



*New Report*

# The Real Fraud: Trump Pardoned the Nation's *Biggest* Health Care Fraudsters

*April 2026*

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# The Real Fraud: Trump Pardoned the Nation's *Biggest* Health Care Fraudsters

*Trump Threw Working Families Under the Bus,  
Calling Their Health Care Fraud, While He Pardoned Over \$2 Billion  
in Health Care Fraud Convictions From Wealthy Business Owners*

Trump and his allies are ripping away health care from millions of families under the guise of fraud, while he **consistently** pardons the corporate fraudsters driving health care fraud. In just the first few months of his second term, Trump pardoned notorious health care fraudsters who cost the federal government and taxpayers billions of dollars. Trump's pardons have become so egregious that he's generated millions in new business for well-connected Washington lobbyists. Trump's cuts to health care have never been about stopping fraud or reforming health care — it was about ransacking Medicaid and eliminating health care tax credits to pay for tax breaks for billionaires and big corporations. Republican lawmakers' cuts take away health care from those who can least afford it and increase health care costs for all of us.

*Here is the truth behind Trump's smoke and mirrors:*

*SECTION I*

## *Trump's Waste, Fraud, and Abuse by the Numbers:*

- Trump ripped health care away from **15 million Americans**, including **seniors, children, veterans**, and **people with disabilities**, in the name of fraud.
- The truth is: Trump cut over **\$1 trillion** from the health care programs working Americans rely on, to pay for tax breaks for **billionaire donors** and **corporations**.
- Trump claims he cares about fraud, but he has pardoned **70+ fraudsters** during his time in office, including countless **donors, allies**, and **celebrities**.
- Trump excused over **\$3 billion** in fraud, including fraud against Medicare and Medicaid.
- Lobbyists pocketed more than **\$2 million** from white-collar criminals seeking pardons during Trump's first year back in office.
- Encouraged by Trump's reckless pardoning, over **10,000 criminals** have applied for pardons in only the first nine months of Trump's second term.

## *The Ledger: Trump Pardoned Health Care Fraudsters Who Cost the Government and Taxpayers Billions.*

### *FEBRUARY 2020*

*Judith Negron* FLORIDA ..... \$200M

### *DECEMBER 2020*

*Philip Esformes* FLORIDA ..... \$1.3B

### *JANUARY 2021*

*WellCare Executives* FLORIDA ..... Millions

*John Estin Davis* TENNESSEE ..... \$4.6M

*John Duncan Fordham* GEORGIA ..... \$2M+

*Faustino Bernadett* CALIFORNIA ..... \$900M

*Salomon Melgen* FLORIDA ..... \$42M

### *APRIL 2025*

*Paul Walczak* FLORIDA ..... \$10M

### *MAY 2025*

*Lawrence Duran* FLORIDA ..... \$205M

### *NOVEMBER 2025*

*Joseph Schwartz* NEW YORK ..... \$38M

*Robert Harshbarger* TENNESSEE ..... \$848K

**Joseph Schwartz (NY):** In November 2025, Trump pardoned a [former owner of a collapsed nursing home chain](#) who committed Medicaid fraud and [stole](#) \$38 million in taxes. Schwartz reportedly [paid](#) Trump-aligned lobbyists \$960,000 to advocate for his federal pardon and is currently [serving](#) a state Medicaid fraud sentence in Arkansas.

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**Robert Harshbarger (TN):** In November 2025, Trump [pardoned](#) the [husband](#) of U.S. Rep. Diana Harshbarger (R-TN-01), a pharmacist who was [sentenced](#) to 48 months' imprisonment and fined \$848,504 for committing health care fraud and selling misbranded kidney dialysis drugs sourced from China.

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**Lawrence Duran (FL):** In May 2025, Trump [commuted](#) the sentence of a Florida health care executive who was [convicted](#) of orchestrating what was the [largest therapy-related Medicare fraud scheme](#) in history at the time. He stole \$205 million from Medicare and was sentenced to 50 years in prison.

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**Paul Walczak (FL):** In April 2025, Trump pardoned a business owner who was [convicted](#) of stealing \$7 million from employees of his health care business and evading an additional \$3 million in taxes, after his mother [attended a \\$1 million-per-person fundraiser](#) at Mar-a-Lago.

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**WellCare Executives (FL):** In January 2021, Trump [pardoned](#) five executives of WellCare, a company that [defrauded](#) Florida's Medicaid program by falsely inflating behavioral health expenses, [retaining](#) millions of dollars in stolen Medicaid funds. The executives were [convicted](#) on counts of health care fraud and false statements, and the president/CEO was sentenced to 36 months in prison.

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**John Estin Davis (TN):** In January 2021, Trump [commuted](#) the sentence of the former CEO of Comprehensive Pain Specialists, a Tennessee-based chain of pain management clinics, who had spent four months in prison after federal prosecutors charged him with accepting more than \$750,000 in illegal bribes and kickbacks in a scheme that billed Medicare \$4.6 million for durable medical equipment. Uniquely, Davis was the only convicted health care fraudster to receive clemency while the Trump administration was simultaneously accusing him of even more fraud.

**John Duncan Fordham (GA):** In January 2021, Trump [pardoned](#) a former pharmacist who was convicted on one count of health care fraud in 2005. Prosecutors alleged that Fordham kicked back money to former state Rep. Robin L. Williams in exchange for a lucrative contract with the East Georgia Community Mental Health Center. In all, the health care fraud investigation found more than \$2 million was [stolen](#) from the Community Mental Health Center of East Central Georgia.

