

# DEMOCRATIC CLUB OF WILLOW VALLEY

## NEWSLETTER

April 2025

Paid for by Democratic Club of Willow Valley

Treasurer, Steve Wright

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## Addressing the Issues

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# Biggest Trump-Musk Scandal

## THE NEW REPUBLIC

[This Is the Biggest Trump-Musk Scandal That No One's Talking About | The New Republic](#)

[Jacob Silverman](#) February 27, 2025

Donald Trump and Elon Musk are ushering in a new age of bribery, graft, and corruption to American politics.

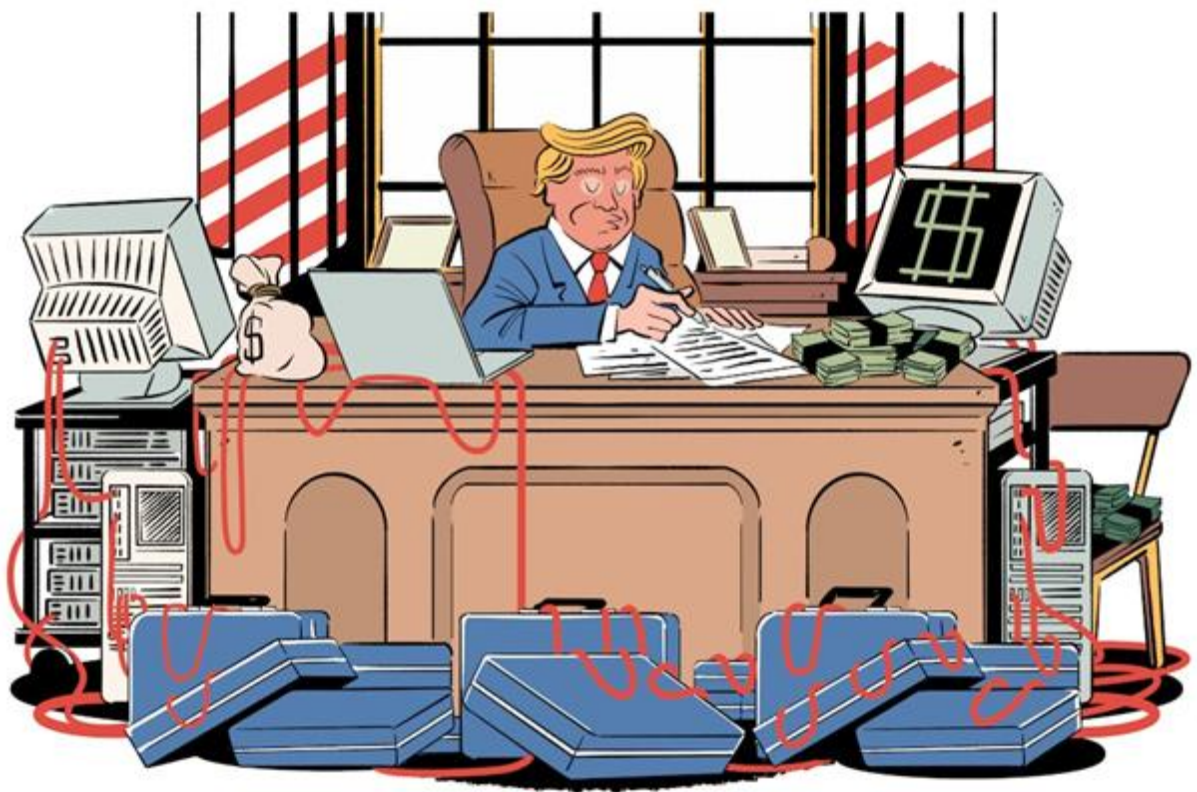


Illustration by Gustavo Magalhães

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# Biggest Trump-Musk Scandal (cont'd)

In the months leading up to the 2024 presidential election, political ethics watchers, an endangered breed, worried about the increasing number of ways in which Donald Trump seemed to be for sale. “Trump keeps creating avenues for people to quietly give him money,” ran a *Washington Post* opinion [headline](#), referring to the glitzy, \$100,000 watches that Trump had recently presented for sale—purchasable with bitcoin.

