

FRAUD AS PRETEXT:

How the Trump Administration Sacrificed
Accountability to Push a Violent, Lawless Agenda

DEMOCRATIC STAFF REPORT

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM
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I. OVERVIEW

More than three years after the first indictments in the Feeding Our Future case, Oversight Committee Republicans are once again relitigating a fraud scheme that is being aggressively investigated and prosecuted by federal and state authorities. Rather than advancing meaningful oversight, this inquiry singles out Minnesota for political purposes while ignoring comparable fraud in other states. The facts demonstrate that Minnesota officials partnered with law enforcement, strengthened safeguards, and helped bring perpetrators to justice—undermining the central premise of this investigation.

Committee Republicans amplified their investigation into social services fraud in Minnesota after right-wing YouTuber Nick Shirley posted a viral video in December 2025 claiming, without proof, to have unearthed widespread fraud within the state’s child care centers.¹ This video, and the national conversation that followed, has been used by the Trump Administration to scapegoat members of Minnesota’s Somali community and to justify sending thousands of federal agents into Minneapolis, where they have executed a violent and deadly crackdown on immigrants, protestors, and anyone they believe does not support President Trump’s agenda.²

Republicans’ targeting of Minnesota also comes despite ample evidence of fraud in Republican-run states. Mississippi, Oklahoma, Alabama, and Florida have ongoing fraud investigations and documented issues with people defrauding federal programs, yet Committee Republicans have not launched an investigation into any of those states.³

¹ YouTube, *I Investigated Minnesota’s Billion Dollar Fraud Scandal* (online at www.youtube.com/watch?v=r8AulCA1aOQ) (Dec. 26, 2025).

² See *Six Prosecutors Quit Over Push to Investigate ICE Shooting Victim’s Widow*, New York Times (Jan. 13, 2026) (online at www.nytimes.com/2026/01/13/us/prosecutors-doj-resignation-ice-shooting.html).

³ For example: in Mississippi, there is an ongoing trial for \$77 million in welfare fraud; in Texas and Florida, federal prosecutors recently arrested a Russian citizen accused of submitting billions of dollars in fraudulent claims and funneling millions overseas; Oklahoma and Alabama lead the nation in SNAP fraud; and Governor Ron DeSantis of Florida recently reappointed a University of Florida Board Trustee who faces charges for defrauding the federal government of federal financial aid funds. See, e.g., *Welfare Grift from Minnesota to Mississippi*, Wall Street Journal (Jan. 8, 2026) (online at www.wsj.com/opinion/welfare-fraud-minnesota-mississippi-republicans-15805c6a); *Mississippi Auditor Warns Welfare Fraud is “Incredibly Easy” as \$77M Trial Begins*, Fox News (Jan. 6, 2026) (online at www.foxnews.com/media/mississippi-auditor-warns-welfare-fraud-incredibly-easy-77m-trial-begins); *Russian-Run Texas Medical Supplier at Center of Massive Medicare Billing Scheme, Feds Say*, CBS News (Feb. 24, 2026) (online at www.cbsnews.com/texas/news/russian-run-texas-medical-supplier-massive-medicare-billing-scheme-feds-say); Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs, *Among States That Have Reported Data, Oklahoma Leads the Nation in Food-Stamp Fraud* (Dec. 5, 2025) (online at <https://ocpathink.org/post/independent-journalism/among-states-that-have-reported-data-oklahoma-leads-the-nation-in-food-stamp-fraud>); *Alabama Leads Nation in SNAP Fraud with \$10 Million Stolen; Secure EBT Chip Cards Coming*, ABC News (Dec. 30, 2025) (online at <https://abc3340.com/news/local/alabama-leads-nation-in-snap-fraud-10-million-stolen-secure-chip-cards-to-help>); *DeSantis Reappoints Heavener to UF Board Amid Federal Fraud Allegations*, The Gainesville Sun (Jan. 8, 2026) (online at www.gainesville.com/story/news/education/campus/2026/01/08/bill-heavener-reappointed-to).

Fraud in federal social services programs occurs in all 50 states and demands a comprehensive, aggressive, and evidence-based approach to safeguarding taxpayer dollars and bringing fraudsters to justice.⁴ Yet Republicans on the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform have launched an investigation into occurrences of social services fraud exclusively within the State of Minnesota. In particular, Chairman Comer has alleged without evidence that Governor Tim Walz and Attorney General Keith Ellison failed to act after “Minnesota officials saw early signs of fraud within Feeding Our Future but failed to intervene.”⁵ Notably, this investigation is not the first time Committee Republicans have targeted Governor Walz when it was politically expedient to do so. In August 2024, Committee Republicans launched a separate failed investigation into Governor Walz several weeks after presidential candidate Kamala Harris announced he would be her running mate against Donald Trump in the 2024 election.⁶

States should remain vigilant about fraud, and federal and state funds should always carry robust oversight and fraud control mechanisms. Minnesota’s Feeding our Future fraud scandal occurred during the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic, when states quickly deployed federal funds to keep children from going hungry when they no longer had access to school meals. In hindsight, states and the federal government have learned lessons from the rapid emergency expansion of federal programs, including the need for more robust fraud controls that prevent fraud from occurring in the first place. Committee Democrats support ongoing federal oversight and investigative work to investigate, prosecute and recover funds from those who committed pandemic-era fraud, including strengthening program payment integrity and implementing fraud risk frameworks as recommended by the Government Accountability Office (GAO).⁷

university-of-florida-board-of-trustees/88083484007).

⁴ *Influencer, White House Welfare Fraud Claims Are Distorted, But the System Has Risks*, NPR (Jan. 10, 2026) (online at www.npr.org/2026/01/10/nx-s1-5672684/benefits-fraud-unlawful-accusation-new-york-california-colorado-social-services); See, e.g., U.S. Department of Justice, *Press Release: National Health Care Fraud Takedown Results in 324 Defendants Charged in Connection with Over \$14.6 Billion in Alleged Fraud* (Jun. 30, 2025) (online at www.justice.gov/opa/pr/national-health-care-fraud-takedown-results-324-defendants-charged-connection-over-146); Government Accountability Office, *Combating Fraud: Approaches to Evaluate Effectiveness and Demonstrate Integrity* (Jan. 2026) (GAO-26-107609) (online at <https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-26-107609.pdf>).

⁵ Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, *Press Release: Chairman Comer Launches Investigation into Massive Fraud in Minnesota’s Social Services System on Governor Walz’s Watch* (Dec. 3, 2025) (online at <https://oversight.house.gov/release/chairman-comer-launches-investigation-into-massive-fraud-in-minnesotas-social-services-system-on-governor-walzs-watch/>); Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, *Press Release: Comer Expands Investigation into Widespread Fraud Uncovered in Minnesota Government Programs* (Dec. 22, 2025) (online at <https://oversight.house.gov/release/comer-expands-investigation-into-widespread-fraud-uncovered-in-minnesota-government-programs/>).

⁶ See *GOP’s Comer Launches Investigation into Walz’s “Engagement” With China*, ABC News (Aug. 16, 2024) (online at <https://abcnews.com/Politics/gops-comer-launches-investigation-walzs-engagement-china/story?id=112896060>).

