

A CORRUPTION CRACKDOWN

ROOTING OUT WASTE, FRAUD, AND BRIBERY

INTRODUCTION

Washington works for whoever can afford it. That is not a slogan, it is a description of how our government actually runs: billionaires buy elections, senators steer contracts to their own spouses, members of Congress trade stock on information the rest of us will never see, and retired generals cash out as defense contractors the moment they leave the Pentagon. Every one of these arrangements is legal. That is the scandal.

Mainers do not need a lecture on corruption. They can see it for themselves, in a Senate seat funded almost entirely by out-of-state billionaires and in a defense budget that cannot pass a basic audit. This plan lays out exactly how we end it: close the loopholes, raise the penalties, and make sure that public service in Washington stops paying better than it should.

BAN CORPORATIONS AND BILLIONAIRES BUYING ELECTIONS

We live in a system where wealth buys power. Since the Supreme Court's decision in Citizens United, corporations and billionaires have been handed unrestricted power to flood our elections with cash.¹ The result is a country where a handful of people can spend tens, even hundreds of millions of dollars on a single campaign - a scheme of legalized bribery and vote-buying that drowns out the voices of everyday people and replaces what we used to call democracy.²

We must restore integrity and transparency to our politics.

¹ [Brennan Center for Justice](#), "Citizens United, Explained" (January 2025)

² For example, in the 2022 midterms, just 21 of the biggest donor families contributed \$783 million and billionaires provided 15 percent of all federal election financing — most of which went to super PACs supporting congressional campaigns (Brennan Center for Justice, "4 Takeaways About Money in the Midterms" [11/16/22](#))

³ [The Maine Monitor](#), "Nearly 100 billionaires and their spouses have donated to reelect Susan Collins" (June 2026)

THE VIEW FROM MAINE

Nearly 100 billionaires and their spouses have poured almost \$10 million into Susan Collins' campaign since the start of 2025, according to reporting from the Maine Monitor.³ This includes people like Marc Rowan, who bankrupted two of Maine's largest paper mills⁴; and Stephen Schwarzman, who runs one of the largest corporate landlords in America, which has been rapaciously buying up single-family homes.⁵

Not a single one of those billionaire donors is a Maine resident.

Ask yourself: why are nearly a hundred billionaires from outside Maine writing checks to a single Senate race? It is not because they care about our state. It is because they expect a return on their investment.

OUR PLAN TO CLEAN IT UP

- Overturn Citizens United, either by a less foolhardy Supreme Court or by constitutional amendment.
- Impose a lifetime ban on former Members of Congress lobbying Congress. Public service should never become a pathway to private affluence.
- Ban federal candidates from accepting corporate PAC money. Right now, candidates cannot take money directly from corporations - but they can take it through committees corporations set up for exactly that purpose. That is a loophole, not a safeguard.
- Rein in Super PACs, which now wield unprecedented influence over our elections.
- Require full transparency from dark-money organizations. The American people deserve to know where the money funding our elections comes from, and right now, legal loopholes let many of these groups keep their donors entirely secret. Super PACs are technically required to disclose their donors, but those donors can themselves be dark-money groups, which means the original source of the cash stays hidden.

How can anyone trust a political system if they are kept in the dark about who is funding it? Transparency now.

THE NUMBERS DON'T LIE

The amount billionaires gave to support Collins is strikingly similar to what small-dollar donors - those giving \$200 or less - gave to the Platner campaign. Billionaires gave \$9.8 million to Collins; small-dollar donors gave \$9.6 million to Platner. By contrast, the Collins

⁴ [Dropsite News](#), "Billionaire Bankrolling Anti-Platner PAC Gutted Maine Mill Towns" (April 2026)

⁵ [The Guardian](#), "The Blackstone rebellion: how one country took on the world's biggest commercial landlord" (September 2022); [CNBC](#), "Why Blackstone is buying rental homes in the U.S." (June 2025)

⁶ [The Maine Monitor](#), "Nearly 100 billionaires and their spouses have donated to reelect Susan Collins" (June 2026)

campaign raised only about \$980,000 from small-dollar donations of its own.⁶ Strip away the billionaire money, and Collins would be left with a tenth of her current war chest.

