integrity of the national park system.⁸⁹ This erasure of history is unpopular⁹⁰ and potentially unlawful according to provisions of the National Park Centennial Act that require “a broad program of the highest quality and interpretation and education” that reflects “current scientific and academic research, content, methods, and audience analysis.”⁹¹ Despite the widespread outcry and public pushback, Congressional Republicans have refused to conduct any oversight over this attempted erasure of American history. The Trump administration’s influence on the semiquincentennial celebrations is yet another attempt to reframe history to match the ideological preferences and Christian nationalist worldview of the President’s most fervent political supporters.

Freedom 250’s Freedom Trucks operation is one of the means used to promote a counterfeit history of our country. In the exhibits, slavery’s role is downplayed. Thomas Jefferson is credited with saying the slave trade is a “cruel war against human nature itself,” while being silent on his ownership of over 600 enslaved people.⁹² Native Americans are described as people whose “lands and property shall never be taken from them without their consent,” when the opposite was true.⁹³ There is no mention of the acquisition by military conquest of large sections of the country from Mexico and Spanish colonies, omitting the history of many Spanish speakers in the United States.⁹⁴

Sources interviewed by Committee Democrats emphasized that the White House’s efforts to plan overtly right-wing, sectarian events was inconsistent with the Semiquincentennial Commission’s focus on civic engagement and its historically honest, nonpartisan mandate. Despite pressure from former America250 Executive Director Ariel Abergel, among others, America250 declined to lead or play a role in those events. Once it became clear that America250 would not lead on the President’s priorities, Freedom 250 took the wheel, spearheading the events and programming most aligned with the President’s vision. Freedom 250 talking points obtained by Committee Democrats assert that “Freedom 250 is additive to the Commission’s work, not a replacement for it,”⁹⁵ but over time it became clear that the Trump administration was attempting to supplant America250’s programming with its preferred Freedom 250 events.

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An exhibit on Muhammad Ali—among the most prominent Muslims in American history—falsely states that he “later disavowed” Islam, a claim the Council on American-Islamic Relations publicly refuted, calling Ali “a devout Muslim” and urging Freedom 250 to correct the record.

— HOSTILE TAKEOVER: TURNING A BELOVED NONPROFIT INTO A PRESIDENTIAL SHELL

The Creation of Freedom 250

Freedom 250 was created in the aftermath of the White House’s failure to hijack America250, both through its leadership and its programming. Freedom 250, a limited liability company (LLC), was formally stood up in the fall of 2025 and lodged inside the National Park Foundation, the congressionally chartered philanthropic partner of the National Park Service (NPS).

On October 28, 2025, Freedom 250 was first registered as an LLC in Delaware⁹⁶ and then in the District of Columbia,⁹⁷ making Freedom 250 a wholly owned subsidiary of the NPF. The D.C. filing lists the same mailing address as NPF and names a senior NPF official as its sole beneficial owner.⁹⁸ The Delaware filing lists the registered agent as Harvard Business Services, a go-to vendor for anonymous Trump-affiliated organizations.⁹⁹

Freedom 250 began transacting business to “support & promote the activities of the National Parks [sic] Foundation” in the District of Columbia on November 18, 2025,¹⁰⁰ one week after a cooperative agreement between the NPS and the NPF, signed November 11, 2025, had already designated Freedom 250 the “primary public-private partner for the America250 commemoration period” and “as the subrecipient and operational implementing entity for America250 projects executed under [the] Agreement, with direct liaison rights to NPS program officials.”¹⁰¹ The federal government thus identified Freedom 250 as the lead vehicle for the nation’s 250th anniversary before the entity had formally begun to operate.

Freedom 250 was unveiled to the public only weeks later. According to sources familiar with the matter, America250 met with Freedom 250 leadership in December 2025 to discuss the relationship between the two groups. Those sources indicate that, shortly after, congressional members of the Commission were approached by Freedom 250 to pass legislation codifying the use of the Washington Monument for Freedom 250 activities on New Year’s Eve, which was ultimately enacted December 2, 2025.¹⁰² Freedom 250’s activities caused administrative hurdles that required the creation of new agreements and product orders. A prime example of this arose regarding America250’s trademark of the Betsy Ross flag, for which Freedom 250 requested sole ownership. On April 10, 2026, America250 formally surrendered its trademark to Freedom 250.¹⁰³

On December 17, 2025, Freedom 250 circulated talking points—drafted and edited by its CEO, Keith Krach—about the new organization.¹⁰⁴ The document described Freedom 250 as “the official public-private partnership for this historic

initiative,”¹⁰⁵ and announced that it would lead “the delivery of the President’s national signature events...including the Great American State Fair, the Patriot Games, the UFC 250 Fight, and a National Prayer Event.”¹⁰⁶ According to confidential disclosures made to Committee Democrats, Freedom 250 was not involved in funding the UFC fight or the Indy Car Grand Prix, despite the proliferation of Freedom 250 branding on those events. Both UFC and Indy Car appear to be funding the events themselves, with the UFC officially confirming they are covering the costs and Indy Car implying they are taking on the cost and responsibility of administering the event.¹⁰⁷ Of course, these assurances did not settle whether taxpayers were left on the hook for the time and resources expended by federal employees tasked with the event’s permits, preparation, security, and clean up.

Diverting America250’s Funding, Donors, and Good Name

Freedom 250 did not supplant America250 because it was better at organizing festivities for the nation’s semiquincentennial. It did so through a series of diversions and misrepresentations that drained the chartered Commission of the resources it needed to function, redirecting the appropriations Congress intended for America250, peeling away its private donors, and trading on its nonpartisan reputation to recruit performers who believed they were joining a nonpolitical celebration. The cumulative effect, and the apparent purpose, was to render America250 unable to succeed, and install Freedom 250 in its place.

Fleeing Congressional Appropriations

Congress appropriated money for the semiquincentennial believing it would fund the chartered Commission. In early 2025, America250 planned to request \$100 million in funding through the One Big Beautiful Bill Act. However, America250 increased its request to \$150 million at the recommendation of Chris LaCivita, the longtime Trump campaign strategist advising on the semiquincentennial.¹⁰⁸ The appropriations request was submitted on May 13, 2025, with the understanding that \$100 million would be applied to America250 programming and \$50 million would be applied to the White House’s programming.¹⁰⁹

According to sources familiar with the meeting, on July 30, 2025, America250 held a meeting that included Vince Haley and Brittany Baldwin from Task Force 250 and contractors for America250, including Chris LaCivita, Meredith O’Rourke, and ESI. The meeting included a budget breakdown for semiquincentennial programming, which was presented by Justin Caporale from ESI. As a follow-up to this meeting, Justin Caporale created an internal budget document that reflected approved America250 tentpole programs, as well as the White House initiatives contingent upon federal and private funding. Additional programs included the Great American Talent Show, Navy250, Marine250, Washington Monument Lighting, Patriot Games, the Great American State Fair, Memorial Day Commemoration Events, and a Macy’s Float and Bacchus Float.¹¹⁰ At this time, America250 had already provided financial infrastructure to allow private fundraising for Phase 1 of the President’s priority activities already completed, including the Army 250 parade and Iowa rally.

Mr. LaCivita’s representations that the increased appropriations request would still leave America250 with \$100 million turned out to be false. Following the bill’s enactment, America250 expected to receive \$100 million from the One Big Beautiful Bill Act along with \$30 million in federal appropriations, while Task Force 250 expected to receive \$50 million under the Act,¹¹¹ supplemented by \$85 million in private funds raised by Meredith O’Rourke, the President’s 2024 campaign finance chief.¹¹² However, according to sources familiar with the meeting, on November 17, 2025, America250 Chair Rosie Rios met with Brittany Baldwin and Vince Haley—

the Executive Director of Task Force 250 and the Director of the White House Domestic Policy Council, respectively—who informed Chair Rios that America250 would only receive \$50 million from the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, not \$100 million as anticipated. In the end, even that was not delivered, despite a signed agreement between the NPS and America250 that promises \$50 million to America250.¹¹³ According to sources familiar with the matter, America250 had received only \$25 million from the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, disbursed on January 7, 2026, and \$15 million in congressional appropriations for fiscal year 2026, as of the publication of this report. Now, amid evidence of Freedom 250’s own mismanagement of taxpayer dollars, reports indicate that the White House intends to hold America250’s remaining funds hostage.¹¹⁴

According to sources familiar with the appropriations decision-making process, America250’s funding shortfall was made worse by the fact that congressional appropriators were led to believe that America250 would receive \$100 million through the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, so they reduced FY 2026 appropriations below what had been requested. Freedom 250, meanwhile, captured the funding America250 had expected. The resulting shortfall, combined with the competing White House efforts, created significant headwinds for America250’s programming and, according to sources familiar with the split in federal funding, America250 has struggled to execute planned programming amid financial uncertainty and misalignment with Freedom 250. Despite these challenges, America250 has still attempted to execute all originally planned events by pursuing additional private funding, though the loss in federal appropriations has resulted in scaled back programming.