Steve Benen, an MSNBC columnist, [suggested](#) a dark scenario: “A hypothetical wealthy donor wants to give the former president a \$100,000 donation—far in excess of the legal limit—so he or she buys an expensive watch. At that point, the nominee could take his cut and write a comparable check in support of his candidacy, since there is no legal limit on what candidates can spend on their own campaigns.”

In the era of unlimited super PAC giving—when Elon Musk could throw hundreds of millions of dollars; the influence of X, the social media platform he owns; and his personal celebrity behind Team Trump with barely a regulatory hiccup—these concerns seemed practically quaint. Trump-themed nonfungible tokens, golden sneakers, gaudy watches, and other branded tchotchkes were small-time stuff, new incarnations of the steaks, the university, the airline, and many other failed products that Trump hawked as a private citizen. Compared to the \$2 billion that his son-in-law Jared Kushner’s private equity firm received from the Saudi sovereign wealth fund—along with a nine-figure [bailout](#) from the Qatari government for his deeply indebted Manhattan office tower at 666 Fifth Avenue—it seemed that Trump had failed to fully monetize the power of his office.

But Trump was already going after bigger prizes, pursuing potentially huge paydays while his donors and advisers developed plans to eliminate any legal, regulatory, and judicial obstacles still standing in the way of the ascendant American oligarchy. The new Trump administration wouldn’t just be open for business. With the aid of Musk’s DOGE [wrecking ball](#), the administration would create the perfect environment for graft, self-dealing, and lucrative influence-peddling. And it would be legal, at least some of it. For now.

One of Trump’s biggest business deals in recent history took a couple of years of waiting and some financial engineering, but it was worth it. In March 2024, after surviving a Biden administration [investigation](#) involving the Securities and Exchange Commission, FBI, and Department of Homeland Security into the financing of its special purpose acquisition company merger, Trump Media & Technology Group, or

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# Biggest Trump-Musk Scandal (cont'd)

TMTG, the parent of Truth Social, became a publicly traded company. It did so with an assist from Jeff Yass, the options king, ByteDance investor, and richest man in Pennsylvania. After helping Trump find religion on ByteDance's mega-popular app TikTok, Yass's firm became the largest shareholder of the holding company Trump Media was merging with, helping the venture survive a lean financial period when two Truth Social investors [pleaded](#) guilty to securities fraud as part of an insider trading investigation. Yass sold his TMTG shares soon after the company went public; Susquehanna, his investment firm, also sold its TMTG shares, but later bought back in.

Trump held onto his TMTG stock, which represented more than half of all issued shares. As of mid-February, his holdings were worth more than \$3 billion, making them his most valuable asset—at least on paper. If Trump were to sell any of his shares, the already volatile Trump Media stock price would likely plummet. It's possible that, like Musk and many other billionaires, Trump uses his holdings as collateral for large loans or other deals. Like much that underwrites Trump's empire, the value of this collateral is pretty specious, a fiction of financial engineering. In 2024, Trump Media [brought in](#) only \$3.6 million in revenue—a 12 percent decline from the previous year. Overall, the company reported \$400.9 million in losses. Even so, Trump Media handed its employees \$107 million in [stock compensation](#) while also instituting an executive stock buyback program. TMTG's market capitalization was a nonsensical \$6.59 billion.

For someone who has long been a highly leveraged pauper-billionaire, in arrears on his bills, the stock offering must have been a revelation. Without doing much at all, beyond posting on Truth Social, Trump had a multibillion-dollar asset. There was potential for so much more. In mid-October, weeks before Election Day, Trump [released](#) his first cryptocurrency token under the auspices of World Liberty Financial, or WLFI, a new venture with which Trump and his sons had partnered. (Its founders include Alex and Zach Witkoff, sons of Trump's Middle East envoy Steve Witkoff.)