⁷ See, e.g., Government Accountability Office, *COVID-19 Relief: Consequences of Fraud and Lessons for Prevention* (Apr. 9, 2025) (GAO-25-107746) (online at www.gao.gov/assets/gao-25-107746.pdf).

II. KEY TAKEAWAYS

- A. Federal fraud prosecutors recognized the Walz Administration as an important partner in fighting fraud in Minnesota’s social services programs.**
- B. Witnesses testified that Governor Walz and Attorney General Ellison take fraud seriously and did not support Republican claims that Governor Walz or Attorney General Ellison ignored fraud or directed them to ignore fraud.**
 - 1. Witnesses uniformly rejected unsubstantiated whistleblower claims raised by Republicans on the Walz Administration’s handling of fraud.
 - 2. Witnesses provided details on the fraud control measures, partnerships, and efforts the Walz Administration has pursued to combat evolving fraud threats.
- C. Working families will suffer if Republicans continue to use fraud as a pretext to cut access to Medicaid, child care funding, and other programs.**
- D. Committee Republicans’ investigation appears to be providing cover for the egregious human and constitutional rights violations committed by the Trump Administration in the name of addressing fraud.**
 - 1. Trump’s surge of thousands of immigration enforcement officers to Minnesota was allegedly to fight fraud, but instead, directly obliterated fraud investigation and prosecution efforts in the state.
 - 2. Committee Republicans claim to be concerned about fraud yet were silent as President Trump pardoned dozens of fraudsters and gutted the offices responsible for fighting fraud, abuse, and corruption.
 - 3. The Trump Administration is trying to use its alleged response to fraud in Minnesota as leverage to seize the state’s voter rolls.

III. BACKGROUND

Since at least 2022, federal prosecutors have been investigating a series of social services fraud schemes perpetrated within Minnesota, totaling approximately \$1 billion in stolen taxpayer funds that never reached its intended recipients. More than 90 people have been charged and at least 59 people have been convicted across three key fraud schemes:

- The Minneapolis-based nonprofit Feeding Our Future took advantage of expanded access to federal nutrition benefits during the COVID-19 pandemic to use federal funding to buy luxury goods instead of feeding tens of thousands of Minnesota children;

- Certain social services providers falsely certified children as qualifying for autism treatment in order to steal public funds and provide kickbacks to the children’s parents; and
- Hundreds of social services providers falsely claimed to have provided services to people at risk for homelessness.⁸

These schemes represent a corrupt and unconscionable effort to divert critically needed resources away from children and vulnerable people. Oversight Democrats strongly support efforts to prevent fraud, punish fraudsters, and ensure the integrity of social benefits programs.

While many of the defendants in these investigations are of Somali descent, and some are Somali immigrants, the vast majority of those charged in these fraudulent schemes are American citizens.⁹ Notably, the founder and executive director of Feeding Our Future and ringleader of the fraud scheme, Aimee Bock, is not Somali.¹⁰

As part of the Oversight Committee’s investigation into fraud in Minnesota, Chairman Comer called for transcribed interviews in January and February 2026 with current and former administrators within the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE), which oversaw the programs defrauded by Feeding Our Future, and Department of Human Services (DHS), responsible for the autism and housing assistance programs that were defrauded.¹¹ The Oversight Committee conducted interviews with:

- **Emily Honer**, Director of Nutrition Program Services at MDE
- **Daron Korte**, Assistant Commissioner of MDE

⁸ *What to Know About Minnesota's "Industrial-Scale Fraud" Scandal, as More Charges Are Filed and Trump Weighs In*, CBS News (Dec. 19, 2025) (online at www.cbsnews.com/news/what-to-know-minnesota-fraud-scandal-more-charges-filed-trump-walz/); *How Fraud Swamped Minnesota’s Social Services System on Tim Walz’s Watch*, New York Times (Nov. 29, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/2025/11/29/us/fraud-minnesota-somali.html); *Prosecutors Say Minnesota’s Fraud Scandal Goes Further Than Previously Known*, New York Times (Dec. 18, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/2025/12/18/us/minnesota-fraud-scandal.html).

⁹ *How Fraud Swamped Minnesota’s Social Services System on Tim Walz’s Watch*, New York Times (Nov. 29, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/2025/11/29/us/fraud-minnesota-somali.html).

¹⁰ *Aimee Bock, “Mastermind” of Minnesota’s Biggest Fraud Scheme, Says “I Wish I Could Go Back and Do Things Differently*, CBS News (Jan. 20, 2026) (www.cbsnews.com/news/aimee-bock-minnesota-fraud-feeding-our-future-interview/).

¹¹ Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, *Press Release: Comer Expands Investigation Into Widespread Fraud Uncovered in Minnesota Government Programs* (Dec. 22, 2025) (online at <https://oversight.house.gov/release/comer-expands-investigation-into-widespread-fraud-uncovered-in-minnesota-government-programs/>); Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, *Press Release: Chairman Comer Widens Investigation into Fraud in Minnesota’s Social Services Programs* (Jan. 23, 2026) (online at <https://oversight.house.gov/release/chairman-comer-widens-investigation-into-fraud-in-minnesotas-social-services-programs/?highlight=gandhi>).

- **Mary Cathryn Ricker**, Former Commissioner of MDE
- **Dave Greeman**, Former Chief Financial Officer of DHS
- **Eric Grumdahl**, Former Assistant Commissioner for Homelessness and Housing Supports at DHS
- **Jodi Harpstead**, Former Commissioner of DHS
- **Tony Lourey**, Former Commissioner of DHS
- **Shireen Gandhi**, Commissioner of DHS ¹²

The Oversight Committee also conducted a transcribed interview with **Chris Schmitter**, former Chief of Staff to Governor Walz. After nine transcribed interviews, there is *no evidence* to suggest that Governor Walz and Attorney General Ellison ignored or covered up fraud concerns in Minnesota and *no evidence* to suggest Minnesota failed to investigate fraud and hold fraudsters accountable.

IV. FINDINGS

A. **Federal Fraud Prosecutors Recognized the Walz Administration as an Important Partner in Fighting Fraud in Minnesota’s Social Services Programs**

The fraud scheme perpetuated by Feeding Our Future was complex, ruthless, and required vast amounts of specialized skill and resources to investigate and prosecute. On September 20, 2022, when the Department of Justice (DOJ) announced federal charges against 47 defendants in the scheme, then-U.S. Attorney for the District of Minnesota Andrew Luger recognized that it took “skilled investigators and prosecutors who unraveled the lies, deception, and mountains of false documentation to bring this complex case to light.”¹³

The Walz Administration was an integral partner in this process. At a press conference on the indictments, U.S. Attorney Luger specifically noted that it was MDE who brought this case to the FBI. He also detailed the extraordinary challenges MDE pushed through in working to bring the truth to light:

Given the number of sites and the astounding number of meals the defendants claim to be serving, MDE employees raised questions, suspicions, and concerns with Bock. At times, as set forth in the indictments, Bock would simply lie to MDE that she was monitoring

¹² Shireen Gandhi was Temporary Commissioner at the time of her transcribed interview and was appointed Commissioner of DHS on February 23, 2026.