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**Faustino Bernadett (CA):** In January 2021, Trump granted a full [pardon](#) to a former California anesthesiologist who had been sentenced to 15 months in prison in connection with a scheme that paid \$30 million in kickbacks to doctors and others who referred spinal fusion surgeries to Pacific Hospital of Long Beach, which he owned. The scheme resulted in more than \$900 million in fake bills being submitted, [bilking](#) the state's workers' compensation system.

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**Salomon Melgen (FL):** In January 2021, Trump granted a commutation to Salomon Melgen, a Florida eye doctor who was serving a 17-year prison sentence for defrauding Medicare of \$42 million. Melgen falsely diagnosed patients with eye diseases, then gave them unnecessary care, including laser treatments and painful eye injections, according to DOJ and court documents.

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**Philip Esformes (FL):** In December 2020, Trump granted a [commutation](#) to Philip Esformes, a Florida health care executive convicted in 2019 of a \$1.3 billion Medicare and Medicaid fraud scheme. After he was sentenced, the DOJ announced in a press release that “the man behind one of the biggest health care frauds in history will be spending 20 years in prison.” Trump freed him 14 months later. Esformes was [arrested again](#) on domestic violence charges in 2024.

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**Judith Negron (FL):** In February 2020, Trump [commuted](#) the sentence of a co-owner of American Therapeutic Corporation, a Miami mental health company who had been convicted of organizing a massive Medicare

**One of Congress's Biggest Supporters for Ripping Away Affordable Care Act Tax Credits From Millions Was the CEO Behind One of the Biggest Health Care Fraud Schemes in History.**

In 2003, Senator Rick Scott (R-FL) was the CEO of Columbia/HCA, who resigned days after federal agents raided his company headquarters and found the hospital giant “**systematically defrauded**” Medicare, Medicaid, and other health care programs through unlawful billing and other ploys. The company pled guilty and was charged **\$1.7 billion** in fines, in **one of the largest cases of defrauding of government health care in history**. Meanwhile, Scott invoked the Fifth Amendment **75 times** and walked away from the company with a severance package of over **\$300 million**. Independent investigations found **98 percent** of Medicaid fraud is committed by a handful of corrupt health care providers like Scott’s former firm. If Republican lawmakers were **serious about fraud**, they’d hire, not **fire**, inspectors general who conduct oversight of corporate fraud and go after the corporations and executives ripping off American taxpayers. Instead, they cut coverage for hard-working families and funding for hospitals to hand tax breaks to those same corporations that are driving up health care costs. Scott spent his time having narrowly escaped a prison sentence, fueling allegations of enrollee fraud in health programs, eliminating ACA tax credits for working families, and pushing Trump to **funnel the money** into accounts that would render health care unaffordable for millions and help the wealthiest Americans **shield their profits from taxes**.

## *Trump's War on Fraud Appears to be Focused on Those He Considers Political Enemies.*

While Trump showers forgiveness upon wealthy donors, political allies, and corporations committing billions in health care fraud, he makes **unsubstantiated claims** of fraud in Democrat-led states to target Medicaid for specific communities from Minnesota to California. His actions are **unprecedented** and could disrupt health care for millions of Americans, including seniors and kids. In Minnesota, the Trump administration is attempting to withhold over **\$243 million** in Medicaid funds - which could hurt families like Sarah Lindbo's, whose **14-year-old daughter relies on Medicaid** for the doctors, prescriptions, and caretakers she needs to make it through school with cerebral palsy. Families across the country like Sarah's will pay the price for Republican lawmakers gutting Medicaid to fund tax breaks for the wealthy. Their rampant accusations of fraud only add insult to injury.

*A former Trump DOJ pardon attorney,  
Elizabeth Oyer, even **admitted**:*

*“The war on fraud seems like a war on specific fraud committed by a specific kind of people.” Oyer said President Trump is partial to “fraud committed by people in whom he sees something of himself. He sees a wealthy and successful businessman and he sees something of himself in him.”*

## *Millions of Hardworking, Law-Abiding Americans Are Paying the Price For Trump's Fake Crusade Against Fraud*

*Cutting Back on Groceries to Afford Health Care or Losing Health Coverage Altogether.*

Working Americans are paying the price for Republican lawmakers' reckless health care cuts while white collar fraudsters get away with the fraud that costs our health care system billions. The real fraud in health care is driven by corporate greed, but Republican lawmakers are blaming working families and ripping away their health care instead of holding big corporations and billionaire donors accountable. Thanks to Trump's reckless health care cuts, **15 million Americans** will lose their health care. Middle-class families will pay **\$20 billion** in higher health care costs in 2026, while CEOs and yacht owners pocket **\$120 billion** in tax breaks from the GOP tax scam. Premiums **doubled and tripled** for the over **20 million Americans** Republican lawmakers ripped away ACA tax credits from, and **costs are skyrocketing for everyone, everywhere**. Americans are getting hit with **higher deductibles, higher out-of-pocket limits, higher drug costs, and higher copays**. Parents, like **Nicole from South Carolina**, are forgoing coverage for themselves to afford insurance for their children, gambling that a medical emergency doesn't wipe out their lifesavings. Farmers, like **Daniel from Kentucky**, reeling from the costs of Trump's trade wars, face a double whammy after the GOP tax law doubled their health premiums.

# *1 in 3*

*Americans skip meals or other needs to afford health care.*

# *1 in 6*

*Americans on the ACA are worried they won't be able to afford coverage at all.*

*Meanwhile, Phillip Esformes, our nation's biggest health care fraudster, **sat pretty** at his \$7.5 million oceanfront mansion in Miami, thanks to his pardon from President Trump.*