While it got off to a slow start, WLFI eventually sold tens of millions of dollars' worth of tokens—with \$30 million worth going to Justin Sun, a Chinese crypto entrepreneur with an exceedingly [checkered](#) career history and a taste for less regulated offshore markets. Sun is currently being sued—at least for the moment—by the SEC for fraud. He has every interest in becoming a business partner with the president who will appoint the next SEC chair. "Excited to have you part of the @worldlibertyfi team and our future working together," [wrote](#) Steve Witkoff after Sun announced his investment.

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# Biggest Trump-Musk Scandal (cont'd)

By Election Day, it seemed that Trump was not just open for business but establishing new avenues of payment and possible bribery unavailable to past presidents. Gone are the days of political operatives like Robert Maheu handing over suitcases of cash to Nixon administration officials. The payoffs travel on crypto rails now, in the relative open. Or they come as hundreds of millions of dollars in super PAC donations.

After Trump handily won the election, the proverbial “For Sale” sign went up. Justin Sun, whose business interests include the TRON blockchain that is a favored money-laundering tool for global cybercrime, [announced](#) another \$45 million purchase of WLFI tokens and began publicly advising Trump’s sons on crypto purchases. While Trump put his TMTG shares in a trust, there was little talk about his getting out of the crypto business or swearing off milking his voter base with fraudulent memecoin offerings. President Jimmy Carter putting his peanut farm in a blind trust seemed like the sort of accountability gesture that belonged to a far more naïve, less debauched era.

A few days before the inauguration, Trump crossed a Rubicon of gifting that seemed absurd even for him, releasing an official “memecoin”—more accurately called a shitcoin—an essentially worthless cryptocurrency token branded with the ticker symbol \$TRUMP. The token had all the hallmarks of a pump-and-dump operation—dropped without warning and hyped by Trump’s social media accounts, with about 80 percent of supply reserved for insiders who would “dump” the tokens on retail traders after they surged toward a multibillion-dollar market cap. And that’s exactly what happened, with large holders quickly selling, while one company behind the coin [reaped](#) \$100 million in trading fees. Most regular folks who bought and sold \$TRUMP lost money.

Back in the White House, on January 29, Trump Media [announced](#) a new DeFi, or decentralized finance, venture called Truth.Fi. The new company would put \$250 million into crypto tokens while offering crypto investment products to customers. It was at least his third distinct crypto company—not counting the \$MELANIA shitcoin, which Trump also promoted.

As Trump throws himself into one of the world’s shadiest industries, his government is smashing the regulatory and legal apparatus that once might have kept him and his donors in check. While Musk and DOGE take aim at the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau—a major enemy of the crypto and banking industries—Trump is

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# Biggest Trump-Musk Scandal (cont'd)

installing crypto executives, venture capitalists, and tech entrepreneurs in positions of authority across the government. A number of them [come from](#) Andreessen Horowitz, the venture capital firm that poured billions into the crypto bubble, and whose eponymous founders emerged as major Trump backers. The SEC, Commodity Futures Trading Commission, and other financial regulators will soon be heavily staffed by crypto lawyers, fintech executives, and former government employees who passed through the revolving door into the private sector and are now returning, bearing the interests of their erstwhile private-sector employers.

Against this backdrop, financial crimes and political corruption seem destined to receive minimal scrutiny under the second Trump administration. His Department of Justice has already [tried to scrap](#) criminal charges in the corruption investigation into New York City Mayor Eric Adams. The decision was announced as part of a brazen quid pro quo in which Adams, his legal fate held hostage to Trump's goodwill, promised to devote more city resources to deporting migrants.

Attorney General Pam Bondi has made a point of halting anti-corruption work, while Trump signed an [executive order](#) stating that the administration would "pause" enforcement of the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act, which bans bribery of foreign officials and has been a useful check on wrongdoing by both U.S. and foreign companies (that can face prosecution in the United States for bribes paid abroad). The administration said that the FCPA "actively harms American economic competitiveness," since multinational execs couldn't pay the bribes needed to secure deals in competitive markets.

We're witnessing a monumental and sudden transformation of U.S. legal and regulatory systems. Even white-collar defense attorneys seemed rattled, wondering if this newly permissive legal landscape will cut into their caseloads. "Abolishing globally focused investigative teams and restricting the scope of overseas bribery and foreign lobbying transparency probes will have a significant impact on what's been a boon for the defense bar this century," [wrote](#) Bloomberg Law.