¹³ U.S. Department of Justice, *Press Release: U.S. Attorney Announces Federal Charges Against 47 Defendants in \$250 Million Feeding Our Future Fraud Scheme* (Sept. 20, 2022) (online at www.justice.gov/archives/opa/pr/us-attorney-announces-federal-charges-against-47-defendants-250-million-feeding-our-future).

the sites and that Feeding Our Future employees were working at the sites to make sure that the meal counts were accurate. When MDE employees persisted, Bock struck back, accusing them of discriminating against Feeding Our Future sites. Now despite this, MDE employees continued to push back on Bock accusing the employees of discriminating against the sites. All of this, the indictment alleges, was simply part of the scheme to cover up the fraud and keep the money flowing to Feeding Our Future and the sites it sponsored.¹⁴

Also at the press conference, Michael Paul, the Special Agent in charge of the FBI's Minneapolis field office, offered recognition and thanks to "the Minnesota Department of Education for their cooperation and their continued transparency throughout the investigation. This case represents persistence, patience, and dedication."¹⁵ When asked if the alleged fraud expanded beyond Minnesota to other states, Associate Deputy Attorney General Kevin Chambers stated, "As you might imagine, while this scheme is complex, there's nothing unique or special about Minnesota which means that it could only occur here now."¹⁶

B. Witnesses Testified that Governor Walz and Attorney General Ellison Take Fraud Seriously and Did Not Support Republican Claims that Governor Walz or Attorney General Ellison Ignored Fraud or Directed Them to Ignore Fraud

In response to questions as to whether Governor Walz or Attorney General Ellison ignored or directed them to ignore fraud within Minnesota's social services programs, the witnesses repeatedly confirmed that no such disregard for fraud had occurred. They also confirmed that both Governor Walz and Attorney General Ellison take fraud control and prevention seriously. For example, when asked whether Governor Walz or Attorney General Ellison asked him to ignore fraud in any programs administered by DHS, Former DHS Commissioner Tony Lourey replied, "absolutely not."¹⁷ He emphasized, "From day one, the Walz Administration [. . .] took fraud concerns very seriously, and was a partner in working toward delivery of services that prevented fraud."¹⁸

According to Mr. Schmitter, Governor Walz had a "deep-seated disdain" for fraud and indicated that any time a "dollar is spent on fraud" Minnesota had to do more to prevent that. He described how Governor Walz was quick to approve shutting down Minnesota's Housing Stabilization Services program following a meeting with then-Acting U.S Attorney Joe

¹⁴ *Press Conference: U.S. Attorney for the District of Minnesota Announces Federal Charges Against 47 Defendants in \$250 Million Feeding Our Future Fraud Scheme*, U.S. Department of Justice (Sept. 20, 2022) (online at www.justice.gov/archives/opa/video/us-attorney-district-minnesota-announces-federal-charges-against-47-defendants-250-million).

¹⁵ *Id.*

¹⁶ *Id.*

¹⁷ Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Transcribed Interview of Tony Lourey (Feb. 2026).

¹⁸ Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Transcribed Interview of Tony Lourey (Feb. 2026).

Thompson in which Thompson expressed concerns about fraud within the program in the summer of 2025.¹⁹

When asked whether Attorney General Ellison chose to ignore allegations of fraud within Minnesota medical assistance programs, Former Assistant Commissioner Grumdahl said, “quite the contrary,” and emphasized that Minnesota has a Medicaid fraud control unit within the Attorney General’s office.²⁰ Indeed, Minnesota has consistently prosecuted fraud since Governor Walz and Attorney General Ellison took office in 2019. Under Attorney General Ellison’s leadership, the Minnesota Medicaid Fraud Control Unit has prosecuted more than 300 cases of Medicaid fraud and won more than \$80 million in restitution and recoveries for Minnesota taxpayers.²¹ Working alongside the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of the Inspector General, the Office of the Minnesota Attorney General has been prosecuting individuals who defrauded the state’s Housing Stabilization Services program and the state’s Early Intensive Developmental and Behavior Intervention program—which allowed Minnesotans to use Medicaid benefits for housing stabilization and autism behavioral health services, respectively.²²

Governor Walz signed comprehensive anti-fraud legislation into law during Minnesota’s 2023-2025 legislative session and expanded state agencies’ authority to stop fraudulent payments. The Walz Administration also established the Financial Crimes and Fraud Section within the Minnesota Bureau of Criminal Apprehension.²³ On September 17, 2025, Governor Walz issued an executive order directing Minnesota state agencies to “intensify efforts to prevent, detect, and combat fraud across Minnesota government programs,” building on these prior reforms.²⁴ According to Governor Walz, “We have no tolerance for fraud in the State of Minnesota,” and “[i]f you commit fraud in Minnesota, you will be prosecuted and held accountable to the fullest extent of the law.”²⁵ Democratic staff have found no evidence to contradict these statements during the course of the Oversight Committee’s investigation.

¹⁹ Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Transcribed Interview of Chris Schmitter (Feb. 2026).

²⁰ Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Transcribed Interview of Eric Grumdahl (Feb. 2026).

²¹ Office of the Minnesota Attorney General, *Press Release: Attorney General Ellison Announces Over \$3 Million in Fraud Charges Against Medicaid Provider* (Jan. 14, 2026) (online at www.ag.state.mn.us/Office/Communications/2026/01/14_MedicaidFraud.asp).

²² The Office of the Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison, *Press Release: Attorney General Ellison Partners with Federal Law Enforcement on Indictments of Housing Stabilization Services and Early Intensive Developmental and Behavioral Intervention Providers* (Dec. 18, 2025) (online at www.ag.state.mn.us/Office/Communications/2025/12/18_HSS.asp); *What To Know About Minnesota's "Industrial-Scale Fraud" Scandal, As More Charges Are Filed And Trump Weighs In*, CBS News (Dec. 19, 2025) (online at www.cbsnews.com/news/what-to-know-minnesota-fraud-scandal-more-charges-filed-trump-walz/).

²³ Office of Governor Tim Walz & Lt. Governor Peggy Flanagan, *Press Release: Governor Walz Issues Executive Order Directing State Agencies to Take Additional Steps to Continue Combating Fraud* (Sept. 17, 2025) (online at <https://mn.gov/governor/newsroom/press-releases/?id=1055-706056>).

