

THIS IS NOT NORMAL: PART 2

TRUMP THE HUCKSTER – A PRESIDENT WITH A SIDE HUSTLE

THE TRUMP DIFFERENCE:

While many former presidents and presidential candidates have engaged in merchandise sales and fundraising efforts, Donald Trump's approach to selling merchandise is notably different in scale, variety, and style compared to his predecessors and contemporaries.

Scope and variety: Trump offers an unusually wide range of products, including digital trading cards (NFTs), physical memorabilia, cologne, shoes, and even pieces of his own clothing. This level of product diversity is unprecedented for a former president or presidential candidate.

Personal branding: Trump heavily leverages his personal brand and image across his merchandise, often featuring himself as a central figure in the products (e.g., digital trading cards depicting him as a superhero).

Direct sales approach: Trump frequently promotes his merchandise directly to supporters through social media and campaign events.

Monetization of political events: Trump has uniquely capitalized on political events, such as selling pieces of the suit he wore during his debate with Biden or merchandise featuring his mugshot.



High-priced collectibles: Some of Trump's offerings, like the digital trading cards or suit fragments, are priced much higher than typical campaign merchandise.

Ongoing sales during campaigning, while in or out of office: Trump continues to heavily promote and sell merchandise while actively campaigning for the presidency, which is unusual for a major party candidate.

While other former presidents have engaged in book deals, speaking engagements, and some merchandise sales, the scale and style of Trump's merchandise efforts are unprecedented in modern American politics. His approach more closely resembles that of a celebrity. Detractors would say Snake Oil Salesman or Carnival Barker than traditional political fundraising methods., particularly since the funds in many instances go to him personally or to a company controlled by him rather than his campaign.

DEFINITION OF SIDE HUSTLE:

A side hustle is an additional job or activity that a person engages in alongside their primary employment to earn extra income. This informal term is often used interchangeably with "side job" or "side gig."

HISTORICAL CONTEXT: What the Framers thought about a Presidential Side Hustle.

The framers of the U.S. Constitution were concerned about the potential for corruption and undue influence on the president through financial means. They addressed this issue specifically in the Constitution through what is known as the Domestic Emoluments Clause.

The Domestic Emoluments Clause: The Domestic Emoluments Clause is found in Article II, Section 1, Paragraph 7 of the Constitution. It states: "The President shall, at stated Times, receive for his Services, a Compensation, which shall neither be encreased nor diminished during the Period for which he shall have been elected, and he shall not receive within that Period any other Emolument from the United States, or any of them."

This clause serves two key purposes:

1. It establishes that the president's salary is fixed and cannot be changed during their term.
2. It prohibits the president from receiving any other form of compensation from the federal government or individual states.



TRUMP'S SIDE HUSTLES:

Past Enterprises:

As a businessman, before he became president, Trump had several ventures licensing his name on all sorts of things from steaks, vodka, an airline, water, various buildings and a university. This list does not include his two casinos in Atlantic City and a USFL football team. The majority were not successful and ended up in litigation. Trump was involved in six bankruptcies for various companies and holdings. The most successful enterprise was

his involvement in a reality television show, The Apprentice, in which he played a successful businessman.

But this article is about the enterprises and merchandizing conducted after he ran for office.

TRUMP'S RECENT MERCHANDIZING ENDEAVOURS:

Merchandise Production:

1. **Trump Products:** Many of Trump's branded products, including clothing, accessories, and even Bibles, are manufactured overseas. Reports indicate that items such as ties, eyeglasses, and various apparel are made in countries like China, Indonesia, and Bangladesh.

Sneakers and Footwear:

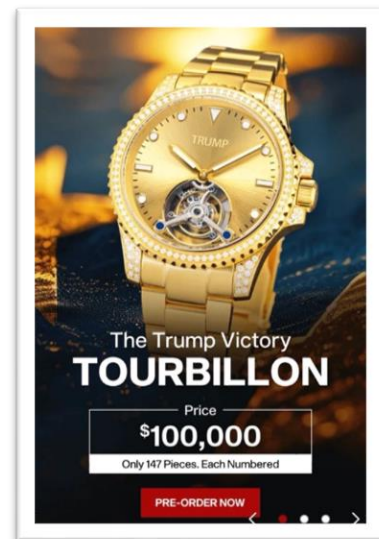
1. High-top sneakers:
 - Launched in February 2024
 - Prices range from \$99 to \$399 per pair
 - Includes various designs, such as the "Fight Fight Fight" edition featuring a bloodied Trump image
2. "Trump Presidential Golf Shoes":
 - Priced at \$499
 - Listed as sold out on the website
3. "Never Surrender" shoes:
 - Gold lace-up high-top sneakers
 - Priced at \$119.00
4. "Fight Fight Fight" boots:
 - Timberland-style boots
 - Feature an American flag motif on the cushioned collar
 - Include Trump's signature and the phrase "Fight Fight Fight"
5. Slides:
 - Mentioned as part of the expanded CIC Ventures Trump sneaker line
6. Various other sneaker designs:
 - "Crypto President" pair highlighting Trump's embrace of Bitcoin
 - Patriotic American flag-themed Trump support shoes



The footwear is sold through different channels, including the official Trump merchandise website and third-party sellers on platforms like Amazon. Some of these items are limited editions, with Trump reportedly signing a small number of pairs for select buyers.

Watches:

1. Trump Victory Tourbillon:
 - Price \$1000,000
 - Limited to 147 pieces
 - Trump's signature engraved
 - Available in yellow gold or pink gold
2. Fight Fight Fight watch:
 - Price: \$499 to \$799 depending on model
 - Available in stainless steel with red dial or two-tone gold
3. Production and sales:
 - Sold via pre-order with no refunds
 - Delivery expected in October/November/December
4. Expert opinions:
 - Watch experts are skeptical about the quality and pricing
 - The tourbillon model is likely "cobbled together" and "vastly overpriced"
 - Manufacturing cost estimated at \$15,000-\$16,000 for the \$100,000 watch
 - Despite claims of being "Swiss-made", experts suspect many Trump watches are actually made in China.



The Trump Bible:

1. Name and Price:
 - Called the "God Bless the USA Bible"
 - Costs \$59.99 (excluding taxes and shipping)
2. Contents:
 - King James Version of the Bible
 - Copies of the U.S. Constitution, Declaration of Independence, Bill of Rights, and Pledge of Allegiance
 - Handwritten lyrics to the chorus of Lee Greenwood's "God Bless the USA"
3. Marketing:

- Endorsed by Trump in a video on Truth Social
- Trump called it his "favorite book" and encouraged supporters to buy it
- Marketed as a "patriotic" version of the Bible

4. Production and Sales:

- Trump's name and image used under a paid license from CIC Ventures LLC
- CIC Ventures is owned by the Donald J. Trump Revocable Trust
- Trump reported earning \$300,000 in Bible sales royalties
- The Bibles are marketed at a minimum price of \$59.99, production cost estimated around \$3 Bible.



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5. Controversies:

- Criticized for blending politics and religion
- Seen by some as promoting Christian nationalism
- Unprecedented for a political leader to endorse a specific Bible edition
- **Printed in China:** Approximately 120,000 copies of Trump's Bible were printed in Hangzhou, China, and shipped to the U.S. in early 2024. This is significant given Trump's frequent accusations against China regarding unfair trade practices and job losses for Americans.
- **Oklahoma:** Oklahoma's initial request for Bibles to be placed in public schools had specifications that closely matched a Bible version endorsed by former President Donald Trump. The Trump-endorsed Bible appeared to be one of very few, if not the only one, that met all the specifications. It was estimated that the market price was above other options and would generate \$3.5 million in sales. Following criticism and accusations of bias, Oklahoma amended the request on October 9, 2024 thereby creating a larger pool of Bibles to choose from.
- The situation has sparked controversy over the separation of church and state, the use of public funds, and the potential political motivations behind the Bible initiative in Oklahoma schools.