With Musk and DOGE leading the push for austerity and privatization, Trump has established a form of corporate and political governance where financial crimes are tolerated, and even legal, if they redound to his benefit or that of his allies in tech and finance. At the same time, tech companies and their CEOs have offered more direct payments, giving millions to Trump's inauguration committee. Amazon [offered](#) Melania Trump a \$40 million documentary deal, which she negotiated with Jeff Bezos over dinner at Mar-a-Lago.

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# Biggest Trump-Musk Scandal (cont'd)

That deal was part of an unprecedented postelection flood of cash moving from private industry directly to the president and his family—some \$80 million, [according](#) to *The Wall Street Journal*, “as defendants settle lawsuits the president previously filed against them and corporations enter into new business ventures.”

And rather than prepare to cover Trump critically, or to fend off the lawfare and intimidation he has long employed, large media companies seem in a rush to pay him off. After the election, Disney settled a lawsuit with Trump involving ABC News for \$15 million. Meta shelled out \$25 million in another settlement. CBS is reportedly considering negotiating a settlement with Trump over a *60 Minutes* preelection interview with Vice President Kamala Harris that Trump falsely claimed was heavily edited in her favor, but executives at CBS’s parent company [worry](#) about the legal liability that might come with such a payoff. The Trump administration is duly applying pressure: Brendan Carr, the fiercely pro-MAGA, pro-Musk Federal Communications Commission chair, has been [investigating](#) the news program.

On February 12, X [agreed to pay](#) Trump \$10 million to settle a Twitter-era lawsuit relating to his suspension from the platform over his role in the January 6 Capitol riot. While some of these settlement payments went to a future Trump presidential library, that \$10 million allegedly went directly to Trump, who now employs Musk as an adviser and special government employee. It seemed less like a typical legal settlement than a gift. Trump is, after all, the boss, and the boss needs to be paid.

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Jacob Silverman’s next book, *Gilded Rage: Elon Musk and the Radicalization of Silicon Valley*, will be published in fall 2025 by Bloomsbury.



# Historic Upset



## ANALYSIS ELECTION 2025 'HISTORIC UPSET'

*Astonishment as county elects 1st Democratic Pa. senator since 1800s*

**JAXON WHITE**

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It had been a running gag in Lancaster County politics these past few months that maybe county Commissioner Chairman Josh Parsons would flub the 36th Senate District race.

The sheer improbability of that suggestion made it funny. Maybe Republican voters would take for granted their heavy advantage in the 36th and not turn out at the polls. (Unlikely.) And maybe anger at President Donald Trump would motivate Democrats to vote in droves in the special election. (Unlikely.)

But on Tuesday night, those jokes were no laughing matter for the GOP.



From the left, James Andrew Malone, Beverly Brinkley and Jen Hendricks, all of East Petersburg, speak outside of the East Petersburg Community Center on Tuesday. Malone, the Democratic mayor of East Petersburg, won a special election Tuesday for Pennsylvania's 36th Senate District against Republican Lancaster County Commissioner Josh Parsons and Libertarian nominee Zachary Moore.

SUZETTE WENGER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

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# Historic Upset (cont'd)

Come 10:15 p.m., James Malone, the two-term, part-time mayor of East Petersburg Borough, had pulled off the most significant political upset in Lancaster County history by defeating Parsons in a county that hasn't elected a Democrat to the state Senate since 1889.

Some local Republicans on Wednesday whispered — others shouted — that Parsons' polarizing personality drove many GOP voters away from the polls, or to choose Malone on their ballots.

Some cited the mail-in results showing Malone won 70% of the mailed ballots. The county's stats Tuesday morning show only about 56% of those had been requested by registered Democrats and about 10% from independent or third-party voters, meaning some of the 34% of Republicans who requested a mail-in ballot wound up voting for Malone.