²⁴ *Id.*

²⁵ *Id.*

1. *Witnesses uniformly rejected unsubstantiated whistleblower claims raised by Republicans about the Walz Administration's handling of fraud concerns*

The witnesses uniformly rejected a number of unsubstantiated whistleblower claims raised by Committee Republicans regarding the Walz Administration's handling of fraud in MDE and DHS programs: (1) that the Walz Administration instructed officials to prioritize getting funds out the door during the pandemic over verifying that the recipients of those funds were legitimate; (2) that whistleblowers were retaliated against for trying to report fraud; and (3) that officials were discouraged from questioning funding to certain programs because of concerns they would be labeled as racist. For example:

- All witnesses said they were unaware of any instances of retaliation against whistleblowers within MDE or DHS.
- Former MDE Commissioner Ricker testified that in her experience, both getting funding out the door quickly and preventing funding from reaching illegitimate providers were important: "It was important to follow through on these programs so that they got to their intended recipients, and it was important to follow the guidance or the expectations of those programs at the same time."²⁶
- Former DHS Commissioner Lourey confirmed a similar experience during his tenure, stating "[he] did not share the opinion that the Walz Administration cared more about getting money out the door than fraud prevention."²⁷
- Assistant Commissioner Korte pushed back against allegations that whistleblowers would be labeled racist: "It was never anything that happened internally at MDE," but rather, the agency was "being criticized externally for discrimination and racial bias by Feeding our Future. But there were never any warnings that were issued internally to change [MDE's] behavior as a result of that."²⁸

Current and former DHS employees also emphasized that the agency took fraud concerns raised by employees seriously and protects internal whistleblowers. For example, Commissioner Gandhi said, "whistleblowers are very important to DHS. When people raise concerns or complaints, it's very important to take those seriously."²⁹

²⁶ Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Transcribed Interview of Mary Cathryn Ricker (Feb. 2026).

²⁷ Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Transcribed Interview of Tony Lourey (Feb. 2026).

²⁸ Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Transcribed Interview of Daron Korte (Feb. 2026).

²⁹ Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Transcribed Interview of Shireen Gandhi (Feb. 2026).

2. *Witnesses provided details on the fraud control measures, partnerships, and efforts the Walz Administration has pursued to combat evolving fraud threats*
 - a. *Witnesses testified that program integrity and fraud control are foundational to program implementation.*

Current and former Minnesota state employees interviewed by Committee staff repeatedly indicated that program integrity and fraud prevention are integral to the success of Minnesota’s social benefits programs. All current and former employees explained that fraud prevention was a key part of social benefits programs, and the Walz Administration continues to strengthen anti-fraud measures now.

According to Commissioner Gandhi, “[P]rogram integrity is [a] very important part of the mission. It is something that is always evolving. As fraud schemes evolve, as program design changes at the legislature, we always have to be strengthening program integrity, improving internal controls.”³⁰ Former Assistant Commissioner Grumdahl said, “Implementing programs well and aligned with their intent is a core part of the organization’s mission and the leadership of the organization.”³¹ Former DHS Commissioner Lourey explained that “fraud prevention is part and parcel of running a good program. If you want to serve the people well, you need to do it with program integrity, and I found [the Walz Administration] a partner in that shared goal.”³²

Current and former Minnesota employees explained that program integrity and fraud control are not one-time instruments—rather, both are something an agency is always implementing and trying to improve. As Former Chief Financial Officer of DHS Dave Greeman explained, “I think we’ve made a lot of strides in improving program integrity at the Department, but it’s something you always are working at. And you never reach it and can step back; you always have to be working towards it.”³³

Former Commissioner Harpstead explained how Minnesota DHS took concerns of widespread fraud seriously after learning of the Feeding Our Future scheme. According to Former Commissioner Harpstead:

[W]e went through the court records from the Feeding Our Future work in collaboration with the Attorney General’s office. We looked at every Child Care Assistance Program dollar, every Medicaid dollar, every grant that they might have been involved with to see what their involvement was. We found zero fraud in DHS by the people that had been indicted in Feeding Our Future. But because of the preponderance of evidence in the court records, we did disqualify individuals [associated with Feeding Our Future] from

³⁰ Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Transcribed Interview of Shireen Gandhi (Feb. 2026).

³¹ Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Transcribed Interview of Eric Grumdahl (Feb. 2026).

³² Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Transcribed Interview of Tony Lourey (Feb. 2026).

³³ Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Transcribed Interview of Dave Greeman (Feb. 2026).

working in DHS programs for 15 years, and we stopped payment in some of the organizations.³⁴

Former Commissioner Harpstead emphasized that in addition to preemptively stopping payments to people associated with Feeding Our Future after learning of fraud in that program, during her tenure as DHS Commissioner, DHS “did 4,000 investigations and stopped payment on 750 entities, either individuals or organizations.”³⁵

b. The Walz Administration worked with oversight entities, law enforcement, and federal partners to root out fraud.

Both DHS and MDE have an Office of the Inspector General (OIG) embedded within the agency. MDE established its OIG with the support of Governor Walz after the Feeding Our Future fraud allegations came to light.³⁶ All current and former DHS employees discussed the work of the OIGs and confirmed they are an important part of investigating fraud.³⁷

Minnesota DHS also works closely with the Minnesota Attorney General’s Office to root out Medicaid fraud. In October 2025, Governor Walz ordered an independent third-party billing review of 14 high-risk Medicaid services, including autism treatment services, and directed DHS to strengthen pre-payment review to ensure that improper payments are not issued to providers suspected of fraud.³⁸ Commissioner Gandhi explained that these reforms will help DHS prevent fraud before it starts because “enhanced prepayment review by an outside vendor” will help “flag concerning claims for DHS to look into,” representing a “new layer in [DHS] program integrity efforts.”³⁹

MDE also worked with appropriate state and federal authorities, including the U.S. Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Office of the Inspector General and the FBI, to detect and prevent fraud associated with Feeding Our Future. Contrary to right-wing media narratives suggesting that MDE repeatedly and deliberately failed to stop payment to fraudsters associated with Feeding Our Future from 2020 to 2022, Director Honer, Assistant Commissioner Korte, and Former Commissioner Ricker told Committee staff that MDE levied every tool in its authority to stop payment and prevent fraud. Steps MDE took to address concerns with Feeding

³⁴ Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Transcribed Interview of Jody Harpstead (Feb. 2026).

³⁵ Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Transcribed Interview of Jody Harpstead (Feb. 2026).

³⁶ See Office of Governor Tim Walz & Lt. Governor Peggy Flanagan, *Press Release: Governor Walz Issues Executive Order Directing State Agencies to Take Additional Steps to Continue Combating Fraud* (Sept. 17, 2025) (online at <https://mn.gov/governor/newsroom/press-releases/?id=1055-706056>).

³⁷ See, e.g., Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Transcribed Interview of Shireen Gandhi (Feb. 2026).

³⁸ Office of Governor Tim Walz & Lt. Governor Peggy Flanagan, *Press Release: Governor Walz Orders Third-Party Audit of Medicaid Billing at DHS* (Oct. 29, 2025) (online at <https://mn.gov/governor/newsroom/press-releases/?id=1055-711001>).

³⁹ Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Transcribed Interview of Shireen Gandhi (Feb. 2026).