Digital Trading Cards & Tie-in Perks:

Nothing says "crazy" like the former president marketing digital trading cards for \$99 showing Trump in various heroic poses. The Latest versions of NFTs come with potential perks of pieces of his suit and a crypto currency tie-in.

NFT (Non-Fungible Token) digital trading cards:

Latest Release - the "America First" collection:

- Trump recently launched a new series called "America First Collection" priced at \$99 per NFT.
- This is the fourth batch of Trump NFTs, with previous releases in December 2022, April 2023, and December 2023.

Content:

- Features 50 new illustrations of Trump in various poses, including:



- o Dancing
 - o Wearing an Iron Man-esque suit with the title "SuperTrump "
 - o Holding Bitcoin symbols with the label "crypto president," a moniker he gave himself while speaking at a tech fundraiser in June.
 - o Posing as a "sneakerhead" wearing his own line of golden shoes
 - o Trump posing as a "sneakerhead" wearing his own line of golden shoes, wearing an " and several
- Special Offers:

- Buyers purchasing 15 or more NFTs (\$1,485) receive a physical card with a piece of Trump's debate suit. Trump refers to this suit as the "knockout

suit" in his promotional video. He claims they will cut up the suit and randomly autograph five of the pieces, calling it a "true collector's item".

- Those buying 75 or more NFTs (\$7,425) get an invitation to a "gala dinner" with Trump in Florida.

Financial Impact:

- Trump has reportedly made \$7 million from his NFT licensing agreement.
- Previous releases have generated around \$4 million each in total revenue.

Crypto Connection:

- Trump has been courting crypto-friendly voters, calling himself the "crypto president."
- He's reversed his previous skepticism about cryptocurrencies, now promoting them in his campaign.

- The launch of the new NFT cards comes less than a week after Trump promoted an "official" cryptocurrency project using his name on Truth Social and linked to a group in the Telegram messaging app run by his sons Eric and Don Jr. called "The DeFiant Ones" (a nod to DeFi, short for decentralized finance). The group has since been renamed "World Liberty Financial" and has almost 50,000 subscribers, though little is known about the project.

Market Performance:

- The value of these NFTs has fluctuated, with the second release reportedly "torpedoing" the value of the first.
- Only about half of the third series (100,000 NFTs) sold.

Previous Collections:

- First collection released in December 2022
- Sold out 44,000 NFTs within two days
- Generated approximately \$4.5 million in sales



Previous Special Offers:

- This is not the first time Trump has sold pieces of his clothing. Last year, he offered fragments of the suit he wore during his arrest and mugshot in Atlanta to supporters who purchased 47 digital trading cards.

Religious Relics:

- A token of a saint is commonly referred to as a **relic**. Relics are physical remains or personal effects of saints and are often venerated in various religious traditions, particularly within Christianity. A saint relic is a physical object associated with a saint or holy person that is preserved and venerated in many religious traditions, particularly in Christianity.

Fragrances:

1. Trump Empire:

- Price: Around \$124.99 for 3.4 oz

- Notes: Peppermint, chai accord, apple, orange flower, jasmine, Tonka bean, amber, musk
- Available as part of a 4-piece gift set

2. Victory 47:

- New cologne for men launched in 2024
- Price: \$199 per bottle
- Notes: Citrus, cedar, leather, amber
- Features a Trump head topper on the bottle
- Expected to ship in fall 2024

3. Fight Fight Fight:

- Limited edition cologne for men
- Price: \$129
- Described as having "rich, robust notes"
- Features Trump's image and raised fist on the bottle
- Expected to ship in November/December 2024

6. Marketing:

- Fragrances are often marketed as collector's items
- Emphasis on Trump's brand and political imagery
- Some fragrances tie into his presidential campaign (e.g., "Victory 47")
- Sold through various channels including Amazon, Walmart, and dedicated Trump merchandise websites
- Some fragrances are listed as limited editions or temporarily out of stock

Other merchandise:

- "Trump Freedom Cooler" priced from \$299.
- Trump has sold merchandise featuring his mugshot on items like t-shirts and coffee mugs
- Silver coins featuring Trump's profile (\$100 each)

FOLLOW THE MONEY:

It's not entirely clear whether the money from Trump's branded merchandise goes directly to his campaign or to him personally. However, we can infer a few key points:

1. Personal profit: Some of the merchandise sales appear to benefit Trump personally. For example, his financial disclosure revealed that he made \$300,000 from Bible sales and over \$7.1 million in NFT licensing fees.