Couple Malone's lead from mail-ins with a mere 29% turnout in a district of more than 184,000 registered voters, and Tuesday saw Parsons lose the race in a district that Trump won by 15 percentage points in November.

Political pundits across the country were quick to add Parsons' defeat to their list of indicators of dissatisfaction with Trump's second term, connecting Malone's success to Democratic gains in other recent special elections nationwide.

Malone bested Parsons by just 482 votes, as of Tuesday evening, in a district considered so deeply red that in 2022, Democrats didn't even field a candidate.

Malone said Wednesday he was told his swearing-in is tentatively scheduled for early May, though he'd like to get to Harrisburg sooner. He will serve in the seat until at least 2026, likely launching his reelection campaign within a year.

"We're going to have to work really hard to put the platform on the ground ... and prove to all of them that this was not just a small minority making a decision," he told LNP | LancasterOnline.

There are still provisional ballots to be counted, and military and overseas ballots can trickle in before 5 p.m. on April 1, but the number of those ballots is too few to sway the outcome of the race.

The 36th's former senator, Ryan Aument, whose resignation in December sparked the special election, won the seat by more than a 15-point margin in his 2014 and 2018 contested campaigns. Aument, who did not endorse Parsons' candidacy, did not respond to a request for comment.

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# Historic Upset (cont'd)

## **'Shock and disbelief'**

Parsons, who had never lost a campaign since entering the public eye in 2011, was confident the race would break his way when he spoke to a reporter at his East Hempfield Township polling place Tuesday morning, despite Republicans— including Elon Musk and activist Scott Presler — raising doubts that Parsons could overcome Malone's mail-in lead.

Many of Lancaster County's top Republicans regularly gather on election nights at the Republican Committee of Lancaster County's headquarters in East Hempfield Township to watch the live results as they're reported.

In the room with Parsons and his campaign team Tuesday was state Sen. Chris Gebhard, whose 48th District covers a sliver of northeast Lancaster County. He chairs the Senate Republican Campaign Committee, which gave just over \$4,600 to Parsons' campaign this year.

"There was a lot of shock and disbelief amongst everybody in the room from the time I got there at about 9:30, until I left an hour and a half later," Gebhard said. "It was a historic upset."

He said the Lancaster County GOP seemed to focus its messaging in the lead-up to the election to mirror that of a contentious primary campaign, focused on driving the 36th's 53% majority of Republicans to the polls to overwhelm Democrats' early mail-in advantage.

That did not happen. Emblematic of that failure were polls in Republican bastions like Elizabethtown Borough and West Hempfield Township.

Malone won four of Elizabethtown's five voting precincts and five of West Hempfield's seven — all of which broke for Trump in November. Malone won some of those precincts by just a few dozen votes, relying heavily on mail ballots that yielded sometimes twice or three times as many votes in his favor.

## **Parsons scrutinized**

Yet Gebhard said Parsons' loss was not a knock against his candidacy, or the county GOP's ability to spread word about the special election. He said the result was likely a pushback against Republican control in Washington, D.C.

Others felt differently. "This is a race that Republicans should have won. Period," said Shelley Castetter, a longtime GOP strategist in Lancaster's southern end who had worked with Aument in the past.

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# Historic Upset (cont'd)

Citing several cases of Parsons' harsh language and inflammatory rhetoric, she said his loss was just as much about his poor likability as a candidate as it was about national politics. Many of Parsons' campaign materials boasted his public opposition to Lancaster City Council's "Welcoming City" immigration ordinance and Lancaster Public Library's hosting of a Drag Queen Story Hour last year. Some local Democrats blame his speaking out about the latter event for attracting attention that led to a bomb threat that shut down much of downtown Lancaster.

Parsons also sparked outrage from some of the county's local GOP chairs last year when he and fellow Commissioner Ray D'Agostino funded mailers supporting challengers to members of the Republican Committee of Lancaster County who opposed his wife's endorsement for a county judge race in 2023.

His public criticisms against LNP | LancasterOnline, claiming it is a biased news organization, and his belittling of a reporter were the subject of a Washington Post column last year.

"(Parsons) has ruled with an iron fist," Catterer said, noting that those who oppose Parsons rarely speak out against him.