Our Future included denying site applications over a variety of identified concerns, trying to stop payments to the organization, and bringing the issue to the USDA OIG and FBI.⁴⁰

However, MDE staff faced a series of challenges that, as witnesses explained, compounded one another, including:

- **Lack of essential clarity from USDA and the USDA OIG beginning in the first Trump Administration.** While Minnesota administers USDA child nutrition programs, it must comply with federal requirements and relies on USDA for program implementation guidance. However, according to Assistant Commissioner Korte, conversations between MDE and USDA were “one-sided.” MDE repeatedly reached out to USDA to express concerns about possible fraud within child nutrition programs and received inadequate responses.⁴¹ When asked about the USDA Office of Inspector General’s response to concerns that MDE raised about program irregularities, Director Honer said, “[T]he frustrating part was that it was absent.”⁴² Ms. Honer said that USDA’s inaction enabled Feeding Our Future “because the USDA and the Office of the Inspector General are supposed to be our final stop when we have used all our tools. And for that to fail not only allowed Feeding Our Future to continue, but in the matters of the lawsuit that they had against us and USDA refusing to provide support, I feel like it accelerated Feeding Our Future in feeling that they were incredibly powerful.”⁴³
- **Challenges in court that further emboldened fraudsters.** In response to the decision of a Minnesota state judge in 2021, MDE felt it was legally obligated to continue payments to Feeding our Future or be held in contempt of court.⁴⁴ When MDE took steps to stop payment to Feeding Our Future in March 2021, Feeding Our Future filed a temporary restraining order and the judge indicated that MDE’s actions were a “real problem.”⁴⁵ Assistant Commissioner Korte

⁴⁰ State of Minnesota, Office of the Legislative Auditor, *Minnesota Department of Education: Oversight of Feeding Our Future — Special Review* (June 2024) (online at www.auditor.leg.state.mn.us/sreview/pdf/2024-mdefof.pdf); *Press Conference: U.S. Attorney for the District of Minnesota Announces Federal Charges Against 47 Defendants in \$250 Million Feeding Our Future Fraud Scheme*, U.S. Department of Justice (Sept. 20, 2022) (online at www.justice.gov/archives/opa/pr/us-attorney-announces-federal-charges-against-47-defendants-250-million-feeding-our-future); Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Transcribed Interview of Emily Honer (Feb. 2026).

⁴¹ Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Transcribed Interview of Daron Korte (Feb. 2026).

⁴² Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Transcribed Interview of Emily Honer (Jan. 2026).

⁴³ Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Transcribed Interview of Emily Honer (Jan. 2026).

⁴⁴ See e.g., State of Minnesota, Office of the Legislative Auditor, *Minnesota Department of Education: Oversight of Feeding Our Future — Special Review* (June 2024) (online at www.auditor.leg.state.mn.us/sreview/pdf/2024-mdefof.pdf); Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Transcribed Interview of Emily Honer (Feb. 2026).

⁴⁵ State of Minnesota, Office of the Legislative Auditor, *Minnesota Department of Education: Oversight of Feeding Our Future — Special Review* (June 2024) (online at www.auditor.leg.state.mn.us/sreview/pdf/2024-mdefof.pdf).

discussed how the judge’s comments signaled to MDE “that there was a high likelihood that he was going to find in favor of Feeding Our Future. There was also a high likelihood that we were going to be found in contempt of court once again and have to pay attorney fee sanctions once again,” so MDE “decided to voluntarily lift the stop-pay.”⁴⁶

C. **Working Families Will Suffer if Republicans Continue to use Fraud as a Pretext to Cut Access to Medicaid, Child Care Funding, and Other Programs**

The Trump Administration is using unsubstantiated claims of widespread waste, fraud, and abuse to freeze funds for child care and other essential services and make cuts to everything from Medicaid to federal nutrition benefits that keep working families afloat and ensure children do not go hungry.⁴⁷ But the overall benefits that federal assistance programs provide for working Americans far outweigh the risks of fraud within these programs.⁴⁸

1. *Healthcare*

On February 25, 2026, the Trump Administration announced a freeze of almost \$260 million in Medicaid funding to Minnesota for specific programs. The Administration said that the funding would be withheld “until the state government takes its obligations seriously to stop the fraud that’s being perpetrated against the American taxpayer” and claimed that Minnesota was the first of several states that would be targeted by Vice President JD Vance’s new anti-fraud task force.⁴⁹

All Minnesota DHS officials interviewed by the Committee described the general importance of federal funds to the state’s Medicaid program. Approximately one third of Minnesota children rely on Medicaid or other medical assistance that is supported in part by federal funding.⁵⁰

⁴⁶ Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Transcribed Interview of Daron Korte (Feb. 2026).

⁴⁷ *Trump Officials See Fraud Everywhere. Here’s What We Know*, CNN (Jan. 12, 2026) (online at www.cnn.com/2026/01/10/politics/fraud-federal-programs-trump-vis); *Minnesota’s Food Stamp Program in Peril as Trump Administration Says It’s Subject to Fraud*, MinnPost (Jan. 7, 2026) (online at www.minnpost.com/national/washington/2026/01/snap-minnesotas-food-stamp-program-in-peril-as-trump-administration-says-its-subject-to-fraud/).

⁴⁸ See Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, *Robust COVID Relief Bolstered Economy and Reduced Hardship for Millions* (Mar. 6, 2023) (online at www.cbpp.org/research/poverty-and-inequality/robust-covid-relief-bolstered-economy-and-reduced-hardship-for).

⁴⁹ *Trump Admin Halts Medicaid Payments to Minnesota Over Fraud Claims*, CNN (Feb. 26, 2026) (online at www.cnn.com/2026/02/25/politics/trump-vance-minnesota-medicaid).

⁵⁰ Minnesota Compass, *Medicaid in Minnesota: The Who, What, Where, Why, and How* (June 30, 2025) (online at www.mncompass.org/data-insights/articles/medicaid-minnesota-who-what-where-why-and-how#0-15804-g).

Witnesses said that if federal cuts were made to Medicaid, children and other vulnerable people in Minnesota would experience negative health outcomes.

- Former Commissioner Tony Lourey explained that cuts to federal Medicaid funding “would be absolutely disastrous. I mean people, kids would die.” He added, “[W]ithout these funding streams, the provider community would be in serious jeopardy, particularly those most vulnerable, the social safety net providers that rely on these funding streams.”⁵¹
- Former Assistant Commissioner Grumdahl testified that cuts to Medicaid “would be really devastating for those families” that rely on it and that families would have to make “really hard choices about diverting needed medical care.”⁵²
- Commissioner Gandhi stated, “[W]e know that when children receive healthcare, they actually do better in school, they miss less school, and there are studies out there that show that they become more productive adults [. . .] and are able to contribute to society better.”⁵³
- Mr. Grumdahl explained that any lapse in federal funding for addiction services “will result in people dying. [. . . T]hose services are lifesaving. And so without those services, the impact can be immediate and dramatic and include life and death.”⁵⁴

2. *Food Assistance*

On December 16, 2025, the Trump Administration demanded that Minnesota “recertify” the eligibility of state Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipients via in-person interviews with over 100,000 participating households before January 15, 2026, to avoid blanket disqualification from SNAP.⁵⁵ A federal district court issued a preliminary injunction keeping USDA from implementing this requirement.⁵⁶ Approximately 440,000 Minnesotans receive SNAP benefits every month, and approximately 150,000 of these enrollees are children.⁵⁷

⁵¹ Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Transcribed Interview of Tony Lourey (Feb. 2026).

⁵² Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Transcribed Interview of Eric Grumdahl (Feb. 2026).

⁵³ Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Transcribed Interview of Shireen Gandhi (Feb. 2026).

⁵⁴ Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Transcribed Interview of Eric Grumdahl (Feb. 2026).