PASS THE “COLLINS RULE”: SENATORS CANNOT FUNNEL MONEY TO THEIR SPOUSES

Susan Collins’ husband’s lobbying firm received over \$76 million in federal contracts - tens of millions of dollars of it from agencies that Susan Collins herself oversees.

That is not a coincidence. That is a senator using her office to enrich her own household, in plain sight, with no law stopping her.

No existing law covers this. Although the anti-nepotism statute prohibits Members from putting family members on their payroll, it says nothing about a spouse’s firm being enriched through winning contracts from agencies the senator oversees.⁷ Hiring your spouse is banned. Arranging for your spouse’s firm to receive millions from agencies you oversee is, apparently, fine. This is plain corruption, and we will not stand for it.

In 2017, Senator Warren introduced the Presidential Conflicts of Interest Act, which would have required presidential appointees to recuse themselves from decisions affecting the financial holdings of the president or the president’s spouse.⁸ The principle is identical to what the Collins Rule proposes: a senator should not be able to direct money to their spouse’s firm.

The Collins Rule would require a senator to recuse themselves from any vote, decision, or oversight activity involving an agency from which their spouse’s firm receives government contracts. This is the most basic requirement of public office - one which applies to judges and ordinary federal employees. Why should senators be the exception?

We will pass the Collins Rule to stop senators from enriching themselves by funneling government contracts to their spouses.

BAN CONGRESSPEOPLE AND THEIR SPOUSES FROM TRADING STOCKS, UNDER PENALTY OF IMPRISONMENT

Members of Congress sit in classified briefings, vote on legislation that moves markets, and oversee the very industries they invest in. They have access to sensitive, non-public information that the rest of us will never see, and current law lets them trade on it. If anyone without an office on Capitol Hill did that, it would be called insider trading, and they would go to prison for it.

- Of all members of Congress who own stock, 59% are Republican and 41% are Democrats. This is not a partisan problem; it is a Washington problem.⁹
- Ten members of Congress currently hold between \$750,000 and \$2 million in cryptocurrency assets.¹⁰

⁷ [Cornell Legal Information Institute](#), U.S. Code § 3110

⁸ [115th Congress](#), S.65, “Presidential Conflicts of Interest Act of 2017” (January 2017)

⁹ [Campaign Legal Center](#), “Congressional Stock Trading By The Numbers - 119th Congress” (November 2025)

¹⁰ [Campaign Legal Center](#), “Congressional Stock Trading and the STOCK Act” (September 2025)

How can these lawmakers claim to represent our interests when their own net worth rises and falls with the industries they are supposed to regulate?

As long as sitting members of Congress are allowed to hold and trade stock connected to the industries they have a hand in regulating, the public will keep asking whether their policy decisions serve our best interest - or their own bank accounts.

The public agrees, overwhelmingly and across party lines: 86% of Americans support banning members of Congress from trading stocks.¹¹

STOP TRADING ON CONGRESSIONAL KNOWLEDGE

Lawmakers are already prohibited from using nonpublic information gained through their official positions for personal benefit, and members are legally required to disclose their own stock transactions, and those of their spouses, within designated reporting windows.

But over a decade after its passage, the STOCK Act has failed to live up to its promise. It has not stopped the appearance of corruption, and it has not convinced the public that Congress puts their interests ahead of its own portfolio.

The penalty for violating the STOCK Act is a flat \$200 fine - hardly a deterrent against the potential millions to be made trading on inside information.

Lawmakers have engaged in between \$14.3 million and \$52.1 million in undisclosed or untimely disclosed stock trades, and watchdogs have repeatedly called for accountability wherever a member of Congress appears to have violated disclosure rules or traded on inside information.

Not a single member of Congress has ever been prosecuted for insider trading under the STOCK Act.¹²

A law with no teeth is not a law. It is a permission slip.

OUR PLAN

- Ban members of Congress and their spouses from trading individual stocks while in office.
- Dramatically increase penalties for STOCK Act violations, with criminal prosecution - including imprisonment - on the table for the worst offenses, not a \$200 parking ticket.
- Close the loopholes that have let every single violation go unprosecuted for over a decade.

¹¹ [University of Maryland Program for Public Consultation](#), “Ban on Stock Trading for Members of Congress Favored by Overwhelming Bipartisan Majority” (July 2023)

¹² [Campaign Legal Center](#), “Congressional Stock Trading and the STOCK Act” (September 2025)

STRIP PENSIONS FROM CONGRESSIONAL FELONS

Current law can strip a federal employee's pension for a list of specific crimes. In practice, it has never been enforced - because forfeiture only triggers if every element of the offense directly relates to a Member's official duties. Off-duty corruption is excluded. Personal financial misconduct is excluded. Sex crimes are not on the list at all, clearly a great oversight given the Epstein files.

Former Representative Steve Buyer was convicted of insider trading and sentenced to 22 months in prison. His conduct occurred after he left Congress, while working as a lobbyist - trading on access his congressional service gave him. His pension was never at risk. He is currently collecting an estimated \$47,946 a year of taxpayer money.¹³ Trump has since pardoned him.

Ask yourself: why should a convicted felon collect a government check for the rest of his life?

NO PENSION FOR CONGRESSIONAL FELONS ACT

We don't think the current law is right. That's why we will fight for legislation that strips the pension of any member of Congress convicted of a serious felony. Why should they be rewarded for their crimes?

- Remove the 'official duties' nexus requirement, so any Member convicted of a serious felony loses their congressional pension - whether the offense occurred on duty or off.
- Add sex crimes to the list of offenses that trigger forfeiture. A Member convicted of felony sexual abuse should lose their pension. Full stop.
- Apply forfeiture to the full federal pension, not just the congressional service credit.
- Close the post-congressional gap: former Members who trade on their congressional access after leaving office face the same consequences as those who commit crimes while serving.

ROOT OUT CORRUPTION AND WASTE IN THE MILITARY

AUDIT THE PENTAGON

Every year, more and more of your tax dollars flow into the Pentagon. And every year, the Pentagon fails to account for where that money goes.

The Pentagon has failed its audit for the eighth year in a row, even as Congress hands it a record budget of over \$1 trillion for 2026.¹⁴¹⁵

¹³ [National Taxpayers Union Foundation](#), "Former Representative Steve Buyer's Pardon Highlights Yet Another Congressional Pension Loophole" (June 2026)

¹⁴ [Reuters](#), "Pentagon Says It Fails Eighth Audit, Targets 2028 to Pass" (December 2025)

¹⁵ [U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations](#), "Congress Approves FY 2026 Defense Appropriations Bill" (February 2026)

Just last year, the Government Accountability Office found that one reason for these repeated failures is that the agency faces “significant fraud exposure” from military contractors,¹⁶ who engage in brazen, open price gouging.¹⁷

This year, the Pentagon reported \$4.65 trillion in assets¹⁸ - but trillions of dollars of that figure may be in limbo. As of 2023, the Pentagon could not even keep track of more than 60 percent of its own assets.¹⁹

Picture pouring money into a bucket with a gaping hole in the bottom. That hole just happens to leak straight into the pockets of defense contractors and the Washington insiders who answer to them.

THE REVOLVING DOOR

“Revolving door” is the polite term for what is, in plain English, a legal kickback scheme. It describes the well-worn path of retired senior military officials moving out of the Pentagon and straight into the arms industry - as lobbyists, board members, and executives for the very contractors they used to oversee. Then, often enough, those same officials rotate back into the Pentagon’s civilian leadership, bringing their new corporate loyalties with them.

This is not a side effect of the system. It is the system.

A 2021 Government Accountability Office report found that 1,700 senior government officials had taken positions in the arms industry within five years of leaving federal service.²⁰ The pattern is especially stark at the top: over five years, over 80 percent of retired four-star generals and admirals went on to work in the arms sector as board members, advisers, lobbyists, or consultants.²¹

The revolving door weakens enforcement, normalizes contractor-friendly rules, entrenches monopoly-style sustainment contracts, and shields failing programs from cancellation. It builds an entire ecosystem of incentives that enrich defense primes and the senior officials who pass through them, while blocking every honest effort to bring down the true cost of our national security.

CBS News reported that defense contractors routinely overcharge the Pentagon - and the American taxpayer - by nearly 40 percent.²²

The Commission on Wartime Contracting concluded that between \$31 billion and \$60 billion of taxpayer funds were lost to contract waste and fraud in Iraq and Afghanistan alone.²³

These officials profit from a state of perpetual conflict. There is no longer a meaningful line between defending this country and profiting from its defense and that is a direct conflict of

¹⁶ [U.S. Government Accountability Office](#), DOD Financial Management, “Accelerated Timelines Needed to Address Long-standing Issues and Fraud Risk” (April 2025)

¹⁷ [CBS](#), “How the Pentagon falls victim to price gouging by military contractors” (May 2023)

¹⁸ [Reuters](#), “Pentagon Says It Fails Eighth Audit, Targets 2028 to Pass” (December 2025)

¹⁹ [Responsible Statecraft](#), “Pentagon can’t account for 63% of nearly \$4 trillion in assets” (December 2023); [U.S. Department of Defense, Office of the Undersecretary of Defense](#), “Agency Financial Report Fiscal Year 2023” (November 2023)

²⁰ [U.S. Government Accountability Office](#), Report to Congressional Committees, “Post Government Employment Restrictions” (September 2021)

²¹ [Washington Post](#), “Over 80 percent of four-star retirees are employed in defense industry” (October 2023)

²² [CBS News](#), 60 Minutes, “Weapons contractors hitting Department of Defense with inflated prices for planes, submarines, missiles” (May 2023)

²³ [U.S. Senate Committee on Armed Services Subcommittee On Readiness and Management Support](#), “The Final Report Of The Commission On Wartime Contracting In Iraq And Afghanistan” (October 2011)

interest at the heart of our national security establishment.

Laws should prevent former officials from using their public service to advance their own financial interests at the public's expense. Right now, nothing meaningfully does.

WHAT WE WILL DO ABOUT IT

- If the Pentagon does not pass its audit, it does not get a blank check: no further funding increases until basic financial accountability is restored.
- Contractors caught defrauding the Pentagon are permanently barred from future federal contracts - not quietly re-engaged a few years later.
- Close the revolving door: impose lifetime restrictions barring senior Pentagon officials and military brass from lobbying for, or taking board seats at, the defense contractors they used to oversee.

A LIFETIME BAN ON FOREIGN LOBBYING

Under current law, former members of Congress are free to lobby their old colleagues after a brief “cooling-off” period - just one year for former members of the House, and two years for former senators.²⁴

One year. Two years. That is all it takes before a former lawmaker can turn the relationships and the inside knowledge we gave them in trust into a paycheck - sometimes from a foreign government.

Why should members of Congress be allowed to take the trust the American people placed in them and convert it into a private fortune, at democracy's expense?

WHAT WE WILL DO ABOUT IT

- Replace the current cooling-off period with a permanent, lifetime ban.
- Prohibit former members of Congress from lobbying or making lobbying contacts of any kind - no influencing officials on behalf of private parties, foreign or domestic, ever again.

This is not a radical idea. It is common sense, and it already has bipartisan support in the Senate.

²⁴ [U.S. House Committee on Ethics](#), “Negotiations for Future Employment and Restrictions on Post-Employment for House Staff” (December 2022); [U.S. Senate Select Committee on Ethics](#), “Conflicts of Interest” (viewed June 2026)

CRACK DOWN ON EXECUTIVE BRANCH CORRUPTION

Congress is not the only place corruption festers. At the very top of the rotting pile sits an executive branch that has turned the presidency into the most brazen pay-to-play operation in American history. President Trump has one policy: to enrich himself, his family, and his cronies.

Since taking office in January 2025, President Trump has pocketed an estimated \$3 billion from his various business schemes, with much of the money apparently coming from foreign governments and others seeking to curry favor with the White House.²⁵

The pattern is always the same. A corporation, foreign government, or billionaire makes a donation - to the inaugural fund, the presidential library, the family's crypto ventures or the vanity project. Shortly after, a regulatory investigation disappears, a merger sails through, a pardon is issued, or a government contract lands. The American Bar Association calls it as it is: rampant pay-to-play corruption that threatens the foundation of our democracy.²⁶

THE EVIDENCE

The examples are not subtle. They are on the record:

- Vietnam fast-tracked approval for a \$1.5 billion Trump Organization gold resort near Hanoi²⁷ - while simultaneously negotiating to avoid a 46% U.S. tariff.²⁸
- Qatar gave the administration a \$400 million Boeing 747, unveiled as the new Air Force One - Trump's new personal plane, courtesy of a foreign government.²⁹
- Ripple, Coinbase and Robinhood each donated millions to President Trump's inaugural fund.³⁰ Within months of Trump taking office, the SEC dismissed its case against Coinbase, settled and dropped the Ripple case, and closed its investigation into Robinhood.³¹

Asked directly about his family's foreign business dealings, Trump said: "I found out nobody cared, and I'm allowed to".³² That is the ethos of this administration, stated plainly. The question is whether we agree.

