

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 28, 2026

The Honorable Todd W. Blanche
Deputy Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20530

Dear Deputy Attorney General Blanche:

Last year, we asked for the rationale behind your puzzling decision to scale back the Department of Justice's (DOJ) cryptocurrency enforcement efforts and urged you to reconsider.¹ We write now in light of recent reporting that you held substantial amounts of cryptocurrency at the time you made this decision.² Your actions may be a violation of 18 U.S.C. § 208(a). At the very least, you had a glaring conflict of interest and should have recused yourself.

We warned in our prior letter that disbanding the National Cryptocurrency Enforcement Team and taking a hands-off approach to the exchanges, mixers, and other tools that criminals use to obscure the sources and uses of their cryptocurrency were “grave mistakes that will support sanctions evasion, drug trafficking, scams, and child sexual exploitation.”³ DOJ’s perfunctory response to our letter promised that prosecutors would target criminals using cryptocurrency in furtherance of their crimes. Unfortunately, our predictions have proven correct, with illicit cryptocurrency activity soaring 162% in 2025.⁴ This increase was driven primarily by a dramatic rise in the receipt of cryptocurrency by sanctioned entities, but most categories of crypto crime saw increases, including human trafficking and other violent crime.⁵ Moreover, Chinese money laundering networks—to which the Trump Administration has drawn attention for moving billions for Mexican drug cartels—have now emerged as a “dominant force” in the digital asset ecosystem.⁶

¹ Letter to Deputy Att’y Gen. Todd W. Blanche from Sens. Hirono, Warren, Durbin, Whitehouse, Coons, & Blumenthal [hereafter, “Senators Letter to Blanche”] (Apr. 10, 2025), https://www.hirono.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/letter_to_dag_re_cryptocurrency_enforcement.pdf.

² Corey G. Johnson & Al Shaw, *Top DOJ Official Shut Down Enforcement Against Crypto Companies While Holding More Than \$150,000 in Crypto Investments*, PROPUBLICA (Dec. 22, 2025), <https://www.propublica.org/article/todd-blanche-crypto-doj-trump>.

³ Senators Letter to Blanche at 1.

⁴ Chainalysis Team, *Crypto Crime Reaches Record High in 2025 as Nation-State Sanctions Evasion Moves On-Chain at Scale*, CHAINANALYSIS (Jan. 8, 2026), <https://www.chainalysis.com/blog/2026-crypto-crime-report-introduction/>.

⁵ *See id.* (“[E]ven if the value received by sanctioned entities were flat YoY, 2025 would still mark a record year for crypto crime, as activity increased across most illicit categories. . . . Human trafficking operations have increasingly leveraged cryptocurrency, while there has also been a particularly disturbing rise in physical coercion attacks, in which criminals use violence to force victims to transfer assets, often timing these assaults to coincide with cryptocurrency price peaks.”).

⁶ *See id.*; *see also* U.S. Financial Crimes Enforcement Network, “FinCEN Issues Advisory and Financial Trend Analysis on Chinese Money Laundering Networks” (Aug. 28, 2025), <https://www.fincen.gov/news/news-releases/fincen-issues-advisory-and-financial-trend-analysis-chinese-money-laundering>.

We noted that “[y]our decisions give rise to concerns that President Trump’s interest in selling his cryptocurrency may be the reason for easing law enforcement scrutiny.”⁷ Certainly, President Trump’s financial interests seem to have motivated some of his pardons of criminals convicted of cryptocurrency-related crimes.⁸ But the fact that you held substantial amounts of cryptocurrency at the time you made this decision calls into question your own motivations. The timeline of events is clear:

- 1/18/25: You disclosed cryptocurrency holdings of between \$158,000 and \$470,000, mostly in Bitcoin and Ethereum.⁹
- 2/10/25: You agreed to divest these assets “as soon as practicable.”¹⁰
- 3/5/25: You were confirmed as Deputy Attorney General.¹¹
- 4/7/25: You issued a memo scaling back DOJ’s cryptocurrency enforcement.¹²
- 5/31/25–6/3/25: Your cryptocurrency holdings were sold or transferred to relatives.¹³

As noted above, your decision to direct this change in DOJ policy favorable to the cryptocurrency industry while holding substantial amounts of cryptocurrency appears to have violated 18 U.S.C. § 208(a). This provision generally prohibits an executive branch employee from “participat[ing] personally and substantially” in a “decision . . . or other particular matter in which, to his knowledge, he . . . has a financial interest.”¹⁴ Willful violations of this provision are punishable by up to five years in prison.¹⁵ Your conduct is now the subject of a complaint to DOJ’s Office of the Inspector General.¹⁶

We have a constitutional obligation to perform oversight over the Department of Justice and its personnel and policy decisions. To that end, please preserve all relevant documents and communications, answer the following questions, and provide the requested information:

⁷ Senators Letter to Blanche at 3.