⁵⁵ See Complaint, *State of Minnesota v. U.S. Department of Agriculture* (No. 25-CV-04767) (Dec. 23, 2025) (online at https://www.ag.state.mn.us/Office/Communications/2025/docs/USDA_SNAP-Recertification_Complaint.pdf).

⁵⁶ Order Granting Motion for a Preliminary Injunction, *State of Minnesota v. U.S. Department of Agriculture* (No. 25-CV-04767) (Jan. 16, 2026) (online at <https://cases.justia.com/federal/district-courts/minnesota/mndce/0:2025cv04767/229896/44/0.pdf?ts=1768648304>).

⁵⁷ Office of Minnesota Attorney General Keith Ellison, *Press Release: Attorney General Ellison Files for Emergency Relief to Protect Almost 450k SNAP Recipients* (Dec. 30, 2025) (online at www.ag.state.mn.us/Office/Communications/2025/12/30_SNAP.asp).

All MDE officials interviewed by the Committee detailed the importance of federal nutrition assistance programs operated by USDA, especially the sort of expanded access to free meals for children during the COVID-19 pandemic that Feeding Our Future exploited for illicit profit.

- Director Honer said that “food access for families was a greater need during COVID” and explained that food insecurity can impact children in many negative ways, including by increasing school absenteeism and behavioral issues.⁵⁸
- According to Assistant Commissioner Korte, without expanded federal school nutrition programs and pandemic-era waivers authorized by USDA, children would have gone hungry because they “would’ve been unable to access the meals that they otherwise needed.”⁵⁹ More than 181,000 Minnesota children are eligible for free school breakfasts and lunches supported by federal funds.⁶⁰
- Former Commissioner Ricker conveyed the harsh reality of the food insecurity that many Minnesotans face, informed by her years of experience as a classroom teacher: “I very much remember [. . .] just knowing that food insecurity was an issue, that I would keep granola bars in my desk. Other teachers would keep [. . .] graham crackers and other things.”⁶¹

3. *Childcare*

In response to Nick Shirley’s unsubstantiated and debunked claims of fraud at child care centers in Minnesota, the Trump Administration froze \$10 billion in federal assistance for Minnesota and four other Democratic-led states for essential services including childcare.⁶² While a federal court blocked the freeze in early February 2026,⁶³ further attempts to cut off child care assistance risk throwing families into chaos across the state.

⁵⁸ Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Transcribed Interview of Emily Honer (Jan. 2026).

⁵⁹ Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Transcribed Interview of Daron Korte (Feb. 2026).

⁶⁰ National Education Association, *School Nutrition, SNAP, and Local Food Funding in Minnesota* (Oct. 2025) (online at www.nea.org/sites/default/files/2025-10/33488-state-specific-nutrition-funding-fact-sheet_minnesota_final.pdf).

⁶¹ Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Transcribed Interview of Mary Cathryn Ricker (Feb. 2026).

⁶² *Day Care in Minneapolis Vandalized, and Children’s Information Stolen, After Viral Video Purporting Fraud*, CBS News (Dec. 31, 2025) (online at www.cbsnews.com/minnesota/news/day-care-minneapolis-vandalized-viral-video-fraud/); *9 Minnesota Child Care Centers Discussed in Viral Video “Operating as Expected,” State Officials Say*, CBS News (Jan. 2, 2026) (online at www.cbsnews.com/minnesota/news/minnesota-child-care-centers-viral-video-operating-expected/); *Trump Freezes Over \$10 Billion in Childcare, Family Assistance Funds to 5 US States*, (Jan. 7, 2026) (online at www.reuters.com/world/trump-administration-freezes-some-child-care-funds-five-states-2026-01-07/).

⁶³ *Judge Blocks Trump’s \$10B Child Care Funding Freeze That Targeted Blue States, Including Illinois*, NPR Illinois (Feb. 9, 2026) (online at www.nprillinois.org/illinois/2026-02-09/judge-blocks-trumps-10b-child-care-funding-freeze-that-targeted-blue-states-including-illinois).

According to Former Commissioner Lourey, federal child care assistance is “a wonderful investment for our youth and their families” which operates as a lifeline to “families of modest means” in Minnesota and helps parents to “get to a place where they’re better able to support their household in the future years for those children.”⁶⁴ He testified that even a temporary lapse in child care assistance is detrimental to Minnesota’s working families, saying that he is personally aware of parents “who are no longer able to pursue their training or their career because they no longer have the support to pay for quality daycare that they need in order to pursue those goals that support families.”⁶⁵

D. Committee Republicans’ Investigation Appears to be Providing Cover for the Egregious Human and Constitutional Rights Violations Committed by the Trump Administration in the Name of Addressing Fraud

1. *Trump’s surge of thousands of immigration enforcement officers to Minnesota was allegedly to fight fraud, but instead, directly obliterated fraud investigation and prosecution efforts in the state.*

President Trump and his Administration have used the fact that some perpetrators of fraud in Minnesota are of Somali descent to justify widespread immigration raids in Minnesota.⁶⁶ On December 1, 2025, DHS launched Operation Metro Surge in Minnesota, during which it sent thousands of immigration enforcement officers to the state.⁶⁷ Two days later, Chairman Comer announced that he was launching “an investigation into widespread fraud in Minnesota’s social services programs[.]”⁶⁸

As Committee Republicans have conducted their investigation into fraud, immigration agents sent to Minnesota allegedly because of fraud have since been documented taking aggressive and violent actions, including: killing U.S. citizens and peaceful protesters; deploying pepper spray and tear gas; dragging people from their cars; tackling workers at businesses; pepper-spraying and detaining people on school grounds; taking a 5-year-old child and his father on their way home from school and using the child as bait to lure his pregnant mother out of their house; unlawfully forcing their way into homes without a valid judicial warrant; and stopping people on the street for no apparent reason other than the color of their skin.⁶⁹

⁶⁴ Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Transcribed Interview of Tony Lourey (Feb. 2026).

⁶⁵ Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Transcribed Interview of Tony Lourey (Feb. 2026).

⁶⁶ *A Timeline of Trump’s Immigration Crackdown in Minnesota*, PBS (Feb. 13, 2025) (online at www.pbs.org/newshour/nation/a-timeline-of-trumps-immigration-crackdown-in-minnesota).

⁶⁷ *ICE Announces a Dozen Minneapolis Arrests in “Operation Metro Surge”*, Minnesota Star Tribune (Dec. 4, 2025) (online at <https://startribune.com/minneapolis-minnesota-ice-arrests-dhs-operation-metro-surge/601539892>).

⁶⁸ Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, *Press Release: Chairman Comer Launches Investigation into Massive Fraud in Minnesota’s Social Services System on Governor Walz’s Watch* (Dec. 3, 2025) (online at <https://oversight.house.gov/release/chairman-comer-launches-investigation-into-massive-fraud-in-minnesotas-social-services-system-on-governor-walzs-watch/>).

⁶⁹ *Pepper-Sprayed While Pinned Down: A Searing Scene Provokes Outrage*, New York Times (Jan. 23, 2026) (online at <https://nytimes.com/2026/01/23/us/minneapolis-man-pepper-sprayed-pinned-video.html>); *Immigration Agents Deploy Tear Gas, Pepper Spray in Minneapolis as Confrontations With Protesters Grow*, NBC

The federal investigations into fraud schemes within Minnesota’s social services programs have been led by the U.S. Attorney’s Office (USAO) for the District of Minnesota. On January 13, 2026, after mounting frustrations in the office due to Operation Metro Surge, Joe Thompson, Acting U.S. Attorney for the District of Minnesota, was one of six prosecutors in the USAO who resigned in the face of pressure from top DOJ officials to investigate the widow of ICE shooting victim Renee Good and to not investigate the shooting itself.⁷⁰ Mr. Thompson had been leading the federal investigation and prosecution of fraudsters in Minnesota.

Brian O’Hara, Chief of the Minneapolis Police Department, stated that Mr. Thompson’s resignation jeopardizes Minnesota’s ability to prosecute fraud, noting, “When you lose the leader responsible for making the fraud cases, it tells you this isn’t really about prosecuting fraud.”⁷¹ According to testimony to the Committee staff by Governor Walz’s former Chief of Staff, Mr. Thompson’s resignation will absolutely affect ongoing federal fraud prosecutions in Minnesota and will jeopardize Minnesota’s ability to fight fraud.⁷²

On February 3, 2026, another eight federal prosecutors at the Minnesota USAO announced their resignation as a result of the effects of Operation Metro Surge. According to public reporting, fewer than 20 attorneys remain in the office to handle all federal cases in Minnesota—including fraud cases—with DOJ reportedly scrambling to bring in additional attorneys from Main Justice and the Judge Advocate General’s Corps. Even with the outside attorneys surging to the USAO, the office is still “woefully understaffed,” according to one former U.S. attorney. These limited staff resources are reportedly being diverted to work on cases stemming from the aggression with which DHS waged Operation Metro Surge—490

News (Jan. 13, 2026) (online at <https://nbcnews.com/news/us-news/immigration-agents-deploy-tear-gas-pepper-spray-minneapolis-confrontat-rcna253782>); *Federal Immigration Agents Filmed Dragging a Woman From Her Car in Minneapolis*, KSAT (Jan. 15, 2026) (online at <https://ksat.com/news/national/2026/01/16/federal-immigration-agents-filmed-dragging-a-woman-from-her-car-in-minneapolis>); *U.S. Citizens “Aggressively” Detained by CBP While Working at Target*, Newsweek (Jan. 13, 2026) (online at <https://newsweek.com/us-citizens-aggressively-detained-border-patrol-working-target-11349481>); *ICE Agents Outside Roosevelt High School Draws Conflicting Accounts From Union, DHS*, FOX 9 (Jan. 8, 2026) (online at <https://fox9.com/news/ice-agents-outside-roosevelt-high-school-draws-conflicting-accounts-from-union-dhs>); *Kids, Staff, Parents Detained: How Federal Activity in Minnesota is Affecting Schools and Students*, MPR News (Jan. 23, 2026) (online at <https://mprnews.org/story/2026/01/23/how-schools-and-students-are-affected-by-ice-enforcement>); *Judge: ICE Violated Liberian Man’s Rights by Bursting Through Front Door During Arrest*, FOX 9 (Jan. 15, 2026) (online at <https://fox9.com/news/judge-ice-violated-liberian-mans-rights-bursting-through-front-door-during-arrest>); *ICE Broke Down St. Paul Man’s Door, Walked Him Half-Naked Into Freezing Temps*, Sahan Journal (Jan. 19, 2026) (online at <https://sahanjournal.com/immigration/st-paul-east-side-hmong-man-detained-ice-chongly-scott-thao>); *Mother Recounts Her Terror at Seeing Her 5-Year-Old Son Be Taken by ICE Agents*, NBC News (Jan. 30, 2026) (online at www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/mother-5-year-old-taken-ice-immigration-agents-use-son-bait-rcna256729).

⁷⁰ Joe Thompson, *Minnesota’s Top Federal Fraud Prosecutor, Quits Over ICE Shooting Probe*, MPR News (Jan. 13, 2026) (online at www.mprnews.org/story/2026/01/13/us-attorney-on-minnesota-fraud-joe-thompson-resigns-from-office).

⁷¹ *Six Prosecutors Quit Over Push to Investigate ICE Shooting Victim’s Widow*, New York Times (Jan. 13, 2026) (online at www.nytimes.com/2026/01/13/us/prosecutors-doj-resignation-ice-shooting.html).

⁷² Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Transcribed Interview of Chris Schmitter (Feb. 2026).

immigrants challenged their detention from December 1, 2025, to January 26, 2026, alone, compared to only 375 similar cases in the previous eight years combined.⁷³

2. *Committee Republicans claim to be concerned about fraud yet were silent as President Trump pardoned dozens of fraudsters and gutted the offices responsible for fighting fraud, abuse, and corruption.*

Rather than rooting out waste, fraud, and abuse, the Trump Administration has systematically attacked the mechanisms that ensure oversight and accountability within federal programs. This includes illegally firing 19 inspectors general (IG) that had a collective monetary impact of more than \$50 billion in fiscal year 2024 alone through investigations and audits that revealed fraud and abuse.⁷⁴ The Trump Administration also left 28 Offices of Inspector General (OIGs) without Senate-confirmed leadership—raising concerns about reduced OIG capacity, infringement on OIG independence, and the possibility that these actions were taken as retaliation for OIG investigations into potential misconduct by the Trump Administration.⁷⁵

As a result of hiring freezes, mass layoffs, and reckless efforts to drive federal workers from their jobs, federal OIGs have also lost hundreds of key personnel during the Trump Administration, including critical auditors, investigators, and senior leaders who were instrumental in fighting waste, fraud, abuse, and corruption.⁷⁶ The Trump Administration also illegally defunded the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency (CIGIE), a government-wide initiative that trains OIG personnel to address waste, fraud, and abuse within federal programs.⁷⁷

⁷³ *Minnesota Prosecutors Quit En Masse Thanks to Pam Bondi's Orders*, New Republic (Feb. 3, 2026) (online at <https://newrepublic.com/post/206097/minnesota-prosecutors-quit-en-masse-us-attorney-office-doj>).

⁷⁴ Democratic Staff, Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, *Undermining the Watchdogs: The 19 Independent Inspectors General Fired by President Trump Uncovered Billions in Fraud, Waste, and Abuse*, at 3 (May 2025) (online at <https://www.hsgac.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/REPORT.pdf>).

⁷⁵ Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, *Trump Administration's Undercutting of Oversight Hurts Taxpayers and Beneficiaries* (Nov. 6, 2025) (online at www.cbpp.org/research/federal-budget/trump-administrations-undercutting-of-oversight-hurts-taxpayers-and); *Officials Accused of Mortgage Fraud Attack Trump's Housing Agency Chief*, New York Times (Nov. 17, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/2025/11/17/nyregion/lisa-cook-fed-trump-pulte.html).