2. Licensing arrangements: Many of the products, such as the digital trading cards (NFTs) and sneakers, seem to be produced through licensing deals. This suggests that Trump likely receives licensing fees or royalties from these sales.
3. Bible: Trump's name and image used under a paid license from CIC Ventures LLC. CIC Ventures is owned by the Donald J. Trump Revocable Trust so the sale of the Bible appear to benefit Trump personally.
4. Blurred lines: There appears to be a blend between Trump's business interests and his campaign. For example, Truth Social, which Trump has a significant stake in, frequently promotes his posts and is closely tied to his political activities.
5. Varied products: Trump is selling a wide range of items, including digital trading cards, physical memorabilia (like suit fragments), sneakers, and Bibles. Some of these seem more directly tied to his personal brand than to his campaign.

Given this information, it's likely that the proceeds from Trump's branded merchandise are split between personal profit and campaign fundraising, depending on the specific product and how it's marketed. However, without more detailed financial reporting, it's difficult to determine the exact allocation of funds from these sales.

This merchandising strategy appears to be a blend of campaign fundraising and personal profit-making, leveraging Trump's brand and political events to sell a wide range of products to his supporters with at least a portion of the sales benefiting him personally.

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What the framers thought about the side hustle:

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Framers' Intentions:

1. Preserving presidential independence: Alexander Hamilton explained in The Federalist No. 73 that the clause was designed to isolate the President from potentially corrupting congressional influence. By fixing the salary, the legislature "can neither weaken his fortitude by operating on his necessities, nor corrupt his integrity by appealing to his avarice."

2. Preventing undue influence: The clause aims to ensure that neither the federal government nor any state can exert influence over the president through financial means. Hamilton noted that this would prevent the president from having "any pecuniary inducement to renounce or desert the independence intended for him by the Constitution.

3. Avoiding corruption: The framers were concerned about the potential for corruption through gift-giving, which was a common practice among European rulers and diplomats at the time. By prohibiting additional compensation, they sought to prevent even unconscious influence on the president's decision-making.

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Trump businesses prior to presidency:

Donald Trump's business dealings before becoming president frequently involved litigation. Here are some key points:

1. Unprecedented number of lawsuits: An exclusive USA TODAY analysis found that Trump and his businesses were involved in at least 3,500 legal actions in federal and state courts over three decades prior to his presidency.

2. Wide range of legal actions: These lawsuits covered various areas, including:

- Real estate disputes
- Casino-related issues
- Personal injury claims
- Conflicts with government agencies
- Bankruptcy proceedings
- Unpaid royalties
- Trademark infringements

3. Litigation as a business strategy: Trump often used lawsuits as a negotiating tool, turning to litigation to distance himself from failing projects or to haggle over property tax bills.
4. Bankruptcy protection: Trump repeatedly used bankruptcy protection to reconfigure debts of companies within the Trump Organization.
5. High-profile settlements: After his election in 2016, the Trump Organization settled several notable cases, including a \$25 million settlement for fraud allegations against Trump University.
6. Ongoing legal battles: By 2016, Trump or his companies had been involved in 3,500 legal cases in federal and state courts. He was the plaintiff in 1,900 cases and the defendant in 1,450.
7. Real estate lawsuits: Trump faced numerous legal battles related to his real estate projects, including discrimination claims and disputes with local governments.
8. Business ventures: His expansion into casinos, education, and other sectors also resulted in various lawsuits.

In summary, litigation was a common feature of Trump's business career before he became president, with thousands of lawsuits spanning various aspects of his business dealings.

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