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Biden pardons more people in his criminal clan and commutes sentence of Leonard Peltier

By **Suzanne Downing** - January 20, 2025



Hunter and President Joe Biden. Photo credit: Spc. William Thompson | U.S. Army

Just two hours before he is not president, Joe Biden pardoned his brother James Biden and his wife Sara Jones Biden, his sister Valerie Biden Owens, and her husband John Owens.

He pardoned Gerald G. Lundergan and Ernest William Cromartie and commuted the life sentence of Leonard Peltier to serve the remainder of his sentence in home confinement.

Lundergan was convicted for corruption due to orchestrating a multi-year scheme to funnel more than \$200,000 in secret, unlawful corporate contributions into a campaign for United States Senate and for causing the concealment of those contributions from the Federal Election Commission (FEC). He is no longer serving in prison. [Read the Department of Justice report on him here.](#)

Cromartie, a local city assemblyman from Columbia, South Carolina, pleaded guilty in the spring to two counts of aggravated structuring and also income tax evasion.

Peltier is a Native American activist and a member of the American Indian Movement convicted of murdering two FBI agents on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in 1975. He is serving a life sentence.



And then there's the Biden crime family, which was issued a pardon. [Read the actual pardon at the Justice Department here.](#) Biden said in a statement, which was up briefly until noon today at the White House website:

"My family has been subjected to unrelenting attacks and threats, motivated solely by a desire to hurt me—the worst kind of partisan politics. Unfortunately, I have no reason to believe these attacks will end.

"I believe in the rule of law, and I am optimistic that the strength of our legal institutions will ultimately prevail over politics. But baseless and politically motivated investigations wreak havoc on the lives, safety, and financial security of targeted individuals and their families. Even when individuals have done nothing wrong and will ultimately be exonerated, the mere fact of being investigated or prosecuted can irreparably damage their reputations and finances.

"That is why I am exercising my power under the Constitution to pardon James B. Biden, Sara Jones Biden, Valerie Biden Owens, John T. Owens, and Francis W. Biden. The issuance of these pardons should not be mistaken as an acknowledgment that they engaged in any wrongdoing, nor should acceptance be misconstrued as an admission of guilt for any offense.

From Real Clear Wire's Paul Sperry in 2023, this is **Sara Biden's** connection to the influence-peddling scandal:

Trouble has followed Sara Catherine Jones since she married into the Biden family almost three decades ago.

Not long after her 1995 wedding to Jim Biden, she took a job with one of his brother Joe's Senate donors, who later accused her of "fraud" and "unjust enrichment," according to court records reviewed by RealClearInvestigations. In the years since, she and her husband have been accused of renegeing on debts and failing to pay their taxes, court and property records show. Like their nephew, first son Hunter Biden, they have reportedly sold the promise of access to their powerful relative to companies, several of which have gone bankrupt, some of which are tied to foreign countries hostile to the United States.

Now, Sara Jones Biden has emerged as a key figure in the mushrooming Biden foreign influence-peddling scandal.

GOP lawmakers seek to question the 64-year-old licensed attorney as part of their investigation of President Biden for possible impeachable offenses, including bribery. They are especially interested in subpoenaed bank records that include almost a quarter million dollars in checks Sara Biden wrote to her brother-in-law Joe, conspicuously marking them as "loan repayment." Republicans want to ask her about the origin of those loans and whether checks "were funded by Biden influence-peddling schemes with China."

"The Committees require you to provide details of these payments and other related matters," the chairmen of the House Oversight and Judiciary committees said in a joint letter they sent to her last month demanding she make herself available for a transcribed interview. In addition, they sent a subpoena to her husband for testimony and information.

Although Hunter and Jim Biden's questionable business dealings – and their possible blessing from the president – are drawing increasing scrutiny, Sara Biden has drawn little attention until now. But court records and other documents show she has been a central player in the Biden family business for decades. They show how her and her husband's desire for a lifestyle they could not quite afford has repeatedly led them to form relationships with shady figures and enterprises that often ended in lawsuits and even criminal investigations.

Looming over it all is Joe Biden. Documents recently obtained by government watchdog America First Legal, under a Freedom of Information Act request, reveal that Sara and Jim's main business, the Lion Hall Group, shows up in more than 3,735 emails generated by the former Vice President Biden's office. The sheer volume of communications concerning his brother and sister-in-law's business appears to contradict Biden's repeated claims over the years that he was never involved in, or even aware of, his family's business dealings.

A Match Made in Kentucky

Sara Biden's links to Joe Biden date back to the early 1990s, when she landed a committee job with his close personal friend, Sen. Wendell Ford, a Kentucky Democrat.

"Sen. Ford has been an important part of our family for a long time," Joe Biden said after Ford died in 2015. "He gave Sara Jones Biden, from Owensboro, Ky., her first job on the Hill when she graduated from Duke Law School, and that's how she met my brother Jimmy."

Jimmy and Sara weren't just sweethearts; they were also business partners – with a taste for high living.

In 1997, Sara and Jim Biden formed consulting firm Lion Hall Group with the help of Joe Biden's old law partner, David Walsh, who acted as their registered agent, according to incorporation records they filed with the Delaware Department of State.

That same year, they bought an expensive home in the Philadelphia suburbs and struggled to make payments on the \$650,000 mortgage, records show, even though a longtime Democratic fundraiser for then-Sen. Biden, Joel Boyarsky, loaned them as much as \$200,000. In 1998, the IRS filed its first lien against their home to collect \$145,000 in unpaid taxes.

In 2000, they borrowed \$353,000 from another Biden donor – Leonard Barrack, a Philadelphia attorney who a few years earlier had agreed to hire Sara Biden at Jim's urging for \$300,000 per year, according to court and other records. Barrack would soon regret helping them out.

According to a lawsuit he filed against Sara Biden four years later, Barrack said Jim had convinced him that by hiring Sara as a partner, the Bidens would be able to attract clients to his law firm through their political connections.

"Jim Biden assured Barrack that he would be able to generate business for the Barrack Law Firm through his family name and his resemblance to his brother, United States Senator Joseph Biden of Delaware," according to the 2004 complaint filed in Philadelphia County, Pa.

Instead, the document said, Sara Biden developed business opportunities for Lion Hall Group, where she served as president, a potential conflict of interest she allegedly never disclosed to Barrack.

The law firm, also known as Barrack, Rodos & Bacine, further alleged that she used its resources, including a travel budget, for personal benefit. The lawsuit said Sara Biden spent almost \$250,000 to travel with her husband to Hawaii and Alaska and across Europe, including England, Ireland, France, and Italy. They even brought their son, Nicholas (now 26), and a nanny on some of the "lavish" trips.

"Contrary to Sara Biden's representations, none of the foregoing trips generated any business for the Barrack Law Firm," the suit stated. "The Bidens never intended to generate business opportunities for the Barrack Law Firm during their travels, using the trips instead for personal pleasure and to develop opportunities for Lion Hall."

The couple also allegedly received a total of \$500,000 in loans before Sara left the firm in 2003. These salary advances were never repaid, according to the legal complaint. The case, which charged Sara and Lion Hall Group with "fraud," "unjust enrichment," and "breach of contract," was eventually settled. The terms are undisclosed.

Sara Biden did not respond to requests for comment. However, in a law publication profile she asserted that she "co-founded" the Barrack law firm's "institutional development and claims monitoring program." Barrack apparently was unaware she was pursuing other outside interests while allegedly looting his firm.

In 2000, then-Vice President Al Gore and HUD Secretary Andrew Cuomo announced a new \$2 million partnership with NorthPoint Communications to help "bridge the digital divide" by providing broadband Internet access to more than 800 low-income urban neighborhoods.

Looking for political juice to help it win the licenses needed from the FCC for telecom development, NorthPoint invited Sara Biden to join its board, along with Hunter Biden. At the time, Hunter served as executive director of e-commerce policy at the Commerce Department, a Clinton-appointed position. It's not known if his Aunt Sara did any lobbying for Northpoint, but Federal Election Commission records show that in 2000 she gave \$1,200 to Northpoint's PAC – People for Digital Competition.

Sara Biden does not appear in federal lobbying disclosure records as a registered lobbyist. Northpoint filed bankruptcy in 2001.

Several years later, another Biden donor retained her and Lion Hall Group to lobby Sen. Biden and other senators for passage of a bill to help resolve tobacco-related medical claims. Although the bill, which Joe Biden supported, died in the Senate, the donor who pushed it – famous Mississippi trial attorney Dickie Scruggs – introduced Sara Biden to two associates, also Biden donors, who proposed bringing her into a potentially lucrative venture, according to legal documents.

Mississippi lawyers Steve Patterson and Timothy Balducci were looking to build a Democratic lobbying firm in Washington with global reach, and offered to make Sara a partner in the firm, which they planned to call "Patterson Balducci & Biden." But the deal fell apart when Balducci and Patterson were indicted on federal bribery charges in an investigation that also ensnared Scruggs. After all three men went to federal prison, Biden was forced to return their donations.

Sara and her husband had more trouble with the IRS in 2013, when the agency slapped them with another lien for unpaid taxes, this one totaling \$589,000. They also faced state and local tax liens, property records show.

The couple had just purchased a \$2.5 million luxury vacation home in Naples, Fla., which the entire Biden clan, including Joe, used. But they racked up debt renovating the home – dubbed the “Biden Bungalow” – and went in search of more bailout money.

Owing a combined \$700,000 in tax and vendor liens, they quickly found another Joe Biden supporter to rescue them. Over the next few years, millionaire car magnate and major Biden donor John Hynansky of Delaware floated Sara and Jim Biden “loans” totaling \$900,000, records show.

During this same period, as then-Vice President Biden was the point person for U.S. policy in Ukraine, a federal lending agency – OPIC – authorized loans Hynansky’s company used to build a 7,300-square-foot Porsche dealership along the highway that connects downtown Kyiv to the Boryspil International Airport.

Mortgage records initially reported Jim and Sara Biden’s lender as “1018 PL, LLC,” obscuring Hynansky as the source of the loans. But the corporate entity is controlled by Hynansky, a 2018 document would later reveal.

The Bidens sold the waterfront house for a loss in 2018, and Hynansky released his lien on the property. However, Hynansky did not acknowledge full payment and satisfaction of the loans, according to the details laid out in documents recorded in Collier County, Fla.

Hynansky wasn’t their only white knight.

As the Bidens struggled to find money to pay contractors for hurricane-related repairs on their beach home, and find a buyer for it, they went back to Joe’s old cronies from Mississippi. One of them, Mississippi lawyer Joey Langston, who had been sentenced to three years in federal prison for improperly trying to influence a judge, introduced them to the founder of Americore Health, who needed money to aggressively expand his chain of rural hospitals.

Jim invoked his brother’s influence and said they had the political clout to drum up investment money, according to court documents and published reports. Impressed, Americore not only hired Lion Hall Group but loaned Jim and Sara Biden \$650,000 for their personal use, even as the company hemorrhaged cash. The funds could have been used to help the company’s failing hospitals, which had to lay off hundreds of employees after Americore failed.

As soon as the couple received their loan payment, however, they stepped back from the venture and the promised investments never materialized, according to a lawsuit filed against Jim Biden and Lion Hall Group by Americore’s medical partners after it went bankrupt in 2019. In a declaration, one plaintiff described Jim Biden as a con man who repeatedly made false promises “on the Biden’s [sic] family name.”

According to a recent court filing, Diverse Medical Management and Azzam Medical Services, which hoped to manage Americore hospitals, claimed “Biden and his wife, Sara Biden” made false assurances during a dinner they held at their home near Philadelphia that funding for the venture was forthcoming.

Meanwhile, Americore trustees have tried to claw back the \$650,000 from the Bidens in bankruptcy court. An attorney for Jim Biden maintains that his client recently repaid Americore half the amount to settle the dispute.

After rural hospitals were forced to close their doors in Pennsylvania and other states, the FBI stepped in to investigate the Americore debacle as part of a criminal fraud investigation. While agents have questioned witnesses about Jim Biden's role in the collapse, according to multiple reports, it's unclear if his wife has been questioned. She did not reply to inquiries.

Around the same time the couple was raking in hundreds of thousands of dollars from the crooked hospital deal, Hunter Biden was sending hundreds of thousands more to his Uncle Jim and Aunt Sara – and impeachment investigators on the Hill hope to question Sara about the origin and flow of these funds.