⁷⁶ *Déjà Vu: Elon Musk Takes His Twitter Takeover Tactics to Washington*, New York Times (Jan. 30, 2025) (online at www.nytimes.com/2025/01/30/technology/musk-doge-x-playbook.html); At least 75,000 employees accepted the Office of Personnel Management's "deferred resignation" offer across the federal government. See, e.g., *OPM: 75,000 Workers Took Trump, Musk Government Buyout*, The Hill (Feb. 12, 2025) (online at <https://thehill.com/regulation/court-battles/5142311-opm-75000-workers-took-trump-musk-government-buyout>); Communications with Democratic Committee staff.

⁷⁷ House Committee on Appropriations, Democrats, *Press Release: Trump and Vought Illegally Defund Nonpartisan Government Watchdogs* (Sept. 30, 2025) (online at <https://democrats-appropriations.house.gov/news/press-releases/trump-and-vought-illegally-defund-nonpartisan-government-watchdogs>).

President Trump’s efforts to weaken the mechanisms to catch waste, fraud, abuse, and corruption align with the ways that he has consistently used his position to protect criminals, including fraudsters. In 2025, he issued pardons or commutations to 25 people convicted of fraud-related offenses, including wire fraud, securities fraud, tax fraud, bank fraud, and health care fraud.⁷⁸ Several of the individuals he pardoned had made significant financial contributions to the Trump campaign.⁷⁹ In many cases, President Trump’s pardons meant that the victims of fraud would no longer receive any restitution through financial penalties.⁸⁰ A memorandum published by House Judiciary Committee Democrats estimated that, as of June 2025, President Trump’s pardons for fraud-related and other white-collar offenses could deprive victims of more than \$1 billion owed to them and American taxpayers—allowing offenders to continue profiting from their crimes while victims suffer.⁸¹

Committee Republicans’ insistence that they want to expose theft of taxpayer dollars and hold corrupt perpetrators accountable is entirely incompatible with their rampant disregard for President Trump’s gutting of some of the most essential checks on fraud in federal programs.

3. *The Trump Administration is trying to use its alleged response to fraud in Minnesota as leverage to seize the state’s voter rolls.*

On January 24, 2026, Attorney General Pam Bondi sent Governor Walz a letter attacking Minnesota officials’ response to Operation Metro Surge, and alleging without basis that financial fraud in Minnesota “also implicates election security.”⁸² In this letter, Attorney General Bondi demanded that, in order to “bring back law and order,” Minnesota needed to share social services program records, cooperate with ICE enforcement, and turn over state voter rolls to DOJ to “confirm that Minnesota’s voter registration practices comply with federal law.”⁸³ Minnesota’s Secretary of State, Steve Simon, rejected this demand to release voter rolls to DOJ, calling the letter an “outrageous attempt to coerce Minnesota into giving the federal government private data on millions of U.S. citizens in violation of state and federal law.”⁸⁴

⁷⁸ U.S. Department of Justice, *Clemency Grants by President Donald J. Trump (2025-Present)* (online at www.justice.gov/pardon/clemency-grants-president-donald-j-trump-2025-present) (accessed Jan. 1, 2026).

⁷⁹ *Trump’s Flurry of Pardons Include Some to Campaign Contributors*, ABC News (May 29, 2025) (online at <https://abcnews.go.com/US/trumps-flurry-pardons-include-campaign-contributors/story?id=122313284>).

⁸⁰ *Trump’s Pardons Wipe Out Payments to Defrauded Victims*, Washington Post (Dec. 19, 2025) (online at www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2025/12/19/donald-trump-pardons-trevor-milton-nikola).

⁸¹ Memorandum from Democratic Staff to Democratic Members of the House Committee on the Judiciary, *President Trump’s Pardons Cheat Victims Out of an Astounding \$1.3 Billion in Restitution and Fines, Allowing Fraudsters, Tax Evaders, Drug Traffickers to Keep Ill-Gotten Gains* (June 17, 2025) (online at <https://democrats-judiciary.house.gov/sites/evo-subsites/democrats-judiciary.house.gov/files/evo-media-document/2025-06-17.dem-memo-re-%241.3b-cost-of-trump-pardons.pdf>).

⁸² Letter from Attorney General Pamela Bondi, U.S. Department of Justice, to Governor Tim Walz, State of Minnesota (Jan. 24, 2026) (online at www.nytimes.com/interactive/2026/01/24/us/pam-bondi-walz-doc.html).

⁸³ *Bondi Outlines Terms for Walz to “Restore the Rule of Law” in Minnesota After Fatal Shooting: Reports*, The Hill (Jan. 25, 2026) (online at <https://thehill.com/homenews/state-watch/5705179-bondi-walz-letter-immigration-fraud-voter-rolls>); Letter from Attorney General Pamela Bondi, U.S. Department of Justice, to Governor Tim Walz, State of Minnesota (Jan. 24, 2026) (online at www.nytimes.com/interactive/2026/01/24/us/pam-bondi-walz-doc.html).

⁸⁴ *Why Is the Trump Administration Demanding Minnesota’s Voter Rolls?*, New York Times (Jan. 26,

Since May 2025, DOJ has asked at least 47 states, including Minnesota, to turn over their complete voter registration lists. DOJ sued 24 other states, including Minnesota, over their refusal to provide voter information that includes driver's license and Social Security numbers.⁸⁵ These highly unusual steps by DOJ have alarmed election officials and experts, who expressed concerns about federal overreach, intimidation, and voter privacy.⁸⁶ In September 2025, the Trump Administration confirmed that DOJ is sharing the voter information it receives from states with DHS.⁸⁷

V. CONCLUSION

Historically, both Democrats and Republicans have shared a commitment to rooting out waste, fraud, abuse, and corruption in government programs. But the facts of this Republican-led investigation singling out a Democratic governor who has long been a target of President Trump's ire—cast against the backdrop of Republican complicity with the Trump Administration's panoply of destructive and unlawful actions—make it clear that Republicans are attempting to weaponize fraud to force their unlawful, violent, and unpopular agenda on a wary American public that does not want it.

Under the banner of fighting fraud, President Trump and Secretary Noem's Operation Metro Surge has sowed chaos, fueled violence, undermined public safety and civil rights, and resulted in the deaths of American citizens. Under the banner of fighting fraud, the Trump Administration has tried to seize Minnesota's voter rolls and Americans' private data. Under the banner of fighting fraud, the Trump Administration has attempted to strip away health, education, and childcare funding that millions rely on. Under the banner of fighting fraud, it appears there's nothing the Trump Administration won't try to get away with.

2026) (online at www.nytimes.com/2026/01/26/us/politics/minnesota-trump-voter-rolls.html).

⁸⁵ Brennan Center for Justice, *Tracker of Justice Department Requests for Voter Information* (online at www.brennancenter.org/our-work/research-reports/tracker-justice-department-requests-voter-information) (accessed Feb. 24, 2026).

⁸⁶ *The Justice Department Seeks Voter and Election Information From at Least 19 States, AP Finds*, AP News (Aug. 3, 2025) (online at <https://apnews.com/article/justice-department-election-officials-voting-trump-a04b1522bed0cb6bbc286e25b139701f>).

⁸⁷ *DOJ is Sharing State Voter Roll Lists with Homeland Security*, Stateline (Sept. 12, 2025) (online at <https://stateline.org/2025/09/12/doj-is-sharing-state-voter-roll-lists-with-homeland-security>).