Freedom 250’s capture of federal funding also extended to federal grants. Throughout the fall of 2025, America250 and Freedom 250 negotiated a division of responsibilities, including for the “Freedom Trucks,” the mobile museum program funded by a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). America250 ultimately agreed that Freedom 250 was best positioned to lead and execute the grant and, according to sources familiar with the matter, America250 proposed the transfer. NPF indicated they were told the IMLS grant would go to Freedom 250, but that they were unaware that the federal funding would be taken away from America250. \$10 million dollars in IMLS funds are publicly recorded as having been transferred from America250 to NPF for the express purpose of financing Freedom 250’s Freedom Trucks.¹¹⁵ According to NPF, it assumed full responsibility for Freedom 250’s grant compliance upon completion of the grant transfer in December 2025.¹¹⁶

Capturing and Potentially Deceiving America250’s Private Supporters

Freedom 250 also moved to capture America250’s private supporters. According to sources interviewed by Committee Democrats, after Freedom 250’s launch, donors who had intended to support America250 came under pressure to redirect their giving to Freedom 250, and America250 began losing donors as a result. Some donors have pulled back on their existing commitments, and some who have donated have asked not to be announced, fearing reprisal from the Trump administration. According to sources familiar with the matter, prospective donors and sponsors have been told by the Trump administration that they do not have a “green light” to donate to America250. Freedom 250 itself has conducted aggressive outreach to America250’s corporate sponsors, making calls to the same donors to ask for millions of dollars to support its own programming—and confusing corporate executives in the process, who were not aware of the differences between America250 and Freedom 250.¹¹⁷

Most troubling, Committee Democrats have received confidential disclosures

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... after Freedom 250's launch, donors who had intended to support America250 came under pressure to redirect their giving to Freedom 250, and America250 began losing donors as a result.

that America250 donors were affirmatively misled by fundraisers, including the President's lead fundraiser, Meredith O'Rourke. According to sources interviewed by Committee Democrats, donors who intended to donate to America250 were instead given wire instructions with Freedom 250's banking information—including its routing number and account number—so that contributions would instead flow to Freedom 250. A gift solicited in the name of the nation's nonpartisan birthday commission could thus be redirected without the donor's knowledge, by an entity created to serve the President's priorities. If true, such actions could constitute violations of several laws, ranging from potential wire fraud and charitable solicitation fraud under federal law to charitable solicitation violations under the laws of the District of Columbia, where Freedom 250 is registered and operates as an LLC.

Great American State Fair Concert

This same pattern of deceit appeared again when Freedom 250 recruited artists for its programming. As part of the Great American State Fair—an event intended to showcase “the people, traditions, innovations, and spirit that make America the greatest nation on Earth” through exhibits from all 50 states and territories—Freedom 250 intended to host a series of concerts on the National Mall.¹¹⁸ The original roster of performers included Morris Day, Young MC, Milli Vanilli, The Commodores, Martina McBride, Bret Michaels, C+C Music Factory, Flo Rida, and Vanilla Ice.¹¹⁹ All but Vanilla Ice, Flo Rida, and one member of Milli Vanilli have withdrawn. Although it remains unclear exactly how these artists were solicited to perform, they were reportedly unaware until recently of Freedom 250's political nature.¹²⁰ Under the guise of a “state fair,” Freedom 250 booked the artists to perform at a seemingly nonpartisan, innocuous event celebrating states and the American people; while doing so, they neglected to provide sufficient detail to clarify the distinction between Freedom 250 and America250.

In the words of Young MC, he “was told one thing and then it was a bait-and-switch,” because the event was “presented to [the] artist[s]... as nonpolitical and nonpartisan.”¹²¹ Many of the artists have repeatedly emphasized that when they had asked questions of the event organizers, they were initially reassured that the concert series was nonpartisan. Martina McBride, for example, said that she “asked lots of questions and was assured this was a nonpartisan event that was meant to celebrate ALL 50 states.”¹²² Martina McBride, Young MC, and others claimed that they were never informed that there was political involvement in the event.¹²³ It was only after the artists began receiving social media backlash and were informed through media reporting that it was “considered a ‘Trump-backed’ event,” that they chose to withdraw. All the artists who pulled out criticized the event's organizers for presenting the performance as a “nonpolitical and nonpartisan” event, alleging that their agents and management were misled when they booked the event.¹²⁴

According to sources interviewed by Committee Democrats, Freedom 250 achieved this deceit by using middlemen—including businessmen in the entertainment industry with past ties to President Trump—to conduct outreach to the artists and obscure Freedom 250's political nature. According to those sources, Freedom 250 contracted an artist management group to help it handle the booking. Freedom 250 and the management group pressured artists' agents with higher sums of money than usual in order to secure the artists' contracts, leading the agents to do “little to no due diligence” on the event, one source said. When Freedom 250 and its middlemen reached out to agents to help book the event, the tight timeline was also a source of pressure, leading the agents to work as fast as possible and limiting the time they had to request more information about the event.

Soon after the slew of performers dropped out of the concert series,

Transportation Secretary Sean Duffy stated that military bands were “way better than those libtards that canceled on us,”¹²⁵ and the President announced that he would be replacing the artists with another semiquincentennial event: “the most spectacular TRUMP RALLY of them all.”¹²⁶

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According to sources interviewed by Committee Democrats, donors who intended to donate to America250 were instead given wire instructions with Freedom 250’s banking information so that contributions would instead flow to Freedom 250.

The National Park Foundation as the Ideal Shell

Freedom 250’s unceremonious takeover of the 250th was enabled by the perfect shell: the NPF. For more than five decades, NPF has been the trusted, congressionally-chartered philanthropic partner of the NPS.¹²⁷ NPF has served as an established mechanism with bipartisan support to raise funds for the National Park System with the legal capacity to receive and move large sums of money. By lodging Freedom 250 within NPF and stacking NPF’s board with the President’s own campaign operatives, the White House created a vehicle that could raise and spend money on the President’s priorities while using the credibility, tax status, and donor relationships of a beloved public charity.

NPF has enjoyed bipartisan support since being chartered by Congress in 1967. Its charter authorizes it to “accept, receive, solicit, hold, administer, and use any gifts, devises, or bequests” for the benefit of the NPS without shifting costs onto taxpayers.¹²⁸ It maintains a robust infrastructure for accepting private donations, foundation grants, corporate contributions, and federal funding.¹²⁹ As a 501(c)(3) organization, it offers donors tax-exempt, tax-deductible giving. It holds itself out as a model of integrity:

The National Park Foundation is committed to transparency in our operations, adherence to best practices, and the careful stewardship of donor funds. As a leading national non-profit we strive to exceed industry standards and hold ourselves accountable to our donors, partners, the public, and our treasured national parks. All donations are thoughtfully stewarded and allocated with attention to effectiveness and efficiency. Our strong performance is reflected in the fact that the National Park Foundation is highly rated by independent evaluators.¹³⁰

Beyond its reputation for integrity, NPF also offered a useful legal mechanism for Freedom 250. NPF had previously established subsidiary limited liability corporations (LLCs) to conduct activities outside of its core competencies and congressional mandate, such as the NPF Schoodic Woods LLC, which facilitated land donations to Acadia National Park.¹³¹ This kind of legal structure allows organizations to house joint ventures between tax-exempt and nontax-exempt entities.¹³² Freedom 250’s operations fall well outside anything NPF has previously undertaken, and many of its events are slated to occur far from National Park

System lands.

Trump Took Over the NPF Board

Because Freedom 250 is a wholly owned subsidiary of NPF, control of NPF's board guaranteed control of Freedom 250. The White House remade NPF's board accordingly. The Trump loyalists now seated on the board include Meredith O'Rourke, Chris LaCivita, John DeStefano, Richard Walters, Jim McCray, and *ex officio* board director Interior Secretary Doug Burgum, among others.¹³³ Notably, many of those appointees have direct connections to the President's campaign operations. McCray,¹³⁴ O'Rourke,¹³⁵ and Walters¹³⁶ were all architects of Trump's campaign finance machine; LaCivita co-managed Trump's 2024 presidential campaign,¹³⁷ and Walters directly managed Trump's inaugural committee.¹³⁸ DeStefano is a former president of Data Trust, which handles voter data for the Republican National Committee and other Republican campaign operations and served as an advisor to President Trump during his first term.¹³⁹ He was appointed to the NPF board in 2019.¹⁴⁰

Two of those board members, Ms. O'Rourke and Mr. LaCivita, appear to have served as the principal architects of the President's semiquincentennial priorities. Public reporting indicates that Mr. LaCivita was providing "guidance on strategic communications, public affairs initiatives, and coordination with the White House Task Force on America250."¹⁴¹ Ms. O'Rourke is now also fundraising for the President's several vanity projects, including the White House Ballroom, the East Potomac Golf Links, the Kennedy Center, and National Garden of American Heroes.¹⁴² In an Instagram post published on April 10, 2026, Meredith O'Rourke and Chris LaCivita were pictured on Marine One with President Trump and his son, Eric Trump.¹⁴³

President Trump's appointment of loyalists at the NPF sets a dangerous precedent because it turns a public-interest partner into a political instrument that

Right

Instagram Post by Meredith O'Rourke, dated April 10, 2026, showing her in Marine One (from right to left) with President Donald Trump, Chris LaCivita, and Eric Trump.

