



# Biden clemency for convicted fraudsters met with outrage: 'Slap in the face'

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Published December 17, 2024

Fox News

President Biden made history last week when he granted clemency to more than 1,500 people with a sweeping list of commutations and pardons.

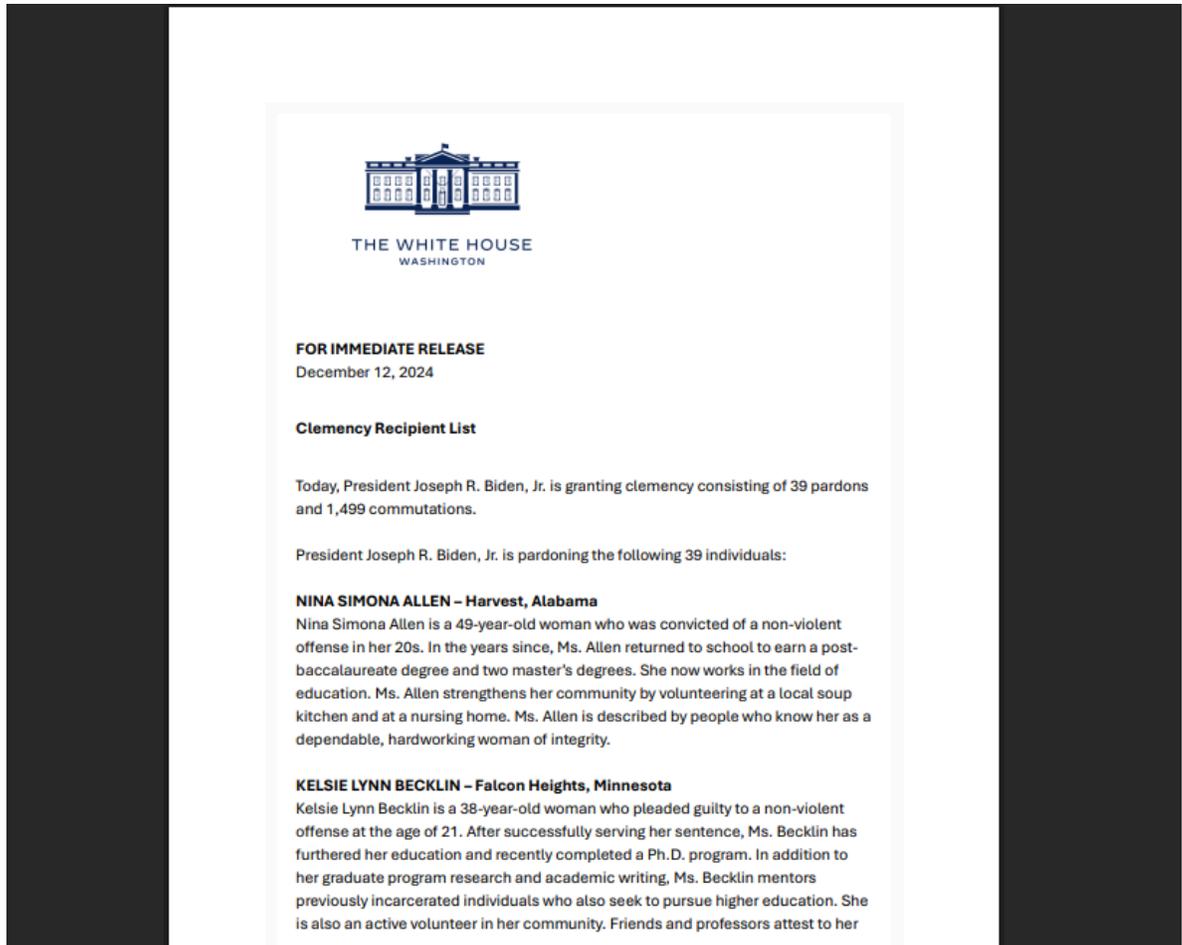
However, the move was met with fierce backlash from critics pointing out various names on the clemency list included individuals who cost taxpayers tens of millions of dollars through their fraudulent actions.

Among those covered in what the Biden White House is calling the largest single-day act of clemency by a U.S. president was Rita Crundwell, a former comptroller in Dixon, Illinois. Crundwell was convicted and sentenced to nearly 20 years behind bars for using her position to steal nearly \$54 million from the small town best known for the boyhood home of Ronald Reagan.

Also on the list was former New York law partner Paul M. Daugerdas, who was sentenced to 15 years in prison for his role in a multibillion-dollar tax fraud scheme described by prosecutors as one of the largest criminal tax fraud cases in U.S. history, as well as Toyosi Alatishe, who abused his position as a caretaker for patients with severe mental deficiencies and physical disabilities by using their personal information to file fraudulent tax returns.

## BIDEN CLEMENCY ANNOUNCEMENT GETS MIXED REVIEWS ON CAPITOL HILL: 'WHERE'S THE BAR?'

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In response to Biden's decision to grant clemency to Crundwell, Republican Illinois state Sen. Andrew Chesney called the move "nothing short of a slap in the face to the people of Dixon."

"Her crimes did not only affect the taxpayers of Dixon, but they also had a rippling effect across the region and state, as communities became subject to stricter, more tedious regulations," Chesney said in a statement following the commutation of Crundwell's sentence. "First, it was the pardoning of his son, and now Biden is apparently extending clemency to anyone with political connections, including corrupt government employees. It's sickening."

Illinois Republican Rep. Darin LaHood echoed Chesney's remarks about the commutation being a "slap in the face" to those impacted by Crundwell's crime, adding that "while many families in Dixon were living paycheck to paycheck, [Crundwell] took advantage of their trust in government and used her access to live an unearned life of luxury."



Rita Crundwell, former comptroller for the City of Dixon, Illinois, turns away as her attorney briefly speaks with the media after Crundwell pleaded guilty in federal court in Rockford, Illinois, on Wednesday, Nov. 14, 2012. (Stacey Wescott/Chicago Tribune/Tribune News Service via Getty Images)

In addition to schemes that defrauded public funds, many of the commutations Biden handed out went to white-collar criminals accused of defrauding their clients out of millions of dollars. Meanwhile, Biden also commuted the sentence of Michael Conahan, a former judge who imposed harsh sentences against juveniles in exchange for \$2.8 million in illegal payments in what became known as a "kids for cash" scandal.

"I want to see [Conahan's] name removed because that's just... another slap in the face, another injustice, on top of all of the grief that everybody in this community has already endured," said Sandy Fonzo, whose son Edward committed suicide after being sent

to a juvenile detention center for eight months after getting caught drinking underage.

**MOTHER RIPS BIDEN FOR COMMUTING SENTENCE FOR 'KIDS-FOR-CASH' JUDGE: 'DEEPLY UPSETTING'**



Former Luzerne County Court Judges Michael Conahan, left, and Mark Ciavarella, right, leave the United States District Courthouse in Scranton, Pennsylvania, on Sept. 15, 2009. (AP Photo/The Citizens' Voice, Mark Moran)

The administration commuted sentences for inmates who were on home confinement during the COVID-19 pandemic and who "have successfully reintegrated into their families and communities," according to the announcement.

This includes verification that the person's primary or a prior offense was not violent, a sex offense, or terrorism-related; ensured a low or minimum recidivism risk; and confirmed that the person was not engaged in violent or gang-related activity while incarcerated. All were on good behavior, and the decisions were not made on an individual basis.

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Between 2017 and 2021, then-President Trump granted just 143 pardons and 93 sentence commutations – amounting to just 2% of the clemency applications that his administration received, according to available Justice Department data.

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