

The Daily Pennsylvanian

Penn denies allegations of foreign influence at Biden Center after House inquiry to Magill

By Molly Cohen | 01/18/23 4:03pm



Credit: Lilian Liu

The United States House Oversight and Accountability Committee sent a letter to Penn President Liz Magill inquiring about foreign donations and visitors to the Penn Biden Center after the discovery of classified documents at the Washington think tank.

The **letter** — signed by committee Chairman Rep. James Comer (R-Ky.) — requests that Magill provide documents and lists pertaining to donations from China to the University and the Penn Biden Center since 2017, as well as information about people who worked at the Center. The letter also requests information about people who visited President Joe Biden at the Center.

In an emailed statement to The Daily Pennsylvanian, a University spokesperson wrote that Penn has received the letter and plans to respond "in a timely matter."

The letter claims that Penn has received "millions of dollars from anonymous Chinese sources" and that these **donations tripled** following the announcement of the formation of the Penn Biden Center in 2017.

"The American people deserve to know whether the Chinese Communist Party, through Chinese companies, influenced potential Biden Administration policies with large, anonymous donations to UPenn and the Penn Biden Center," the letter said.

The University spokesperson wrote to the DP that "It is important to reiterate that the Penn Biden Center has never solicited or received any gifts from any Chinese or other foreign entity."

"The University has never solicited any gifts for the Center. Since its inception in 2017 there have been three unsolicited gifts, from two donors, which combined [to a total of] \$1,100. Both donors are Americans. One hundred percent of the budget for the Penn Biden Center comes from university funds," the spokesperson wrote. "Any foreign gifts received by the university are all properly reported to the U.S. Department of Education as required by **Section 117 of the Higher Education Act**. Penn is fully compliant with federal law regarding the reporting of foreign gifts and contracts."

The Penn Biden Center and the White House did not respond to multiple requests for comment.

The letter from the GOP-led committee goes on to express concern over who had access to the recently discovered documents belonging to Biden, specifically “given the Biden family’s financial connections to foreign actors and companies,” according to the House Oversight and Accountability Committee's [press release](#).

“President Biden’s pattern of mishandling classified documents is alarming,” the letter said. “The Committee is concerned about who had access to these documents given the Biden family’s financial connections to foreign actors and companies.”

The letter also requests a list of all Center employees, a list of all individuals with keycard access to the Center, and a visitor log of everyone who met with Biden at the Center.

In the emailed statement, the University spokesperson wrote that the "Penn Biden Center for Diplomacy and Global Engagement was founded on the principle that a democratic, open, secure, tolerant, and interconnected world benefits all Americans."

In January 2021, a [letter](#) from three House Republicans, including Comer, to then-Penn President Amy Gutmann alleged that the University received millions of dollars in undisclosed funds from China prior to and after the formation of the Penn Biden Center. The letter requested information about donations to the University from the Chinese government or any businesses located primarily in China since 2013. Vice President of University Communications Stephen MacCarthy denied the validity of the allegations in the letter.

During former Penn President Amy Gutmann’s Senate [confirmation](#) hearings for the ambassadorship to Germany in December 2021, she was asked about [donations](#) to the University from China.

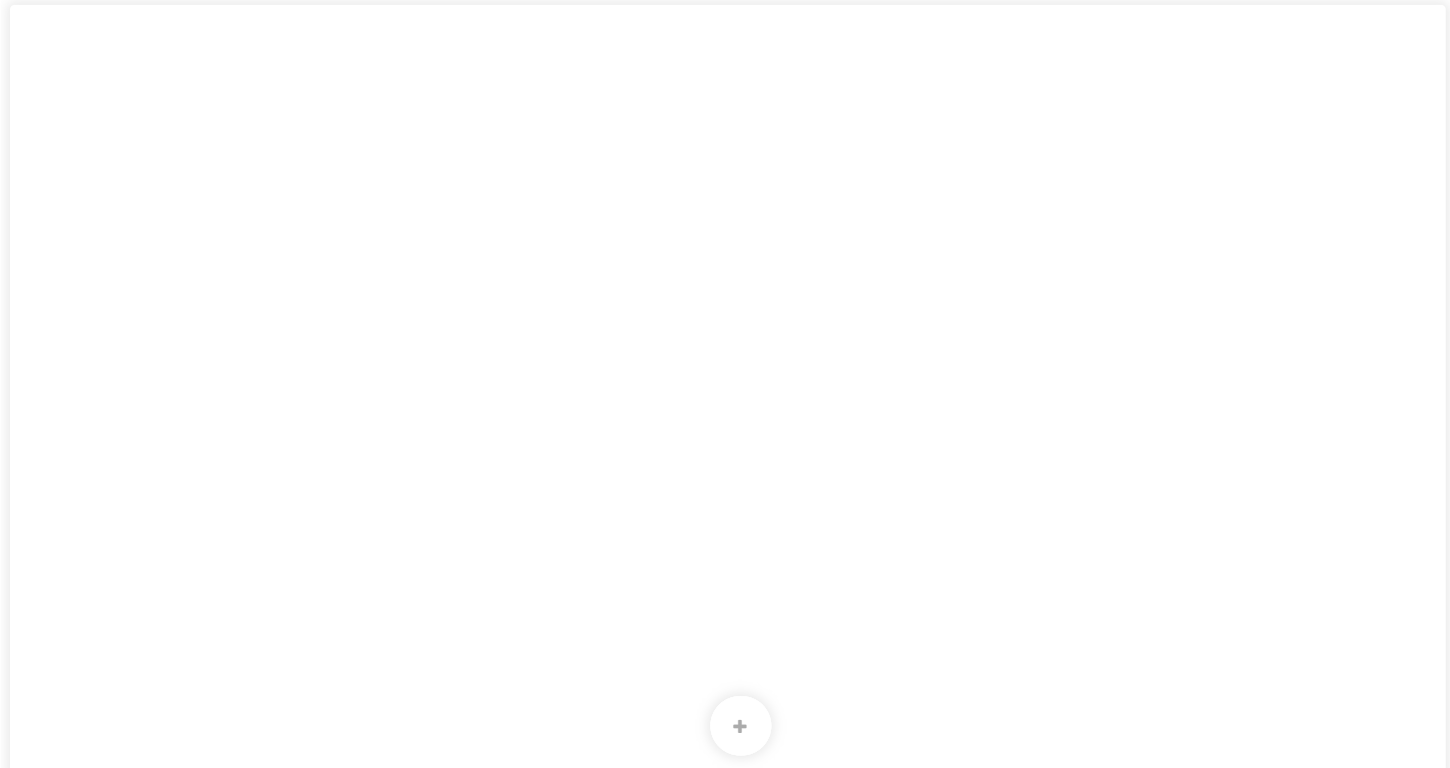
“The University of Pennsylvania has stood strong against accepting any gifts that would threaten academic freedom or threaten national security,” Gutmann said during her testimony.

The Department of Justice is currently [reviewing](#) classified documents that were found at Penn Biden Center on Nov. 2 and first reported on Jan. 9. An additional six documents were [discovered](#) in Biden’s Delaware home in December and publicized on Jan. 12.

The Penn Biden Center [opened](#) in 2018, and Biden used the space as his primary office in Washington prior to his [presidential campaign](#).

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