Credit: Meredith O'Rourke's Instagram
@meredithmorourke



threatens NPF's independence, credibility, and ability to protect our national parks long after the semiquincentennial and Freedom 250 have passed.



Ms. O'Rourke is now also fundraising for the President's several vanity projects, including the White House Ballroom, the East Potomac Golf Links, the Kennedy Center, and National Garden of American Heroes.

Who Ordered the Creation of Freedom 250?

Committee Democrats have received incomplete answers to the question of who directed NPF to create Freedom 250. During a February 10, 2026, House Natural Resources Committee hearing, NPF CEO Jeff Reinbold asserted that “we created Freedom 250 at the request of the NPS to assist the Service in the execution of events and programs in and around park sites to celebrate the 250th anniversary.”¹⁴⁴ In response to subsequent questions by Committee Democrats, Mr. Reinbold stated that the request to form Freedom 250 came directly from the Acting Director of the NPS, Jessica Bowron, in November 2025. Ms. Bowron appears to have asked NPF to create an entity that would allow for work outside of the organization's core competency of raising funds for the National Park System and instead assist with activities associated with the semiquincentennial. NPF decided on the LLC model. At a May 13, 2026, committee hearing, when Ranking Member Huffman asked Interior Secretary Doug Burgum whether he directed anyone at the Interior Department or NPS to form Freedom 250, Secretary Burgum said he had not, and that he was “not aware of the final decisionmaker on Freedom 250.”¹⁴⁵ The Ranking Member asked Secretary Burgum to share that information; to date, the Department has failed to do so.

Freedom 250's Accountability Problem

According to an independent review contracted by NPF, Freedom 250 is governed by the NPF's congressional charter and mission, but its Limited Liability Company (LLC) structure allows Freedom 250 to operate outside of NPF's core competencies. According to Freedom 250 talking points obtained by the Committee, Freedom 250 asserts that “NPS provides legal, fiduciary, and operational oversight for Freedom 250” and that “this structure ensures strong governance, transparency, and continuity while enabling public-private execution at a national scale.”¹⁴⁶ A letter from NPF to Ranking Members Huffman and Dexter, dated June 3, 2026, indicates that Freedom 250 “operates under a clear and robust governance structure designed for transparency and accountability and is distinct from NPF's core work.”¹⁴⁷ The available facts give reason to doubt that those assurances are upheld in practice.

First, Freedom 250's governance structure and staffing leave open questions about organizational processes and oversight. Freedom 250 has no board of its own and is instead governed by a management committee composed of NPF leadership and a single NPF board member, Trump advisor Chris LaCivita, who joined the board in October 2025. Freedom 250 CEO Keith Krach reports to that management

committee. Committee Democrats were told in an interview that Freedom 250 has no full-time employees, and that work associated with Freedom 250 is done by contractors who are paid through NPF. However, NPF's June 3, 2026, letter describes "daily operations [as] managed by a dedicated team within the LLC—not NPF—working alongside contractors and vendors," and acknowledge that "the majority of Freedom 250's operating funds come from federal funds appropriated by Congress specifically for the 250th anniversary commemorations."¹⁴⁸ It remains unclear whether that team is fully constituted of contractors and whether those contractors are paid through federal or private funds.

Second, Freedom 250's leadership and staff have not been made public by Freedom 250 or NPF. It is known that Freedom 250 is led by Keith Krach, a former Under Secretary of State for Economic Growth, Energy and the Environment in the first Trump administration and the former chairman and CEO of DocuSign and Ariba. He was appointed by President Trump to be CEO of Freedom 250.¹⁴⁹ At its launch, Freedom 250 announced that it was "assembling a world-class leadership team, with senior executives and national experts joining in the weeks,"¹⁵⁰ though no such team was ever publicly announced. Committee Democrats have nonetheless identified a number of individuals who are part of Freedom 250's leadership and staff.

Third, NPF's financial arrangements with Freedom 250 are similarly difficult to oversee. Although NPF and Freedom 250 share accounting staff resources, NPF says it has established a "hard wall" to ensure that NPF's federal appropriations are not commingled with Freedom 250's funds. In practice, however, NPF receives federal grants on behalf of Freedom 250 and distributes those funds to Freedom 250. Freedom 250 does not receive federal funds directly, purportedly because it lacks the financial infrastructure to accept such funds. This same structure appears to shield Freedom 250 from transparency on how it spends that money. NPF maintains that all of Freedom 250's financial information will be captured in NPF's annual IRS Form 990, and that the cooperative agreement between the NPS and NPF ensures Freedom 250's financial compliance. However, that information is only disclosed on an annual basis, and Freedom 250 may well be dissolved before Freedom 250's financial compliance is made public.

Fourth, NPF's donor vetting appears to be incapable of preventing self-dealing and even extortion. According to an individual interviewed by Committee Democrats, donations are vetted before NPF accepts them. Private donations over \$1 million and corporate donations over \$100,000 go directly to the Department of the Interior for review, and individual donations are reviewed by NPF, working with NPS's Office of Partnerships, to evaluate any factors that could affect the perceived integrity and impartiality of NPS and DOI. It remains unclear what vetting process has been established for donations to Freedom 250. NPF was unable to confirm whether they had the power to veto any donations to Freedom 250 that failed NPF's or NPS's own donor vetting standards. NPF represented that no corporate sponsors to Freedom 250 had asked for anonymity at the time, though NPF's standard practice would allow them to honor any anonymity request, including from corporations with business before the government.

Fifth, the broader constellation of entities in Freedom 250's network has been made intentionally vague and ambiguous, capitalizing upon its structure as a private nonprofit. In the Freedom 250 talking points distributed by Keith Krach, Freedom 250 describes the "Freedom 250 Network" as a coalition of "civic, cultural, educational, business, and philanthropic partners," calling them "a distinguished group of founding partners, including leading corporations."¹⁵¹ The network appears to include "sponsors" and "partners," with no clear distinction as to what either designation represents in terms of cash donations, in-kind donations, contribution

to events or programming, or providing services of some sort to Freedom 250. When probed by Open Secrets, Freedom 250 did not address the distinction between “sponsors” or “partners.”¹⁵² NPF, when asked by Committee Democrats, could only confirm that the following entities have provided cash contributions to Freedom 250 and have not requested anonymity: Lockheed Martin, ExxonMobil, SAP, United Airlines, Primetime Acquisitions, John Deere, Northrop Grumman, January AI, Mastercard, United Health Group, and Chevron.¹⁵³ All of these companies are listed as “sponsors” on Freedom 250’s website with the exception of Primetime Acquisitions, which does not appear on the website’s list of “sponsors” or “partners.”¹⁵⁴ America250, in contrast, clearly delineates financial sponsors, partners assisting in programming, partners assisting in outreach, and global partners with which the organization has signed official memoranda of understanding (MOU).¹⁵⁵ The list provided by NPF and the “sponsors” and “partners” listed on Freedom 250’s website are not a comprehensive list of the organizations that are ideological partners in the conception and development of Freedom 250 or that have given cash or in-kind donations—there may be several more private donors that have requested anonymity. The organizations that are publicly sponsoring Freedom 250 are paying for unparalleled access to the White House not just in Freedom 250 donations but also in lobbying spending; 12 of the 17 Freedom 250 sponsors that reported lobbying the federal government increased their spending during Trump’s second term.¹⁵⁶ Seven Freedom 250 sponsors have hired Ballard Partners to serve as their lobbying firm—the nation’s highest-earning firm, and one founded by former Trump fundraisers and home to alumni like Susie Wiles, the President’s current Chief of Staff.¹⁵⁷ The money appears to have been well-spent by corporate interests; the games of insider baseball that have emerged since Freedom 250’s creation have included President Trump making dozens of stock market trades involving Freedom 250 sponsors and posting praise on social media for these companies with references to their stock symbols.¹⁵⁸