⁸ Jason Nelson, *All of Trump’s Pardons of Prominent Crypto Figures—So Far*, DECRYPT (Jan. 1, 2026), <https://decrypt.co/348546/trump-crypto-pardons-2025>.

⁹ U.S. Office of Gov’t Ethics (“OGE”), Executive Branch Personnel Public Financial Disclosure Report OGE Form 278e for Deputy Att’y Gen. Nominee Todd W. Blanche, signed Jan. 18, 2025, [https://extapps2.oge.gov/201/Presiden.nsf/PAS+Index/4B1E6A519F015E7D85258C30003200C5/\\$FILE/Blanche%2C%20Todd%20final278.pdf](https://extapps2.oge.gov/201/Presiden.nsf/PAS+Index/4B1E6A519F015E7D85258C30003200C5/$FILE/Blanche%2C%20Todd%20final278.pdf) (reporting holdings of between \$100,000 and \$250,000 in Bitcoin; \$50,000 and \$100,000 in Ethereum; and \$1,000 and \$15,000 each in Solana, Cardano, Ethereum Classic, Polygon, Polkadot, BAT, Quant, and Decentralized).

¹⁰ Letter to Designated Agency Ethics Official Jolene Ann Lauria from Todd Blanche (Feb. 10, 2025), [https://extapps2.oge.gov/201/Presiden.nsf/PAS+Index/0E4C3EB0ACE8404785258C30003217F2/\\$FILE/Blanche%2C%20Todd%20finalEA.pdf](https://extapps2.oge.gov/201/Presiden.nsf/PAS+Index/0E4C3EB0ACE8404785258C30003217F2/$FILE/Blanche%2C%20Todd%20finalEA.pdf).

¹¹ Library of Congress, Nomination PN12-5 — Todd Blanche — Department of Justice, <https://www.congress.gov/nomination/119th-congress/12/5?s=3&r=2>.

¹² Memorandum from Todd W. Blanche, Deputy Attorney General, U.S. Dep’t of Justice, to All Department Employees, “Ending Regulation by Prosecution” (Apr. 7, 2025), <https://www.justice.gov/dag/media/1395781/>.

¹³ U.S. OGE Periodic Transaction Report Form 278-T for Deputy Att’y Gen. Todd W. Blanche, signed June 3, 2025, [https://extapps2.oge.gov/201/Presiden.nsf/PAS+Index/9E22E6BED062C62D85258CC5002C7DEA/\\$FILE/Todd-Blanche-06.03.2025-278T.pdf](https://extapps2.oge.gov/201/Presiden.nsf/PAS+Index/9E22E6BED062C62D85258CC5002C7DEA/$FILE/Todd-Blanche-06.03.2025-278T.pdf).

¹⁴ 18 U.S.C. § 208(a).

¹⁵ 18 U.S.C. § 216(a)(2).

¹⁶ Corey G. Johnson, *Complaint Accuses Trump’s Criminal Attorney of ‘Blatant’ Crypto Conflict in His Role at DOJ*, PROPUBLICA (Jan. 23, 2026), <https://www.propublica.org/article/todd-blanche-complaint-conflict-of-interest>.

1. In a statement issued on January 23, 2026, DOJ represented on your behalf that “this was appropriately flagged, addressed, and cleared in advance.”¹⁷ Please describe in detail the facts underlying that statement. At a minimum, please explain:
 - a. What was “appropriately flagged”?
 - b. To whom was “this . . . appropriately flagged”?
 - c. By whom was “this . . . appropriately flagged”?
 - d. How was “this . . . addressed”?
 - e. How was “this . . . cleared”?
 - f. By whom was “this . . . cleared”?
2. Did you receive a written determination pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 208(b)(1) in advance of issuing your April 7, 2025 memorandum regarding cryptocurrency enforcement? If so, please provide a copy.
3. Did you communicate with agency ethics officials or anyone else within DOJ or the federal government about the propriety of issuing your April 7, 2025 memorandum regarding cryptocurrency enforcement while holding substantial cryptocurrency assets? If so, please provide all records reflecting or relating to this communication.
4. Did you communicate with representatives of any companies active in the cryptocurrency industry between March 5, 2025 and April 7, 2025? If so, please provide all records reflecting or relating to this communication.
5. Why did you wait until May 31, 2025 to begin disposing of your cryptocurrency holdings when you had promised to do so “as soon as practicable” more than three months earlier?
6. Why did you fail to recuse yourself from the decision to issue the April 7, 2025 memo regarding cryptocurrency enforcement?

Proper enforcement of our nation’s laws against criminals using cryptocurrency is of vital importance. To that end, we request answers to these questions and production of the requested materials as soon as possible and no later than February 11, 2026.

Sincerely,


Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator


Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator


Elizabeth Warren
Ranking Member
Committee on Banking,
Housing, and Urban Affairs

¹⁷ *Id.*



Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator



Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator