

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM

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WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

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<https://oversight.house.gov>

July 14, 2021

The Honorable David Ferriero
Archivist of the United States
National Archives and Records Administration
8601 Adelphi Road
College Park, MD 20740

Dear Mr. Ferriero:

Reports regarding President Joseph R. Biden, Jr.'s family members attempting to profit from their proximity to the White House have been disturbing and recurring. Unfortunately, these reports of President Biden using his former official positions of public trust to swell the coffers of his family members are widespread, and any hope the pattern of family self-dealing would finally stop when he assumed the presidency has been dashed.¹

Reporting indicates the President's son, Hunter Biden, a former lawyer and lobbyist tied to a string of opaque business dealings with China, Mexico, and Ukraine, has recast himself as an "undiscovered artist" living comfortably in the Hollywood Hills.² According to the *Washington Post*, Hunter Biden is now attempting to sell his artwork at extravagant prices, from \$75,000 for works on paper to "\$500,000 [for] large paintings."³

The prices for these paintings—by someone with no formal training or history as an artist—raise questions about whether the art is being offered for its merit or its connection to the White House. As one gallery owner said, "[A]nybody who buys it would be guaranteed instant profit . . . He's the president's son."⁴ And though the price of art is dependent on subjective tastes, one art consultant said that while he is "not a fan" of Mr. Biden's work, he is nonetheless

¹ See, e.g., Peter Schweizer, *Inside the Shady Private Equity Firm Run by Kerry and Biden's Kids*, N.Y. POST (Mar. 15, 2018), available at <https://nypost.com/2018/03/15/inside-the-shady-private-equity-firm-run-by-kerry-and-bidens-kids/>.

² Adam Popescu, *There's a New Artist in Town. The Name is Biden.*, N.Y. TIMES (Feb. 28, 2020), available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/28/arts/design/hunter-biden-art.html>.

³ Matt Viser, *Deal of the Art: White House Grapples with Ethics of Hunter Biden's Pricey Paintings*, WASH. POST (Jul. 8, 2021), available at https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/deal-of-the-art-white-house-grapples-with-ethics-of-hunter-bidens-pricey-paintings/2021/07/07/97e0528c-da72-11eb-9bbb-37c30dcf9363_story.html.

⁴ Nicholas Conca, Jessica Sonkin, and Kate Sheehy, *Hunter Biden's Artwork is Actually Good and Will be Worth a Lot, Experts Say*, N.Y. POST (Jun. 15, 2021), available at <https://nypost.com/2021/06/15/hunter-bidens-artwork-is-actually-good-experts-say/>.

“very positive that he’s gonna do well in the market because this industry is very much about, what’s a simple way to put this – it’s like clout.”⁵

The hidden nature of art purchasers and the difficult question of pricing art has made it a well-known tool for money laundering and other illicit activities. As the Senate’s Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations uncovered last year, “The art industry is the largest legal, unregulated market in the United States.”⁶ As the Senate report makes clear, at least since the Obama administration Russian oligarchs have “used transactions involving high-value art to evade sanctions imposed on them by the United States[.]”⁷

The anonymity surrounding Hunter Biden’s art sales is especially susceptible to fraud because “[a] foreign government could front someone to make a purchase... Art purchases are notoriously hard to track, and last year the Treasury Department warned that the secondary market for high value art, and the anonymity of purchasers, could allow foreigners to circumvent sanctions and gain access to the U.S. economy.”⁸

Walter Shaub, former Office of Government Ethics director under President Obama, said, “Because we don’t know who is paying for this art and we don’t know for sure that [Hunter Biden] knows, we have no way of monitoring whether people are buying access to the White House... What these people are paying for is Hunter Biden’s last name.”⁹ The public has a right to know how President Biden and his son intend to keep separate the interests of the American people from the earnings of President Biden’s family members.

This pattern—which appears to be nothing short of a cash-grab—continues beyond President Biden’s children. Just last week, it was reported that Valerie Biden Owens, the President’s “sister, confidante, and longtime political strategist,” will publish a book presumably detailing her time as “The Joe Biden Whisperer.”¹⁰ The publisher, Celadon Books, did not disclose “financial terms.” The nontransparent nature of the transaction raises questions about what exactly is *not* available to be monetized as it relates to President Biden’s time in the White House.

Unfortunately, this is a familiar story. In January, it was reported President Biden’s brother, Francis “Frank” Biden, “promoted his relationship to the commander-in-chief in an

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ The Art Industry and U.S. Policies that Undermine Sanctions, Staff Report, Permanent Subcomm. on Investigations (2020), *available at* <https://www.hsgac.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/2020-07-29%20PSI%20Staff%20Report%20-%20The%20Art%20Industry%20and%20U.S.%20Policies%20that%20Undermine%20Sanctions.pdf>.