Sixth, it is unclear whether Freedom 250 is truly temporary. Sources at NPF indicated that Freedom 250 LLC will be shut down and cease to exist after the work is complete and an audit has been conducted. NPF plans to dissolve the LLC once its money is spent, with any leftover funds returning to NPS for the agency’s discretionary use. However, soon after Freedom 250’s establishment, NPF began receiving federal funds for activities associated with the 250th celebrations that could be spent for years to come. According to USA Spending records, NPF was awarded a \$5 million grant from the Department of the Interior for “A250 Events” on December 2, 2025.¹⁵⁹ That grant was then amended twice on April 20 and April 29, 2026, to provide a total of \$68 million obligated under one grant.¹⁶⁰ Those amendments were filed with a justification that “this funding will support significant events to commemorate the nation’s semiquincentennial.”¹⁶¹ The grant allows for a period of performance ending in 2028, well after the semiquincentennial. As detailed later in this report, Event Strategies, Inc. received an indefinite master contract worth up to \$100 million for continued services for the federal government, with the express intent of funding 11 full-time employees—potentially the source of the funds used to staff the ESI contractors that currently work for Freedom 250—which could allow ESI to continue to host events and build projects in the name of the President’s self-aggrandizement until 2030.¹⁶²

When Committee Democrats sought to clarify these representations, NPF declined to substantiate them. Following a meeting with NPF, at which NPF expressly committed to producing several categories of documents, Ranking Members Huffman and Dexter sent a formal request for gift agreements, an organizational chart, contractor information, contract and task agreements, invoices, and records concerning the Freedom Trucks. After multiple scheduling accommodations and nearly four months of delay, NPF produced only a cover letter

and its cooperative agreement with NPS. That production fell far short of both the request and NPF's own commitment. NPF's evasiveness has deepened the concerns of Committee Democrats regarding Freedom 250, creating the appearance that NPF or Freedom 250 has something to hide.

Since President Trump appointed a series of loyalists to serve on the NPF board of directors, the board no longer functions as an independent entity that can be trusted with true oversight of the either NPF or Freedom 250. Their appointments severely undermine NPF's credibility in conducting real oversight over NPF's federal funds and its subsidiaries, including Freedom 250. Because so many of its members owe their positions to the President and his campaign, there is reason to believe they answer to him rather than to NPS or NPF's congressional charter. NPF's self-regulation and Freedom 250's management committee are no substitute for genuine accountability. And while the cooperative agreement assigns NPS some oversight and policy authority over Freedom 250—with NPF serving as Freedom 250's fiscal agent—it is doubtful that, under this administration, NPS is meaningfully overseeing an entity it dubiously directed NPF to create in the first place.

Having proven that a captured charity could raise unaccountable money from interested parties, the Trump administration appears to have applied this model to an expanding portfolio of projects whose common purpose is the aggrandizement of the President, among them a 250-foot vanity arch that would loom over Arlington National Cemetery and a White House ballroom whose cost to taxpayers has grown by an order of magnitude over what the public was promised. In each case the elements repeat the same pattern: the diversion of public funds steered to favored contractors, dismantling or capturing independent organizations, and a private benefit flowing to the President.

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The money appears to have been well-spent by corporate interests; the games of insider baseball that have emerged since Freedom 250's creation have included President Trump making dozens of stock market trades involving Freedom 250 sponsors and posting praise on social media for these companies with references to their stock symbols.

RESULTS OF THE NO-OVERSIGHT SHELL MODEL

Freed from the disclosure rules, contracting safeguards, and conflict-of-interest guardrails that protect taxpayer money from abuse, the no-oversight shell of Freedom 250 has produced precisely what its design invited. Freedom 250 has steered lucrative taxpayer-funded contracts to the President's own operatives, sold Presidential access to the highest bidder, courted foreign money in America's name, designed a template for corruption that has already been duplicated at another federal agency, stamped a partisan logo onto the machinery of government, staged a national celebration for the President's private benefit, and built a data-harvesting apparatus using the same hands that took a wrecking ball to the federal government in 2025. Each instance points to the same conclusion: Freedom 250 was built to raise and spend money for the President's vanity projects without having to answer for it.

Steering Federal Contracts to the President's Operatives

Freedom 250 has been able to direct significant amounts of taxpayer money to the President's own event operatives at ESI, the firm that America250 hired to plan Army 250 before it was fired in December 2025—four months after ESI received an indefinite master contract worth up to \$100 million.¹⁶³ These contracts are officially known as indefinite delivery, indefinite quantity or “IDIQ” contracts and “provide[] flexibility in cases where the government cannot determine the exact quantities and required timing of a product or service.”¹⁶⁴ Since the beginning of 2025, ESI has received 18 federal contract awards, totaling almost \$40 million in taxpayer dollars.¹⁶⁵ At least six of those contracts were awarded for services associated with semiquincentennial events and there may have been more; some of the public contract descriptions are exceedingly vague, designated as “event planning” or “event support.”¹⁶⁶ The six federal contracts that indicate an explicit connection with the semiquincentennial total more than \$17 million in federal funding.¹⁶⁷

Between February 17 and June 8, 2026, ESI received three additional contracts from the Department of State, together worth more than \$18 million.¹⁶⁸ Although those contracts are also blandly described as “event planning,” “event support,” and “meeting support,” the funding office listed on each is the U.S. Chief of Protocol—a post currently held by Ambassador Monica Crowley. At the same time, she was also America250's Principal Media Representative appointed in June 2025 by President Trump and may have been involved in pressuring America250 to adopt the President's preferred semiquincentennial programming.¹⁶⁹ In a June 6, 2026, Instagram post, Ambassador Crowley used her social media account to promote Freedom 250's event, not America250's.¹⁷⁰ Though the three Department of State contracts do not list the 250th celebrations, their connection to ESI, the Chief of Protocol, and the dates of award and performance raise questions about whether they are underwriting Freedom 250 activity, and whether this contributes to

concerns that the Trump administration officials steers federal contracts to the President's political allies.

Finally, at least two of these individuals identified by Committee Democrats as contractors for Freedom 250 appear to simultaneously work for ESI.¹⁷¹ This indicates that Freedom 250 itself may have had a role in steering contracts to ESI, though the source of funding for those contracts remains unknown. Indeed, NPF CEO Jeff Reinbold told Committee Democrats that tight timelines have pushed Freedom 250 to employ some non-competitive contracting for semiquincentennial events. What makes this all the more troubling is that Freedom 250's contracts with ESI have not been disclosed.

Relatedly, in the fall of 2025, ESI received an award of up to a \$100 million that is valid until 2030, with the potential to extend until 2045, for the express purpose of "Conference, Meeting, Event and Trade Show Planning Services."¹⁷² Specific funds under this award have gone to exterior design and content support services for Freedom 250 events, as well as supporting America250 celebrations at the Department of Defense shortly before the creation of Freedom 250.¹⁷³ The money provides for the salaries of 11 full-time employees—an executive director, project managers, and technical labor—essentially funding the organization to create a long-term team of employees for planning events with federal dollars.¹⁷⁴

Selling Access to the President

As funds flow from Freedom 250 to its chosen contractors, Freedom 250 has augmented its federal funding with private contributions. In doing so, it has put a price on access to the President himself. Through Meredith O'Rourke and her consulting firm, Freedom 250 has circulated bespoke sponsorship packages beginning at \$500,000 and climbing above \$10 million.¹⁷⁵ In exchange, sponsors are promised tiered recognition that escalates from V.I.P. event access to speaking roles at the national Fourth of July celebration, private receptions, and—at the top of the menu—a "historic photo opportunity" with President Trump at a Freedom 250 event.¹⁷⁶ The President has pursued significant fundraising opportunities since the beginning of his second term that have raised concerns with government ethics experts and good government groups.¹⁷⁷ For example, the Campaign Legal Center has alleged in a recent complaint with the U.S. Attorney's office of the District of Columbia that Deloitte, ExxonMobil, John Deere, Mastercard, Oracle, Palantir, and Penske failed to disclose donations made to Freedom 250 in their lobbying disclosure forms, despite being listed on Freedom 250's website as corporate sponsors.¹⁷⁸

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This arrangement is made possible because Freedom 250 sits inside NPF and therefore inherits NPF's donor disclosure practices. Although NPF discloses some of its donors, it only does so for honorific purposes and, in fact, acknowledges that some donations are anonymous, allowing Freedom 250 donations to be kept secret.¹⁷⁹ This structure permits Freedom 250 to function as a financial black box. Donations to the President's pet projects can be solicited, accepted, and spent without public disclosure. Committee Democrats have received confidential disclosures indicating that the administration intends to use this same structure as a pay-to-play scheme. Proposed vanity projects that could potentially receive funds through Freedom 250 include the 250-foot "Arc de Trump,"¹⁸⁰ the White House Ballroom,¹⁸¹ and Trump golf courses in Washington, D.C.¹⁸² The siphoning of funds from the 250th anniversary to Trump vanity projects would not be possible without taking over NPF and supplanting America250 as the primary fundraising vehicle for the nation's semiquincentennial celebration.

NPF told Committee Democrats that it had no part in drafting Freedom 250's sponsorship decks, content, or donor-benefit packages. Those terms reside in individual "gift agreements" between donors and Freedom 250. Because of the organizational firewall, NPF plays no role in deciding Freedom 250's events or branding partnerships; if so, this leaves Committee Democrats speculating how NPF could possibly conduct comprehensive oversight of Freedom 250. While NPF assured Committee Democrats that it had not been asked to fund the President's vanity projects as of February 2026, including the White House Ballroom and Independence Arch, it could not confirm whether or not NPF leadership or board members had been approached to finance those projects or others.

The appointment of the President's own campaign finance chief to roles at both NPF and Freedom 250 leaves little doubt about the character of the operation. Ms. O'Rourke is simultaneously raising money for other Presidential priorities—including the President's demolition and redevelopment of the East Potomac Golf Links, the White House ballroom, and the Kennedy Center—while serving alongside other Trump campaign operatives installed on the NPF board.¹⁸³ These payments do not resemble donations in the ordinary sense; they reflect a pay-to-play arrangement in which Presidential access is monetized through a nonprofit LLC with direct ties to the NPS.

Courting Foreign Money in America's Name

The same secrecy that hides domestic donors also hides foreign ones. NPF asserts that it does not accept foreign donations, and neither, it says, can Freedom 250. Yet Freedom 250's leadership has openly courted foreign donors, apparently without NPF's knowledge. NPF told Committee Democrats they were unaware Mr. Krach intended to solicit foreign support at the World Economic Forum in Davos. At Davos, Freedom 250 CEO Keith Krach emphasized that the effort is "not a government campaign" but a "public-private movement" intended to engage "allies, partners, and institutions around the world."¹⁸⁴ Addressing global leaders directly, Krach asked not how they would observe America's 250th anniversary, but "how will you shape a moment that will influence American leadership for the next generation."¹⁸⁵ In the same exchange, Under Secretary of State Sarah Rogers highlighted the public-private nature of the effort and asked how individuals, organizations, and foreign governments present at Davos could become involved. Mr. Krach welcomed their participation, saying "We would love to work with you. We've got toolkits for countries, states, and companies – all that. It is all about partnership. And what could be funner [sic] than marketing America? Or really, marketing freedom."¹⁸⁶ By contrast, America250 maintains relationships with foreign embassies under individualized memoranda of understanding—and according to

sources familiar with the matter, has neither fundraised with embassies nor pursued foreign donors.

Separately, Meredith O'Rourke appears to be already actively soliciting foreign donations for the National Garden of American Heroes Foundation,¹⁸⁷ a separate nonprofit that seeks to raise private funds for President Trump's desired redevelopment of the East Potomac Golf Links into a Trump-style golf course, which has been bundled with a proposed sculpture garden. The "Contribution Instructions" sheet of a pledge agreement reviewed by Committee Democrats sets out detailed international wire instructions to Chain Bridge Bank, N.A., complete with SWIFT/BIC routing through a correspondent intermediary, Pacific Coast Bankers' Bank.¹⁸⁸ Chain Bridge Bank is a small national bank that, like many institutions of its size, appears to not be a direct member of the SWIFT network and can receive cross-border wires only when a foreign sender routes the funds through a U.S. correspondent intermediary—in this case, Pacific Coast Bankers' Bank—which then forwards the wires domestically to Chain Bridge.¹⁸⁹ It is possible an individual with access to the Chain Bridge account—such as Meredith O'Rourke or Abby Matthis, who are both listed as points of contact on the pledge agreement—configured the capability for this account and only then placed it before prospective donors. Despite Freedom 250's claims it does not receive foreign money, a gift solicitation built—by its chief fundraiser—does not advertise an avenue for inbound foreign money unless foreign money is among the contributions it seeks.

In addition, U.S. ambassadors are effectively competing to raise foreign money for Freedom 250.¹⁹⁰ Solicitation forms bearing the "America250" name have gone to companies in Hong Kong, and fundraising dinners in Singapore have ended with thank-you notes stamped with the Freedom 250 logo.¹⁹¹ America250 and Freedom 250 have been treated as interchangeable in these appeals, with some announcements of corporate sponsorships bearing America250's logo as other fundraising dinners tout the Freedom 250 logo.

Freedom 250's involvement with foreign fundraising raises concerns for numerous reasons, chief among them the tiered system of rewards that Freedom 250 offers in exchange for donations.¹⁹² Freedom 250's tiered packages promise its largest donors private audiences with the President.¹⁹³ Applied to foreign contributors, that promise turns the semiquincentennial into a marketplace for foreign influence. The Foreign Emoluments Clause of the U.S. Constitution bars the President and other federal officials from receiving any compensation, gift, office, or title from a foreign state without the consent of Congress.¹⁹⁴ The U.S. Department of Justice has long interpreted this clause to broadly prohibit federal officials from receiving any profit from a foreign state absent congressional approval.¹⁹⁵ If any foreign funds raised under the banner of Freedom 250 are used for the President's benefit, such as to build vanity projects like the Arc de Trump or the Garden of Heroes that he is attempting to tie to the 250th anniversary, the conduct would clearly violate the Constitution. In addition, the toolkits advertised by Freedom

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Freedom 250's tiered packages promise its largest donors private audiences with the President. Applied to foreign contributors, that promise turns the semiquincentennial into a marketplace for foreign influence.

250 CEO Keith Krach raise the prospect that foreign participation in Freedom 250's planning or events could trigger registration and disclosure obligations under the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA), which requires public disclosure of political activities by foreign principals acting on behalf of a foreign entity or interest.¹⁹⁶

A Partisan Logo on the Machinery of Government Spawns “Vichy Pins” and Racist Merch

Freedom 250's permissive approach to licensing has normalized the Freedom 250 logo in America's eyes and allowed the logo to proliferate with little to no vetting or cost to licensees. NPF has indicated that the loose licensing allows the Freedom 250 brand to proliferate far and wide, even on projects not funded by Freedom 250. In fact, Freedom 250 has rolled out a program called “Logo for the People” with the express intent of providing brand assets to outside organizations to create a “visible national signal of participation.”¹⁹⁷

There are several initiatives for which an entity may request to use Freedom 250's brand assets, including but not limited to hosting events, launching initiatives, running educational programs, organizing community activations, or developing cultural projects.¹⁹⁸ The organization does prohibit the use of Freedom 250 branding in association with fundraising for the federal government, supporting or opposing political parties, or political advocacy—guidance that appears to be stricter for licensees than the organization itself, given the Freedom 250 logo's frequent appearance next to the President's name and likeness.¹⁹⁹ In its June 3, 2026, letter Ranking Members Huffman and Dexter, NPF stated that some events carrying the Freedom 250 branding do so “to raise awareness of the anniversary, such as the Freedom 250 Grand Prix race and UFC Freedom 250 event,” even though Freedom 250 itself is not funding the event.²⁰⁰

The more serious problem is the logo's migration into official government channels. The Department of the Interior has directed agency staff to use Freedom 250 logos in official government materials, including in their official email signatures—a practice that, given Freedom 250's partisan character, raises concerns about compliance with the Hatch Act.²⁰¹ Similar practices have spread beyond the Interior Department. Banners bearing President Trump's face beside

Below

Façade of the Department of the Interior.

Credit: X post by Andrew Leyden, @PenguinSix



the Freedom 250 logo hang from federal buildings across Washington, D.C.,²⁰² mail carries a Freedom 250 postmark;²⁰³ and at a federal oil and gas lease auction in May, the novelty check handed to the winning bidders displayed the Freedom 250 logo alongside the seals of the U.S. Department of the Interior and the Bureau of Land Management.²⁰⁴ Saturating the country with the mark makes the hijacking of a national commemoration appear ordinary through sheer repetition.

The pins distributed by Freedom 250 offer one of the clearest examples. NPS employees with no official affiliation to Freedom 250 have been seen wearing Freedom 250 lapel pins, though not by choice. The U.S. Department of the Interior urged employees to wear the pins on their uniform and threatened disciplinary action to those who refused.²⁰⁵ Anonymous employees have taken to calling it their “Vichy pin,” reflecting an uncomfortable reality that they feel compelled to display a political symbol against their own beliefs.²⁰⁶

Furthermore, the pins are supplied by Ace Specialties,²⁰⁷ a Louisiana firm that bills itself as a “one-stop solution for American-made merchandise” for Republicans that touts its work for the 2020 and 2024 Trump campaigns.²⁰⁸ Ace Specialties is a key supplier for Republican campaigns, stating on its website that “ACE is committed to providing the highest quality American-made products for every candidate and campaign on WinRed.”²⁰⁹ NPS appears to have furnished pins to parks and regional offices, but also encouraged offices to reach out to Ace Specialties directly to place bulk orders for more.²¹⁰ Even if employees were to purchase the official Freedom 250 pin from the Freedom 250 website themselves, they would encounter a Shopify storefront—one operated by a vendor with the same mailing address as Ace Specialties.²¹¹ This indicates that Ace Specialties may have received a contract or has some form of partnership with Freedom 250 to sell Freedom 250’s official merchandise, and that any individual making a purchase from the official Freedom 250 Shopify is unwittingly giving money to and interacting with a Republican campaign vendor. Directing government purchases to a partisan campaign vendor, across federal agencies, amounts to spending public funds to enrich a political ally, a concern already raised by ethics watchdogs to the U.S. Department of the Interior’s Office of the Inspector General.²¹²

The absence of any real licensing discipline has also produced merchandise the organization could not stand behind. Through its partnership with IndyCar—the host of a Freedom 250 street race in Washington, D.C.—a licensed t-shirt appeared

Right

Shirt being sold on IndyCar Website in May 2026

Credit: The Guardian, from IndyCar’s website



on the IndyCar website bearing the Freedom 250 logo on its sleeve and the slogan “One Nation, One Race.”²¹³ The racist t-shirt was taken down within hours of going up.²¹⁴ That an approved, co-branded product reached the public at all is evidence that Freedom 250’s licensing vetting is, at best, negligent.