"Instead, they will just quietly not support him," she said.

On the campaign trail, Parsons also missed a key opportunity to reach out to independent or moderate voters by ignoring invitations from the county League of Women's Voters to participate in a forum earlier this month with Malone and Libertarian candidate Zachary Moore.

Kirk Radanovic, chairman of the county GOP, said in a statement he expects "a lot of finger pointing to rationalize the defeat."

"Today, I'm calling on all Republicans in Lancaster County to unite," Radanovic said. "Republicans who sit on their hands or home on Election Day, elect Democrats. Republicans cannot be complacent."

Radanovic also warned Malone that "his days are numbered in Harrisburg."

## **A 'hopeless' campaign**

Democrats maintained throughout Malone's campaign this year that they were simply looking to close the margins with Republicans in this race to prove a point to the GOP and build momentum heading into this year's municipal elections.

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# Historic Upset (cont'd)

“When we started this race back in January, there were a lot of people that were hopeless,” Malone’s co-campaign chair, Stella Sexton, said Wednesday. “We just didn’t have time for that feeling.”

Sexton, also vice-chair of the county Democratic committee, and other county Democrats led frequent door-knocking campaigns around the 36th, which covers 25 municipalities spanning much of northern Lancaster County.

She said backlash to Trump’s efforts to reshape the federal government, largely through slashes executed by top adviser Elon Musk to public services, was “really the only thing” that Democrats heard about from voters early on in the campaign.

Other special elections across the country, like one in Iowa that saw a Democrat, Mike Zimmer, flip a Republican state Senate seat in January, emboldened county Democrats to push harder for the 36th seat.

Franklin & Marshall College political science professor Stephen Medvic said the Democratic Party’s advantage in special elections could carry into later elections if dissatisfaction with the Trump administration grows among the electorate.

“Even though a bunch has happened since the Iowa special election ... some of this is kind of baked in,” Medvic said. “It’s about turnout differential, and it’s about enthusiasm among the opposition party.”

Lancaster County Democrats’ efforts this year attracted plenty of cash to Malone’s campaign. And some of Pennsylvania’s top party members backed Malone’s candidacy.

On Monday, U.S. Rep. Chris Deluzio of western Pennsylvania helped canvass for voters. And as polls opened on Tuesday, a robocall recorded by Gov. Josh Shapiro was placed to households in the 36th District encouraging them to vote for Malone.

## **A motivating win**

Malone’s victory will not loosen the GOP’s grip on the state Senate majority, and statewide, Republicans are using that fact to downplay the impact of his win.

But the win sends a signal to Democrats in deeply red parts of Lancaster County who for generations have viewed their votes as an exercise in futility.

For Democrats like Kevin Astree, 45, of East Hempfield Town-ship, voting in the special election was entirely about the slim chance they could see some rare representation in the General Assembly.

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# Historic Upset (cont'd)

“I feel like things are just trending in the wrong direction currently,” Astree said. “And I just want to do my part to try to correct that.”

Even third-party voters had reason to feel energized by the results. Though the 480 votes Moore secured would not have swayed the election in Parsons’ favor, the Republicans’ loss of those votes widened the margins, making Malone the clear winner.

“I’m not going to shy away from the fact that I may be one of the most hated men in Lancaster County at this point by the Republican voters,” Moore said. “I’m not going to apologize for trying to go out and represent the Libertarian values.”

We’re going to have to work really hard to put the platform on the ground ... and prove to all of them that this was not just a small minority making a decision.

— Andrew James Malone,

*Democratic state senator-elect*

I feel like things are just trending in the wrong direction currently. And I just want to do my part to try to correct that.

— Kevin Astree,

*Democratic voter in East Hempfield Township*



Lancaster County staff and volunteers process ballots for the 36th Senate District special election on Tuesday. County statistics show that some of the mail-in ballots requested by Republicans came back as votes for the Democratic candidate James Malone, who narrowly won the race.