Starting in the summer of 2017, Hunter began sending large wire transfers to Sara and Jim's Lion Hall Group – some of which ended up in Joe Biden's bank account. The source of the funds was CEFC China Energy, a Chinese conglomerate tied to Chinese military intelligence. After a year, Lion Hall had received \$1.4 million from Hunter Biden.

On Aug. 14, 2017, Hunter Biden wired \$150,000 to Lion Hall after receiving \$400,000 from a joint account he held with CEFC. On Aug. 28, 2017, Sara Biden withdrew \$50,000 in cash from Lion Hall's account. Later the same day, she deposited it into her and Jim Biden's personal checking account, according to bank records subpoenaed by the House Oversight Committee. On Sept. 3, 2017, Sara Biden wrote a check to Joe Biden for \$40,000 for a "loan repayment," exactly 10% of the \$400,000 – matching a "10 held by H for the big guy" arrangement Hunter had made for Joe in the Chinese venture that was discovered in emails from his abandoned laptop.

Another personal check to Joe made out in Sara's handwriting, this one for \$200,000, was cut on March 1, 2018 – the same day Jim Biden got an equal amount from Americore. "Loan repayment" was also filled in for the memo line of the check.

If there were in fact loans between Joe Biden and his sister-in-law, the White House has not explained the reason for them or provided any details about their terms, such as the interest rates charged. A White House spokesman has only said that the release of the bank records is part of "a smear campaign against the president" by Republican investigators.

"There is nothing more to these transactions," said Paul Fishman, a lawyer representing Jim Biden, "and there is nothing wrong with them."

However, the wire transfers raised red flags with Hunter's bank, Wells Fargo, which asked about their "purpose" and also questioned the recipient, the Lion Hall Group. The bank noted the owner, Sara Biden, is a "relative [and] the address appears to be a residential address," adding "What is the business type?"

Unsatisfied with Hunter's explanations, the bank flagged the transactions as potential financial crimes, including money laundering, prompting the U.S. Treasury Department to issue a series of suspicious activity reports.

When her bank asked Sara Biden about the large transfers, she claimed the payments were for international consulting work (neither she nor her husband is registered with the Justice Department as foreign agents). However, she refused to provide any supporting documentation. The bank, in turn, closed the Lion Hall account, according to a 2020 Senate report.

Impeachment investigators tell RCI that they have subpoenaed related bank records from Bank of America, JPMorgan Chase, HSBC, and Cathay Bank, in addition to Wells Fargo.

The Senate report noted that Jim and Sara Biden also benefitted from a \$100,000 line of credit a CEFC executive opened for Hunter Biden in September 2017. After credit cards were issued to Hunter as well as his uncle and aunt, they went on “an extravagant global shopping spree.” Records show Hunter, Jim, and Sara Biden used the cards for plane tickets, hotel rooms, and electronic devices, among other things.



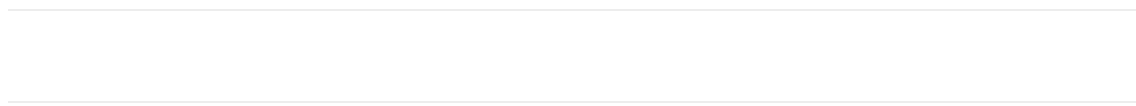
House impeachment investigators tell RCI that Sara Biden, who acted as an apparent financial conduit, may hold answers to whether the president also benefitted from the Chinese largesse as part of a “foreign influence-peddling scheme,” which they say could “compromise his decision-making and threaten national security.” They also seek to find out how much interaction Biden has had with her business, the Lion Hall Group, while in office.

Congressional investigators suspect that Lion Hall, which was incorporated by Joe Biden’s old law partner, was set up to act as a pass-through vehicle to launder possible bribes to Joe Biden. They point out that Biden’s Mississippi donor pal Joey Langston pumped almost \$200,000 into Lion Hall for unspecified services while Biden was vice president.

According to subpoenaed Lion Hall bank records, Langston Law Firm Consulting Inc. began wiring money to Lion Hall within weeks of Langston losing his appeal in February 2016 to have his conviction for bribing a judge thrown out. A federal judge also turned down his petition to have his criminal record cleared. Records show that between March 2016 and October 2016, Langston made four payments to Lion Hall totaling \$187,000. Investigators have asked Langston to come in for questioning and explain the nature of the payments.

Attempts to reach Langston for comment were unsuccessful.

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