On Sunday, June 14th, 2026, the Freedom 250 logo was also featured at the White House lawn for President Trump’s birthday UFC fight as the announcers celebrated one of their corporate sponsors, Truth Social, calling it “the real voice of President Trump.”²¹⁵ Notwithstanding the use of Freedom 250 branding to celebrate the President’s own birthday, the blatant juxtaposition of Freedom 250 with Truth Social—a right-wing platform founded in the wake of the January 6th insurrection at the Capitol and owned by the President—is overtly political and partisan.²¹⁶ In what follows, we discuss this desecration of the White House in more detail.

Freedom 250 Enables Trump to Profit from Conflict-Ridden UFC Birthday Party

On the South Lawn, the White House erected a UFC fighting ring emblazoned with the Freedom 250 logo—not for the Fourth of July, but for the President’s 80th birthday. This event was gated for only the richest and most powerful Americans; the roughly 4,300 seats were available only by personal invitation from the President or through a \$1.5 million “partner investment” package.²¹⁷ Among those who secured an invitation from President Trump were the executives of companies facing impending regulation from the federal government, including the CEOs of Kalshi, Meta, and Paramount.²¹⁸ The public was relegated to either watch the live-stream at an in-person watch party at the Ellipse or to pay to stream the event on Paramount+. Paramount+ is owned by Larry and David Ellison, who have faced criticism for undermining CBS News and suppressing criticism of President Trump on their network while simultaneously seeking approval from the Justice Department to merge with Warner Brothers.²¹⁹

In a striking example of this White House’s disregard for ethics rules, the UFC fighters earned bonuses in “USD1,” the dollar-pegged stablecoin issued by World Liberty Financial, a Trump family crypto venture that served as a presenting partner of the bonus pool and sits in a trust run by the President’s children.²²⁰ President Trump himself bought between \$15,000 and \$150,000 of stock in UFC’s parent company just weeks after the UFC fight was announced, another shameless act of profiteering.²²¹

Although Freedom 250 itself reportedly did not raise funds for the event, relying on the UFC to cover costs, the \$60 million spent by the UFC came with its own rewards.²²² Spectators themselves described the fight as a six-hour ad for UFC, with White House officials featuring prominently throughout the event and boasting about the record-breaking views on Paramount+. ^{223,224} The president and COO of UFC’s parent company called it “the greatest earned marketing tool of all time.”²²⁵ Further, the other sponsors of the event have not gone forgotten; Republican lobbyists familiar with the process say that the White House has used the UFC fight “as another unofficial vehicle for corporate donors to give... and gain favor with Trump.”²²⁶ Notable logos among the many sponsors that were advertised throughout the night included Anduril, Bud Light, Polymarket, Monster Energy, Starlink, and Crypto.com.²²⁷

Seven government agencies were marshalled to support the event, diverting government personnel and taxpayer-funded hours to the President’s birthday party, and the public accounting does not establish that UFC reimbursed the full cost of the federal resources deployed for an event the Department of Homeland Security designated as requiring Super Bowl-level security.²²⁸



Above

Construction of the Freedom 250 UFC event on the White House lawn.

Credit: Allison Robbert for AP News

The UFC arena constructed in the middle of the White House South Lawn also bypassed layers of NPS-mandated environmental review under the auspices of Freedom 250, saving the UFC significant time and money. The event's aftermath, shaped in part by the lack of review that preceded it, also became a vehicle for corporate sponsorship. Freedom 250 "sponsor" Scotts Miracle-Gro pledged \$1 million to restore the lawn to its original state, donating "a combination of monetary and product support" by re-sodding the South Lawn before reseeding it with a custom blend.²²⁹ Ethics watchdog groups note that this arrangement is particularly concerning and reminiscent of the no-bid contract awarded to a Trump ally to repair the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool, especially considering that the White House announced the donation on social media, which ethics watchdogs have called out for reading like an advertisement.²³⁰

Scotts Miracle-Gro's investments have already borne fruit. The company serves as the "exclusive agent for the marketing and distribution of Roundup," a line of herbicides that include glyphosate as the active ingredient.²³¹ Glyphosate is a highly contested chemical that just had a victorious day in front of Trump's hand-picked Supreme Court. After over a decade of lawsuits, the Supreme Court absolved the manufacturers of the product from the costs or potential loss of sales of having to place consumer safety warnings on the label, directly benefiting Scotts Miracle-Gro's interest in continuing to market and sell Roundup.²³² It remains to be seen what more in political access, goodwill or favorable treatment Scotts Miracle-Gro may expect in return for its efforts to curry favor with the President, and if the company will outperform the slipshod job performed at the Reflecting Pool and restore the once-verdant lawn.

Above all, this Freedom 250 UFC fight was another entry in the sprawling series of events staged for the President's self-aggrandizement. Fighters wore Trump merchandise, including a hat bearing the slogan "Trump for Prime Minister," thanked Trump for being brave enough to stage the event, and directed vile, racist remarks at former First Lady Michelle Obama.²³³ Planes buzzed overhead and fireworks burst in the sky late into the early morning, ostensibly celebrating America's 250th birthday as the crowd sang "Happy Birthday" to the President.²³⁴



President Trump himself bought between \$15,000 and \$150,000 of stock in UFC’s parent company just weeks after the UFC fight was announced, another shameless act of profiteering.

Building a Political Database Behind a Government Domain

Freedom 250’s Data Harvesting Risk

Freedom 250’s reach appears now to extend from fundraising for the President and his vanity projects to collecting the American people’s personal data. Its online presence begins on a government website (www.250.gov), which automatically redirects users to a different website (www.freedom250.org), both built by the National Design Studio. The National Design Studio is a temporary organization created by Executive Order 14338 under the White House’s Executive Office of the President.²³⁵ Because it is a temporary organization in a part of the executive branch with no dedicated inspector general, oversight is limited.²³⁶ Its staff are hired as special government employees (SGEs)—a designation under which individuals are still bound by many of the ethics rules that apply to typical government employees, but whose financial disclosures stay confidential and outside-employment rules are looser.²³⁷

These SGEs are largely ex-DOGE employees who have jumped from one temporary government agency structure to another. Their roster runs from the studio’s leader, former Airbnb co-founder and America’s Chief Design Officer Joe Gebbia, to Greg Hogan, who was recently put in charge of www.login.gov—the government’s single sign-on identity service administered by the General Services Administration (GSA).²³⁸ Mr. Hogan is one of three DOGE ex-employees that was granted a carveout from the court injunctions that stripped DOGE employees of their access to sensitive personally identifiable information (PII) through the Office of Personnel Management (OPM); as a result, he still possess access to federal employees’ PII. Several former DOGE employees, including a few of the 19 to 23 year-olds that gained notoriety for allegedly leaking the sensitive PII of hundreds of millions of Americans, are also now National Design Studio employees.²³⁹ The same people who took a wrecking ball to the federal government in 2025 have now been handed the keys to Freedom 250’s public front door: its official website. That front door is collecting extensive information.