WHO PROTECTS YOU?

The FTC exists to protect consumers - you - from being ripped off, misled or squeezed by companies with too much power. It also keeps markets competitive, which keeps prices down. But pay-to-play corruption does not stop at pardons and contracts. When a company donates to the president and then receives a favorable merger approval or a dropped enforcement act, the system designed to protect the public against the powerful breaks down entirely.

Right now the FTC answers to the president. That is the problem. Trump fired the FTC's two Democratic commissioners in March 2025, leaving only loyalists.³³ A court ruled it illegal. The

²⁵ [Brennan Center for Justice](#), "How Weak Federal Ethics Laws Enable Presidential Profiteering" (March 2026)

²⁶ [American Bar Association](#), "The Trump Administration's Rampant Pay-to-Play Corruption Threatens Our Democracy" (March 2026)

²⁷ [The New York Times](#), "Why Vietnam Ignored Its Own Laws to Fast-Track a Trump Family Golf Complex" (May 2025)

²⁸ [Center for Strategic & International Studies](#), "The Latest on Southeast Asia: Tariff Deal with Vietnam" (July 2025)

²⁹ [CBS News](#), "Trump unveils new Air Force One" (June 2026)

³⁰ [Fortune](#), "Crypto firms gave \$18M to Trump's inauguration" (April 2025)

³¹ [Decrypt](#), "SEC and Ripple End Appeals" (August 2025)

³² [The New York Times](#), "Trump Says He Has No Issue With His Family's Foreign Business Deals" (January 2026)

³³ [Wall Street Journal](#), "Trump Fires Two Democratic FTC Commissioners" (March 2025)

Supreme Court blocked the lower court's order, and a decision to give the president the power to fire regulators across roughly two dozen independent agencies is expected any day now.³⁴ When the president can fire your consumer watchdog for ruling against his donors, it isn't a regulator anymore. It's a rubber stamp.

WHAT WE WILL DO ABOUT IT

- Require any president to divest from or place into a blind trust all personal business interests upon taking office. The president is exempt from conflict-of-interest law.³⁵ That changes.
- Require disgorgement of any profits traced to a pay-to-play transaction received by a president, vice president, or senior official. No exceptions.
- Federal law already lets agencies void decisions tainted by bribery - but only after a criminal conviction.³⁶ Lower that bar to civil evidence, and any regulatory favor that was bought gets re-examined. That includes merger approvals.
- Hardwire regulatory independence through ring-fenced budgets, supermajority removal requirements, and a mandatory bipartisan composition. You cannot protect consumers with a watchdog on a president's leash.

The Oval Office is not a business opportunity. And the American people deserve a government that serves them, not itself.

THE CHOICE BEFORE US

Every policy in this plan rests on the same conviction: that public office is a public trust, not a personal investment account. Whether it is a senator funneling contracts to her own husband, a member of Congress trading on secrets the rest of us will never see, a four-star general cashing in at a defense contractor, or a senator's seat bought and paid for by out-of-state billionaires - the pattern is the same, and so is the fix. Close the loophole. Raise the penalty. Make corruption cost more than it pays.

MAINE DESERVES A SENATOR WHO WORKS FOR THE PEOPLE WHO ACTUALLY LIVE HERE - NOT THE BILLIONAIRES WHO DON'T.

³⁴ [ScotusBlog](#), "Supreme Court allows Trump to fire FTC commissioner" (December 2025)

³⁵ [Harvard Journal on Legislation](#), "It is All About the Money: Presidential Conflicts of Interest"

³⁶ [U.S. Federal Acquisition Regulation, Subpart 3.7](#) - Voiding and Rescinding Contracts (March 2026)