

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 12, 2025

David Warrington
Office of the White House Counsel
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Mr. Warrington:

Yesterday, *ABC News* and others reported that the royal family of Qatar is preparing to provide a “super luxury Boeing 747-8 jumbo jet” to be used by President Trump and then subsequently donated to his presidential library.¹ A spokesperson for the government of Qatar maintained that any such deal “remains under review” but did not deny that providing the jet was under consideration. Such an act raises serious constitutional and ethical questions—foremost among them an apparent violation of the Foreign Emoluments Clause of the U.S. Constitution.

The emoluments clause prohibits any person holding office of profit or trust under the United States from accepting any present, emolument, office or title from any foreign state without the consent of Congress.² The intent of this provision is clear: to prevent corruption of and foreign influence by foreign governments over U.S. officials, including the President.

Indeed, this clause has prevented past presidents from accepting gifts such as medals, or honors including honorary citizenship of another country.³ A jet—reportedly valued at \$400 million—from a foreign power could not be a starker example of why this provision exists. Even if provided to the Department of Defense, it is clearly for the benefit of the President, and based on reports, ultimately a planned gift for him personally.

Foreign influence can come in many forms. As the U.S. Department of Justice has long acknowledged, the emoluments clause “has been interpreted as being ‘particularly directed against *every kind of influence by foreign governments* upon officers of the United States.’”⁴ Here there is no question that such a lavish gift has the potential to persuade the President to provide favorable treatment, either directly to the foreign power providing the gift or another party at their behest.

This reported arrangement would be alarming if it were an isolated incident—but it is not. It is impossible to ignore the numerous, mounting conflicts surrounding the president, his family and the Middle East region. Reports of this potential gift come as the President is headed to the region, where the Trump Organization recently announced a \$5.5 billion deal for a luxury golf resort in Qatar and a Trump family cryptocurrency venture received a \$2 billion investment from

¹ Jonathan Karl and Katherine Faulders, “Trump administration poised to accept ‘palace in the sky’ as a gift for Trump from Qatar: Sources,” *ABC News*, May 11, 2025.

² U.S. Constitution Article I, Section 9, Clause 8.

³ *See, e.g.*, Proposal that the President Accept Honorary Irish Citizenship, 1 Op. O.L.C. Supp. 278 (1963).

⁴ Applicability of Emoluments Clause to Proposed Service of Government Employee on Commission of International Historians, 11 Op. O.L.C. 89, 90 (1987) (quoting 24 Op. Att’y Gen. 116, 117 (1902)) (emphasis added).

a UAE-based firm.⁵ And all of this comes as Qatar is playing a pivotal role in ongoing ceasefire negotiations.

Congress and the American public have a right to know the details of any arrangement that calls into question whether the President is acting on behalf of U.S. interests and U.S. interests alone.

To that end, I respectfully request:

1. A clear and detailed explanation of how this reported gift does not violate the Foreign Emoluments Clause.
2. A copy of any legal opinion(s) or memos prepared by the White House Counsel's Office or the Department of Justice regarding this matter.
3. Any communications between the White House, U.S Department of State and/or U.S. Department of Justice and Qatari officials (or intermediaries) relating to the consideration of this proposed gift or donation.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,



Jeanne Shaheen
Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee

CC:

The Honorable Marco Rubio, Secretary of State
The Honorable Pam Bondi, Attorney General

⁵ Benjamin Siegel and Hannah Demissie, "Trump to embark on Middle East trip to strengthen ties with Gulf states, *ABC News*, May 12, 2025.