SUZETTE WENGER | STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

# How Trump Snuck His Mass Deportations Past the Courts

## THE NEW REPUBLIC

### How Trump Snuck His Mass Deportations Past the Courts

Donald Trump's administration has come under fire in the courts for its deportation policies.

[Edith Olmsted](#)

**March 26, 2025**

Donald Trump's sinister plan to deport noncitizens under the Alien Enemies Act included several steps specifically designed to help evade judicial review, Talking Points Memo [reported](#) Wednesday.

It all began weeks before the [secretive deportations](#) on March 15 took place, when Trump entered office and immediately signed an executive order labeling Venezuelan gang Tren de Aragua as a terrorist organization. This helped to set the stage for the president to invoke the Alien Enemies Act, suspending alleged members' due process to deport them.

As soon as early February, Immigration and Customs Enforcement began arresting Venezuelan asylum-seekers. In several cases, individuals were detained at their regular check-ins with federal authorities and brought into ICE custody on the basis of their supposedly [suspicious tattoos](#).

"From there, no further due process or examination to determine whether these people were actually TdA members appears to have taken place," TPM reported.

The White House claimed that authorities had determined beyond a doubt that the more than 100 Venezuelans deported to El Salvador earlier were "terrorist" members of the TdA but refused to reveal operational details of how they were able to determine this. Trump's border czar Tom Homan [claimed](#) that authorities had used social media, surveillance, sworn statements from gang members, and wire taps to determine supposed gang affiliation.

Over the course of the next month, the alleged members of TdA were slowly moved closer and closer to the airfield in South Texas where the flights to El Salvador departed, according to multiple immigration attorneys who spoke with TPM.

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# How Trump Snuck His Mass Deportations Past the Courts

One soon-to-be deported Venezuelan missed an immigration court hearing in Elizabeth, New Jersey, because he had been inexplicably moved to a detention facility in South Texas. Others were moved from Pennsylvania, California, and Louisiana. Attorneys struggled to keep track of their clients as they were slowly arranged, ahead of Trump's invocation of the AEA, like dominoes to fall.

The night before the flights took off, the Venezuelans received misleading information about where they were actually going. One group was placed on an aircraft and told they were going back to Venezuela.

Attorney Martin Rosenow was in disbelief when he received a tearful phone call from his client's wife, saying her husband was being deported back to Venezuela.

"For me, it was impossible, because he still had an open asylum pending and you can't be deported without being given due process. So at first I told her, 'You know what? I think he's just being transferred to another facility because his case is still ongoing,'" Rosenow told TPM. "It's impossible that he'd be deported."

Both Rosenow and the family were left confused and unprepared to challenge his client's subsequent deportation to a torture prison in El Salvador.

Crucially, family members and attorneys were not made aware of the removal of their loved ones and clients, making it impossible to challenge their removal.

John Dutton, an attorney for one of the Venezuelan nationals, told TPM that it seemed to him that every move had been purposefully orchestrated. "They knew that what they were doing was wrong," Dutton said. "The way they did it, how they did it, in the middle of the night, how they didn't allow them to tell their families. They didn't tell them. They didn't tell us as attorneys."

Still, rumors that Trump had invoked the AEA circulated, and at 2 a.m. on March 15, Lee Gelernt, an ACLU attorney, filed suit to block their removals. While the White House said the AEA order was signed on March 14, it did not appear on the government's website until 3:53 p.m. the next day.

Within only hours of its posting, two flights departed, carrying more than 100 Venezuelans nationals, who had not been afforded their due process rights to a hearing, out of the country.

All of these measures indicate that the government took extensive steps to strip noncitizens of their rights ahead of their deportation. As Judge James Boasberg wrote in an [order](#) Monday, the speed at which the deportees were removed "implied a desire to circumvent judicial review."

# A Bit of Humor



from Feminist News as seen on Facebook Feb. 20th:

**“I hope America is like that upside down Delta jet.**

**Everyone survives, but the right wing explodes.”**

# Coming Events

## **Understanding Our Democracy**

Tuesday, April 15<sup>th</sup> at 10 AM

Cultural Center Education Room

Matthew Johnson from Church World Services will be speaking to us on immigration and immigrants here in Lancaster County.