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ Viser, *supra* note 3.

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ Hillel Italie, *Valerie Biden Owens, the President’s Sister, Has a Book Deal*, ASSOC. PRESS. (Jun. 24, 2021), *available at* <https://apnews.com/article/joe-biden-valerie-biden-owens-entertainment-government-and-politics-arts-and-entertainment-46752afe6875e0cd0285d16676238c16>.

Inauguration Day advertisement for the law firm he advises.”¹¹ In an ad taking aim at Florida’s sugar companies, Frank Biden, who joined the firm as a non-lawyer senior adviser in July 2018,¹² appears alongside quotes regarding his relationship with President Biden. Abandoning any pretense of subtlety, Frank Biden brags in the ad that, “[t]he two Biden brothers have long held a commitment to pushing environmental issues to the forefront.”¹³ When CNBC inquired whether the firm would continue to use the Biden name in future ads, the firm provided no response to that question and, instead, painted Frank Biden as a “champion for social justice” and committed to fighting against “corporate behemoths that prey on the little guy.”¹⁴

The Biden Family Has a Pattern of Trading on Official Government Business

Details continue to unfold about Joe Biden’s history of alleged influence peddling while serving as a Senator and Vice President. Recent reporting indicates that in 2014, then-Vice President Biden hosted Hunter Biden’s business associates, including Mexican billionaire Carlos Slim, in the Vice President’s office. In 2016, while Vice President, Joe Biden flew Hunter Biden and his business associate, Jeff Cooper, on Air Force 2 to Mexico City where Hunter attended meetings regarding a business deal.¹⁵ As reported, this “[a]s bare in photographs and emails on Hunter’s abandoned laptop...the latest in a growing body of evidence calling into question the president’s claim that he never spoke about business with Hunter.”¹⁶

Investigative reporting—aptly titled “Biden Inc.”—has noted how “[o]ver his decades in office, ‘Middle-Class Joe’s’ family fortunes have closely tracked his political career.”¹⁷ Among a wealth of other stories, the piece begins by detailing the late summer of 2006 when the President’s sons, Hunter and Beau, showed up to the recently purchased Paradigm Global Advisors (purchased by Hunter and then-Senator Biden’s other brother, James), fired the president of the company, and had “two large men escort[] the fund’s president out of the firm’s midtown Manhattan office[.]”¹⁸ According to an executive present at the time, James Biden told the company “Don’t worry about investors...We’ve got people all around the world who want to invest in Joe Biden.”¹⁹ This executive explained how “James Biden made it clear he viewed the fund as a way to take money from rich foreigners who could not legally give money to his older

¹¹ Brian Schwartz, *Biden Brother Touts Relationship with President in Inauguration Day Ad for Law Firm*, CNBC (Jan. 27, 2021), available at <https://www.cnbc.com/2021/01/27/biden-brother-touts-relationship-with-president-in-inauguration-day-ad-for-law-firm.html>.

¹² Ryan Nicol, *Law Firm Advised by Joe Biden’s Brother Takes Aim at Florida Sugar Companies*, FLAPOL (June 5, 2019), available at <https://floridapolitics.com/archives/297963-law-firm-a-bidens-brother-florida-sugar>.

¹³ *Supra*, note 8.

¹⁴ *Id.*

¹⁵ Josh Boswell, *Joe Biden Entertained Hunter’s Mexican Billionaire Business Associates in the Vice President’s Office in 2014 and Even Flew with His Son to Mexico City on Air Force 2 so Hunter Could Attend Meetings Over a ‘Flippin Gigantic’ Deal*, DAILY MAIL (Jun. 30, 2021), available at <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-9678005/Joe-Biden-entertained-Hunters-billionaire-business-associates-vice-presidents-office.html>.

¹⁶ *Id.*

¹⁷ Ben Schreckinger, *Biden Inc.*, POLITICO (Aug. 2, 2019), available at <https://www.politico.com/magazine/story/2019/08/02/joe-biden-investigation-hunter-brother-hedge-fund-money-2020-campaign-227407>.

