

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

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<https://oversight.house.gov>

March 17, 2023

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary of State
Department of State
2201 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken:

The Democrats on the Committee on Oversight and Accountability are investigating the Trump Administration's failure to disclose gifts from foreign government officials while in office, as required by the Foreign Gifts and Decorations Act.¹ The Administration's failure to disclose foreign gifts to former President Trump and his family raises questions about whether these and other gifts may have been used by foreign governments to influence U.S. policy.

The State Department's Office of the Chief of Protocol is responsible for the annual publication of a comprehensive list of gifts from foreign governments to U.S. government employees, including the President, Vice President, and their families. The Office of the Chief of Protocol briefed Committee staff on foreign gift reporting requirements and indicated the Trump Administration "did not prioritize this obligation."² As a result of the White House's failure to provide a list of gifts received by the President, Vice President, and their families, the State Department published an incomplete annual listing of foreign gifts received in 2020, which did not include any foreign gifts received by President Trump.³ This failure to comprehensively list foreign gifts may violate the Foreign Gifts and Decorations Act, which requires every agency, including the White House, to compile a listing of gifts accepted from foreign governments during the preceding year and transmit it to the Secretary of State no later than January 31 of each year.⁴

The Office of the Chief of Protocol also is responsible for receiving all diplomatic gifts on behalf of the White House and State Department officials and maintaining records pertaining

¹ 5 U.S.C. § 7342.

² Briefings by Staff, Office of the Chief of Protocol, Department of State, to Majority and Minority Staff, Committee on Oversight and Reform (May 9, 2022 and Oct. 14, 2022).

³ Department of State, *Office of the Chief of Protocol; Gifts to Federal Employees from Foreign Government Sources Reported to Employing Agencies in Calendar Year 2020*, 87 Fed. Reg. 69 (Apr. 11, 2022).

⁴ 5 U.S.C. § 7342(f).

to diplomatic gifts. Presidential records obtained by the Committee show that the Office of the Chief of Protocol was aware that the White House Gift Office was also accepting gifts and worked together with the White House on the transfer of gifts between offices, and therefore may have additional records relevant to our investigation.

Committee Democrats are seeking additional records from the State Department regarding foreign gifts and their potential influence on U.S. policy. This investigation will assist Committee Democrats in assessing whether legislative reforms are needed to ensure records of foreign gifts are reported; that their records are preserved and made available to the public; and that they do not violate the Emoluments Clause.

For these reasons, please provide the following documents and information by March 31, 2023, for the period from January 20, 2017, to the present:

1. All documents and communications, including but not limited to official statements filed pursuant to 5 U.S.C. § 7342, related to foreign gifts received by former President Trump or his family members, including documents showing the gift's value, location, and disposition; and the identity of the donor, payment, and reporting;
2. All memorandums recording gift exchanges between former President Trump and his family members with foreign dignitaries; and
3. All communications within the Department of State, and between the Department of State and former President Trump, his family members, or White House staff related to foreign gifts, including any references to effects on U.S. foreign policy.

The Committee on Oversight and Accountability is the principal oversight committee of the House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate "any matter" at "any time" under House Rule X.

If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact Committee staff at (202) 225-5051. Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Jamie Raskin
Ranking Member

cc: The Honorable James Comer, Chairman