Freedom 250’s website quietly collects an extraordinary amount of information about the people who visit it. Its own privacy disclosure states that Freedom 250 collects everything a user shares with it and, when a user or devices permits, tracks precise geolocation data down to “latitude, longitude, velocity, [and] bearing.”²⁴⁰ It logs each click across the site and captures the information users type into forms, including home addresses and contact information, and sends it back to the server of the organization that designed and created the website—in this case the National Design Studio, staffed by ex-DOGE employees. This tracking is accomplished in part through cookies and in part through a PostHog script, which is a commercial developer tool that can automate the collection of behavioral analytics like user-input data from a site, evade ad blockers while doing so, and forward it to

the website developer's account with the switch of a button on the developer's dashboard.²⁴¹ Here, that developer is the National Design Studio.²⁴² Notably, the PostHog tracker was removed from the Freedom 250 site on or about June 18, 2026; archived versions show it had been running until then, and the same tool was removed from other National Design Studio sites, such as TrumpRx, around the same time.²⁴³ It appears that the PostHog script may have been disabled in response to an investigation conducted by The Guardian—the scripts were removed shortly after The Guardian sought comment on the National Design Studio's activities.²⁴⁴ PostHog is not a run-of-the-mill tool a website; America250's website does not possess traces of PostHog or other commercial behavioral tracking tools.²⁴⁵

The privacy policy states that the information is controlled by a “data-protection manager” (DPM), who is not publicly named beyond their affiliation with Freedom 250. Given Freedom 250's unique organizational structure and affiliation with the White House, the National Design Studio, and NPF, there are concerns that the data will not remain within the Freedom 250 organization and may migrate to Freedom 250's political allies or the White House's National Design Studio staffed by ex-DOGE employees. The information collected by Freedom 250 could help seed political campaigns and fundraising efforts by organizations affiliated with Freedom 250, including the DOGE employees who designed the website and have a demonstrated record of misusing data.²⁴⁶

The Role of the Ashbrook Center

The domain www.Freedom250.org was not registered in October 2025, when the Freedom 250 LLC was originally formed, but rather on June 19, 2024.²⁴⁷ The registration is shielded by Perfect Privacy LLC,²⁴⁸ a domain privacy company that conceals the identity of a domain's actual registrant.²⁴⁹ As a result, the public cannot see who reserved the name, or why. But we can see who ran the previous website at that domain.

Until Freedom250 was officially created in October 2025, the domain was home to an earlier “Freedom For the Next 250” campaign that used a strikingly similar logo.²⁵⁰ It was run by the Ashbrook Center, a program at Ashland University in Ohio that promotes a conservative, white-washed retelling of American history—mirroring the Trump administration's broader effort to sanitize the nation's past.²⁵¹ The website was first promoted as the link for a fundraising campaign, aiming to collect \$20 million in donations with a stated goal of reaching all 50 states with customized civics education resources.²⁵² The original site invited people to donate and volunteer for the Ashbrook Center as part of an “elite corps” of history teachers at undergraduate universities.²⁵³ They also provided a digital atlas of sources to supplement and replace textbooks with conservative-approved versions of history.²⁵⁴ In November 2025, just after the creation of Freedom 250 and just before the website was revamped, this Ashbrook Center initiative announced it had received a \$1.3 million grant from the U.S. Department of Education to “revitalize and support K-12 education as the country prepares to commemorate its 250th anniversary throughout 2026.”²⁵⁵ Four days later, a copy of the Ashbrook Center's site that was originally hosted on www.Freedom250.org was migrated to a site owned by the same registrar, named www.ashbrookfreedom250.org; the request for donations on the site remains live.²⁵⁶ On December 18, 2025, the same registered domain of www.Freedom250.org was turned into the official Freedom 250 website with no documented change in site ownership.

The Ashbrook Center is solidly within the Trump administration's orbit. On a page that was live only until April 14, 2026, on Freedom 250's website, Freedom 250 listed some of its network partners; notably, including the Ashbrook Center. Mike Romanchuk, chairman of the Ashbrook Center's board, introduced a resolution in

the Ohio state legislature to award the Nobel Peace Prize to President Trump.²⁵⁷ The president of Ashland University, and member of the Board of Directors of the Ashbrook Center, is Jon Peede—a former Trump appointee who served as the head of the National Endowment of Humanities during the first Trump administration.²⁵⁸ Jon Peede is brother to Robert Peede—former Trump White House aide, recipient of a subpoena in relation to planning the January 6th attack on the Capitol,²⁵⁹ vice president at ESI,²⁶⁰ administrator of ESI's federal contract worth up to \$100 million from the government,²⁶¹ and recipient of millions in federal grants directly related to Freedom 250 programming.²⁶² Between the Peedes' familial ties and documented partnership between Freedom 250 and the Ashbrook Center, it seems clear that Freedom 250 derives its lineage from a conservative organization dedicated to whitewashing America's history—and that its lineage may be longer and more premeditated than is widely known.

The Role of Brad Parscale

The page that handles registration for Freedom 250 events, www.events.freedom250.org, is powered by Campaign Nucleus, a firm founded by Brad Parscale, the digital operative behind President Trump's 2016 and 2020 campaigns. It collects each registrant's name, state, zip code, and mobile number for Freedom 250 events. President Trump, through the Executive Office of the President—the organizational home of the National Design Studio—awarded a non-competitive \$66,000 blanket purchase agreement to be performed in Washington, D.C. to Campaign Nucleus. The contract pays Mr. Parscale's firm for software described as "EVENT PLANNING," mirroring the event-planning descriptions of other contracts related to Freedom 250. This contract was awarded on July 1st 2026, and is scheduled to end in 2031.²⁶³ Freedom 250's organizational email is similarly managed by a Trump campaign-affiliated vendor, Dyspatchit Email and Text Services (Dyspatchit), which manages email and text marketing campaigns and inbox monitoring.²⁶⁴ Dyspatchit is registered to the same Florida address as Campaign Nucleus.²⁶⁵ Federal election records show Dyspatchit was paid by Donald J. Trump for President 2024, Inc. and Trump Save America Joint Fundraising Committee for "Email Services" during the 2024 election.²⁶⁶

These organizations are far from ordinary contractors; they were built for partisan campaigning with a core function of acquiring and exploiting voter data. Mr. Parscale was the digital director of the President's 2016 campaign, where he worked alongside the now-notorious Cambridge Analytica in its harvesting of Facebook data, and he went on to manage the 2020 re-election effort. In 2024, Mr. Parscale returned to the political scene, this time using the two companies he had founded to power the conservative marketing mill. According to an Associated Press investigation, the platform "specializes in mining information from a politician's supporters."²⁶⁷ When a person signs up to attend an event, Campaign Nucleus uses artificial intelligence to analyze that person's data and assign them a score to better identify and target "persuadable" voters.²⁶⁸ Mr. Parscale's firms have been paid more than \$2.2 million by the Trump campaign, Republican National Committee, and related political action and fundraising committees for their political services since 2023.²⁶⁹ Mr. Parscale himself remains close to senior campaign and party officials.²⁷⁰ Mr. Parscale's role in Freedom 250's digital presence raises serious concerns about the potential collection and use of Americans' personal data.

When an American registers to attend a Freedom 250 event—a celebration of the nation's 250th birthday paid in part by taxpayer dollars—the name, location, and phone number they provide are deposited into a partisan data operation engineered to profile, score, and target voters, run by Brad Parscale, the President's longtime digital strategist. The implications are far-reaching; a recent example includes the

ticketing process to enter a free FIFA World Cup Fan Zone hosted by Freedom 250 on the national mall, marketed as a fan experience to bring Americans together to watch the World Cup.²⁷¹ Thousands of unwitting fans, including D.C. residents, Americans visiting D.C. from other states, and international World Cup attendees unwittingly gave their personal information to a partisan political entity, potentially enabling future targeted marketing and campaign outreach by Republican campaigns.

Campaign Nucleus confirms as much, reserving the right to use the data it collects from Freedom 250 for marketing purposes and conducting statistical or demographic analysis, satisfying contractual obligations, or cooperating governmental agencies for purposes of investigations or matters of public importance.²⁷² Campaign Nucleus' own privacy policy states that it collects personal data from recording the information that a browser or device sends when a user visits the website, and that it receives personal data from "third parties that host [its] Websites or Offerings."²⁷³ It also acknowledges that it may also share personal data back with companies that host its offerings, creating a two-way street of data harvesting.²⁷⁴ Dyspatchit's privacy policy includes similar language, informing users that their personal information is collected by the site and may be used to inform marketing activities, personalize advertising to a user's activities and interests, and expand its business activities.²⁷⁵

This arrangement between Freedom 250 and Mr. Parscale's partisan firms raise the concern that the personal information of Americans who engage with Freedom 250's government-sponsored events serve as data harvesting vehicles for the President's political operation. It also raises a second concern: whether federal money appropriated for the semiquincentennial is paying the President's campaign vendors. As established above, the majority of Freedom 250's operating funds are federal, and digital vendors of this kind are ordinarily paid for their services. If Freedom 250 compensates Campaign Nucleus and Dyspatchit—as standard practice would suggest—then public funds are flowing to the for-profit firms of the President's chief digital operative. Furthermore, taxpayer dollars, diverted to Freedom 250, may be funding Mr. Parscale's digital operations and enabling his companies to turn public data from users innocuously and unwittingly interacting with Freedom 250 programming into targeted profiles for partisan messaging and fundraising.

Next page

*A photo of the Freedom 250
FIFA Fan Zone from Freedom
250's Instagram feed.*

*Credit: Freedom 250
Instagram @freedom250*



FIFA

INVESTIGATIVE FINDINGS

Finding 1: The President sought to place himself at the center of the nation's 250th anniversary.

The record reflects a sustained effort, beginning before the President took office, to make the semiquincentennial an occasion for President Trump's personal celebration. In a May 2023 campaign video titled "Salute to America250," then-candidate Trump pledged to convene a federal task force to direct a year of festivities—seven years after Congress had already chartered a bipartisan commission to plan the anniversary. Upon taking office, the President issued Executive Order 14189, which created Task Force 250 and installed the President and Vice President as its heads. He then staged his own birthday as a national event on two occasions: the Army's 250th-anniversary military parade on June 14, 2025, which coincided with his seventy-ninth birthday, and an UFC event on the South Lawn of the White House on June 14, 2026, his 80th birthday, which was conducted under the Freedom 250 banner. The same period saw the pursuit of self-glorifying public works that require substantial funding to be raised. Projects which the President has tried to tie to the 250th birthday for fundraising purposes include a proposed 250-foot arch that would overshadow the Lincoln Memorial; a White House ballroom that has ballooned in cost; a wasteful attempt at repairing the Reflecting Pool; and transforming the East Potomac Golf Links into an exclusive Trump-style golf course.

Finding 2: The President's senior campaign operatives—Meredith O'Rourke, Chris LaCivita, Justin Caporale, and Brad Parscale—played key roles in sidelining America250 and engineering Freedom 250.

The capture of the 250th anniversary was carried out by the President's campaign operatives, who were placed in positions of influence across the institutions involved. In January 2025, Chris LaCivita—a principal architect of the President's 2024 campaign—was engaged to facilitate introductions to senior White House officials, including the Director of the Domestic Policy Council, and to assist in coordination with the White House Task Force on the 250th anniversary. Meredith O'Rourke, the President's chief fundraiser, was brought into America250's preparations for the Army's 250th anniversary and subsequently became central to Freedom 250's solicitation of donations, including the tiered sponsorship packages that placed a price on access to the President and another that solicited foreign donations. When America250 would not conform to the White House's demands, Freedom 250 was created to supplant it and lodged within the NPF—on whose board both O'Rourke and LaCivita were installed—so that the new entity could operate beyond transparency and accountability. President Trump's official campaign merchandise provider and WinRed affiliate Ace Specialties now collect payments, and related personal information such as billing and mailing addresses, from Americans who purchase Freedom 250 merchandise from the official storefront.

Justin Caporale, the President's appointed Executive Producer for Major Events and Public Appearances, helped plan and budget the anniversary's signature events through his firm, Event Strategies, Inc., which has since collected tens of millions of dollars in federal contracts connected to the anniversary. Freedom 250's event-registration platform was handed to Brad Parscale, the President's longtime digital strategist, whose firm, Campaign Nucleus, harvests the personal data of every person who registers for an event and feeds these data into the voter-targeting operation his firms run for the President's campaign and party.

Finding 3: Freedom 250 was built on deceit.

Freedom 250 was sold to the public as an addition to the congressionally-chartered commission rather than a replacement for it; its own talking points insisted that the two play "distinct but complementary roles."²⁷⁶ The record shows the opposite. Donors who intended to support America250 were misled and apparently provided with Freedom 250's banking information, meaning contributions solicited in the name of the nation's nonpartisan birthday foundation were routed instead to the President's substitute entity. Performers recruited for Freedom 250's programming were booked under assurances that the events were nonpartisan and withdrew once the political character of the undertaking became public. Congressional appropriators were led to believe that America250 had already received funding it never collected, prompting them to reduce its appropriations while Freedom 250 captured the federal money and grants Congress had intended for America250.

Finding 4: Under a veil of secrecy, Freedom 250 sold access to the President, solicited foreign money in America's name, and enabled the President to enrich himself.

In its fundraising, Freedom 250 offered tiered sponsorship packages that culminated in a private photograph with the President, placing a price on access to the President. These solicitations were conducted behind a donor structure inherited from the NPF that conceals the identities of those who give and the benefits they may be promised in return. That same structure was used to court foreign money. Freedom 250's leadership solicited foreign governments, corporations, and individuals at the World Economic Forum in Davos, and United States ambassadors abroad solicited foreign contributions in connection with the anniversary.

Finding 5: Freedom 250 constitutes a replicable blueprint for corruption.

Freedom 250 is a blueprint, not a one-time abuse. To move money and favors outside the ordinary rules, the White House captured an independent institution, placed its funds in a nonprofit that is not required to name donors, solicited parties at home and abroad, and directed federal contracts to the President's operatives. The design left no one accountable, and it worked. And this practice has spread throughout the administration. The approach was test-driven at the Department of Agriculture in 2025, where companies with business before the federal government were steered to donate through a conservation charity into a fund the Secretary controls. It was also used with America250 as the attempted bank for Army 250, and the Trust for the National Mall as the bank for the White House ballroom. Further, the personal information of Americans who take part in a government-sponsored celebration is collected and handed to vendors tied to the President's political operation. The conduct documented in this report sets a precedent other officials may follow to turn trusted public institutions into vehicles for private and political power.

CONCLUSION

This report has traced, step by step, how the machinery of a national commemoration was turned against the American people and hijacked to serve the self-absorbed whims of Donald Trump. The disaster caused by the White House and Freedom 250 is the result of deliberate choices, made over a period of several months, to convert an event that belonged to every American into an instrument of one man's vanity, a vehicle for corruption, and an opportunity for partisan political gain.

The partisan machinations, waste, corruption, and self-dealing revealed by this report highlight a stunning disconnect. As the American people suffer under a crushing cost of living crisis from Trump policies, President Trump and his allies trivialize their suffering and insist that the country cannot afford programs and investments to lower costs. Meanwhile, they have spent massive amounts of time, effort, and money on Freedom 250 fiascos, as if no vanity project is too expensive, no scheme is too corrupt, and no gift is too shameful.

These findings are interim, and they are alarming precisely because they remain incomplete. In a democracy, the people's business is meant to be conducted in the open, yet many of the most basic facts here remain concealed behind the White House, Freedom 250, and unfortunately NPF. The complete donor lists and financial ledgers of Freedom 250, the identities of those—foreign and domestic—who have paid into it, and the ultimate disposition of every dollar it has raised remain unknown.

The Committee's investigation will continue to explore these and other records. It will pursue every appropriate avenue of accountability, including legislation to close the structural gaps that allowed a congressionally-chartered foundation to be captured in the first place. The American people are entitled to a full accounting.

A nation marks its 250th anniversary only once, and it belongs in equal measure to every American who has inherited this democratic experiment since the founding. It is a milestone bought by the sacrifice of generations and the conviction enshrined in the national motto, "E pluribus unum"; that a people, despite their differences, could govern themselves. This anniversary was not Donald Trump's to brand, to pledge to anonymous and foreign donors, to exploit for personal gain, or to stage as a coronation.

What this report documents is not extravagance or poor taste: it is an outright moral failure by the President of the United States and at turns appears illegal and unconstitutional. A celebration meant to be held in common was transformed

into a private endeavor, accomplished by demanding that the nation's own public institutions betray the purposes they exist to serve. A charity built for the national parks was made a conduit for vanity. A commission built for every citizen was shoved aside because it would not serve one man. An ambassador who answers to the United States was enlisted to raise money for its President. Civil servants were ordered to wear a partisan emblem on their chests or face discipline. Each was asked to surrender a piece of the public trust.

Even if Freedom 250 winds down, the machine it has created could very well endure. Freedom 250's own CEO describes a longer-lasting ambition. Talking points drafted by Keith Krach state that the entity "is intentionally designed to establish a lasting civic legacy—strengthening national connections, shared purpose, and collaboration that can endure well beyond 2026 and inform future national efforts."²⁷⁷ Freedom 250 has laid the groundwork for continued abuse of the federal government long after the semiquincentennial: from contracts given to ESI and NPF beyond 2026, to personal data being harvested from its website, to the promotion of Christian nationalism and a whitewash of history, and even the President's attempts to redirect federal funds to his own gaudy vanity projects like the Arch de Trump and self-aggrandizing events like the UFC birthday fight. Whether Freedom 250 dissolves after the proceedings wrap up or is quietly preserved, the echo of Freedom 250's corruption will ring long after the semiquincentennial.

The deepest harm is not the sum of what has already been taken, but what the country is being asked to accept. Left unanswered, the methods catalogued in these pages do not expire with this anniversary; they become a manual, usable against any institution, any commemoration, any store of public trust a future administration finds inconvenient or lucrative. So, the question this record calls to answer is larger than the conduct of any one official. It is whether a self-governing people, shown in detail how the corruption of its own founding milestone was carried out, will shrug and conclude that this is simply how things are done now. The semiquincentennial was meant to remind Americans of what they hold in common. Let the record of how it was abused remind them of what they must never consent to lose.

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