## **Dems Club General Meeting**

Tuesday, April 29<sup>th</sup> at 1 PM

Cultural Center Education Room

Braver Angels, presented by  
Ted Borek and Terry Webb

**Save this date: Tuesday, May 20<sup>th</sup> is PRIMARY DAY**

## **Understanding Our Democracy**

Thursday, May 22<sup>nd</sup> at 10 AM

Cultural Center Education Room

Susan Spica (Education Voters PA) and Erin Small (candidate Hempfield School Board) will talk about federal and state education funding.

# Meeting Minutes

## Democratic Club of Willow Valley General Meeting March 25, 2025

### Attendance: 63

President Jen Porter called the meeting to order at 1 p.m. and introduced guest speaker Jaime Arroyo, Democratic candidate for Lancaster City Mayor.

**Guest Speaker:** Mr. Arroyo gave a brief background as a long-time resident of Lancaster City, a local entrepreneur and CEO of Assets, a local non-profit that provides training and financial support for women and people of color establishing businesses. He is also a two-term City Council member. Mr. Arroyo described his major goals as mayor.

- Housing: Lack of affordable housing is a critical issue in the city and county. A collaboration with other municipalities is necessary for finding solutions to this problem.
- Economic development: There is a need for creation of jobs and startups of new small businesses that are equitable and inclusive to provide growth in the city and county.
- Lancaster City as a welcoming community: The city is a diverse and welcoming community. Mr. Arroyo wants to ensure that tradition continues.

Q&A: Following his talk, Mr. Arroyo opened the floor to questions. Some included were:

- Effect of current federal spending cuts to services
- Concern for immigrant workers in the city and county
- Need for a county health department
- Strategies to increase affordable housing in the city

President Porter thanked Mr. Arroyo for his talk and his encouragement to voters to take part in upcoming local elections.

### Business Meeting

Treasury – Steve Wright: The balance stands at \$2,487.22 with \$3,432.00 set aside for 2025 scholarships.

Membership – Margaret Babb: Current membership is 284. The membership drive will begin May 1.

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# Meeting Minutes

Scholarship – Sharron Nelson: The second \$1,000 scholarship for technical schools has been successfully added with those applications due later. Three community service scholarship applications have been received from L-SHS, and one will be awarded in May. L-SHS suggested that applications may be sent online in the future.

Advocacy – Jen Porter, Ellen Haas

- President Porter announced the April campaign using the website [www.5calls.org](http://www.5calls.org). This site provides talking points for calls to legislators. The total for member contacts to legislators for the March Action was **315**. Members are asked to tally their April contacts to report for the next General Meeting.
- For the 2025 Jimmy Carter initiative, April's focus is on the former President's work to eradicate the guinea worm in Africa, a deadly parasite. Through his work, cases of infection fell from 3.6 million in 1986 to fewer than 20 in 2024.
- Ellen Haas reported that she, along with members Margaret Babcock and Terry Webb, visited Lloyd Smucker's office on March 21 and spoke with an aide about topics such as Social Security. A signup sheet was available to those who wished to work with this group for further visitations.
- A group of letter writers is being formed that needs a leader and writers. A signup sheet was available.

Club website: Ross Fairweather: Vice-President Fairweather met with GoDaddy on March 12 to present suggestions made by the Board in its March 17 meeting. She is waiting response from GoDaddy before we can proceed. Testing is scheduled to begin in late April and going live by May 1.

Upcoming events:

- April 5 Day of Protest: Nationwide protests in opposition to Trump's administration will take place. Contact [indivisible.org](http://indivisible.org) for locations.
- *Understanding Our Democracy* series continues. All meetings take place on Tuesday in the Cultural Center Education Room at 10 a.m. Upcoming topics are:
  - April 15, Matthew Johnson of Church World Services
  - May 13, federal and state education funding
  - June 10, advocacy efforts in the Quaker community

Next General Meeting:

Tuesday, April 29, 10 a.m. Cultural Center Education Room. Guest speakers will be Terry Webb and Ted Borek of Braver Angels.

Lucy Painter  
Secretary