¹⁸ *Id.*

¹⁹ *Id.*

brother or his campaign account,” and that Beau Biden told his uncle “This can never leave this room, and if you ever say it again, I will have nothing to do with this.”²⁰

In February 2011, while Joe Biden was Vice President, Frank Biden urged the Palm Beach County School Board to approve a charter school proposal from a for-profit company for which he was president, Mavericks in Education.²¹ A Mavericks press release about the eventual approval denoted Frank Biden as “Mavericks High’s Frank Biden (brother of Vice President Joe Biden).”²² Frank Biden has said his last name was important because people associate the Biden family name with “taking care of people who need help.”²³ Frank Biden has also said that the name is “a tremendous asset” and that he “enjoy[s] automatic acceptance or at least listening to what I have to say.”²⁴ At the time, his Twitter biography described him as “President and founder of Cygnus International LLC, a real estate development and consulting firm; brother of US Vice President, Joe Biden.”²⁵

In 2013, President Biden and his son Hunter visited Beijing, China, on a trip comprised of both official and unofficial meetings and events. NBC News has reported that, contemporaneous to the trip, Hunter Biden was “forming a Chinese private equity fund that associates said at the time was planning to raise big money, including from China.”²⁶ Ten days after the trip, Shanghai authorities issued a business license for the new fund.²⁷

The Biden Family Profiteering Must Stop

The recent revelations of Biden family members again trading on President Biden’s name is an inauspicious beginning to a presidency purportedly aimed at cultivating trust, unity, and honesty. To understand the extent of the Biden family’s use of its connection to the President to enrich itself, please produce the following information to the Committee by July 28, 2021:

1. All documents and communications between the Executive Office of the President or Office of the Vice President and members or associates of the Biden family referring or relating to the 2013 trip to China and the 2016 trip to Mexico; and
2. All documents and communications referring or relating to any security incidents on Air Force Two during the 2013 trip to China and the 2016 trip to Mexico.

²⁰ *Id.*

²¹ Valerie Strauss, *Brother of VP Biden Promotes Charters, Invoking Family Name*, WASH. POST (Dec. 10, 2011), available at https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/answer-sheet/post/brother-of-vp-biden-promotes-charters-invoking-family-name/2011/11/22/gIQAnhLFfO_blog.html.

²² *Id.*

²³ *Id.*

²⁴ *Id.*

²⁵ *Id.*

²⁶ Joe Lederman, *Bidens’ Trip to China with Son Hunter in 2013 Comes Under New Scrutiny*, NBC NEWS (Oct. 2, 2019), available at <https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/2020-election/biden-s-trip-china-son-hunter-2013-comes-under-new-n1061051>.

²⁷ *Id.*

The Honorable David Ferriero

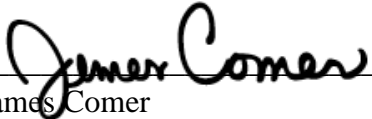
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The Committee on Oversight and Reform is the principal oversight Committee of the U.S. House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate “any matter” at “any time” under House Rule X.

If you have any questions about this request, please contact Committee staff at (202) 225-5074. Thank you for your cooperation with this inquiry.

Sincerely,



James Comer

Ranking Member

Committee on Oversight and Reform



Jody Hice

Ranking Member

Subcommittee on Government
Operations



Glenn S. Grothman

Ranking Member

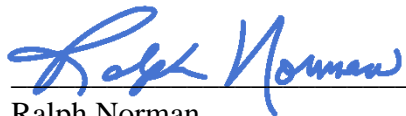
Subcommittee on National Security



Michael Cloud

Ranking Member

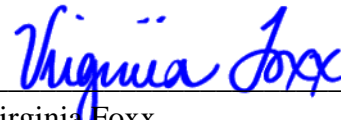
Subcommittee on Economic and
Consumer Policy



Ralph Norman

Ranking Member

Subcommittee on Environment



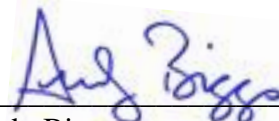
Virginia Foxx

Member of Congress



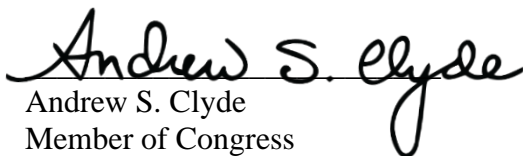
Fred Keller

Member of Congress



Andy Biggs

Member of Congress



Andrew S. Clyde

Member of Congress



Jake LaTurner

Member of Congress

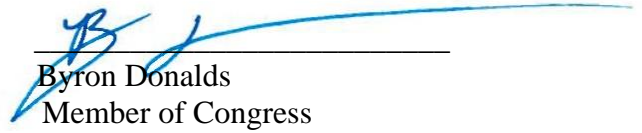
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Pat Fallon
Member of Congress



Byron Donalds
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable Carolyn Maloney, Chairwoman
Committee on Oversight and Reform

The Honorable Gerald E. Connolly, Chairman
Subcommittee on Government Operations

The Honorable Stephen F. Lynch, Chairman
Subcommittee on National Security

The Honorable Raja Krishnamoorthi, Chairman
Subcommittee on Economic and Consumer Policy

The Honorable Ro Khanna
Subcommittee on Environment