Involves Donald Trump, Eric, Don Jr.

Pardon for Binance founder Changpeng Zhao

B Reported

The pardon and Binance's lobbying filings are primary records (A). Binance's business with World Liberty rests on reporting (Bloomberg, The Block). McDowell's friendship with Don Jr. is as reported by NOTUS, CBS News and The Free Press; no payment between them is reported.

13 sources **6** primary records **13** with an archived copy

REACHED THE FAMILY

May 1, 2025

Amount not disclosed

No direct payment to the family is documented. The tie is Binance's role in USD1, the family's stablecoin, including the $2 billion MGX deal settled in USD1 (see the MGX entry). Lobbying fees in Senate filings went to the firms, not the family: Checkmate Government Relations reported $450,000 from Binance for the third quarter of 2025, then $450,000 for the fourth quarter (as amended), $450,000 for the first quarter of 2026 and $750,000 for each of the second and third quarters of 2026, all listing executive relief; BakerHostetler reported $260,000 from Binance for the first three quarters of 2025 and $30,000 from Zhao for the second quarter. The House Judiciary Committee Democrats' August 2026 staff report says Binance itself paid $260,000 to lobby the White House; that equals the BakerHostetler total, and the report does not mention Checkmate's fees.

FROM Binance (company)

CHANNEL business ties through World Liberty's USD1 stablecoin

OFFICIAL ACTION

Oct 21, 2025

Presidential pardon of Changpeng Zhao, who had pleaded guilty to failing to maintain an effective anti-money laundering program, served four months and paid a $50 million fine

AGENCY President; Department of Justice Office of the Pardon Attorney

The action is dated 173 days after the payment.

WHAT HAPPENED

Changpeng Zhao founded Binance, a major crypto exchange. In 2023 he pleaded guilty to failing to maintain an effective anti-money laundering program, served four months in prison and paid a $50 million fine. Binance paid $4.3 billion to settle.

In 2025 Binance's business became entangled with World Liberty Financial, the Trump family's crypto company. In May, an Abu Dhabi fund's $2 billion investment in Binance was settled in World Liberty's USD1 stablecoin. On May 29, 2025, the SEC filed to dismiss its lawsuit against Binance and Zhao with prejudice.

In September 2025 Checkmate Government Relations, the firm of lobbyist Ches McDowell, registered to lobby for Binance. Checkmate's third-quarter report, signed October 20, 2025, lists $450,000 in income from Binance for contacts with the White House Office and the Treasury on digital asset policy and "executive relief." Trump pardoned Zhao the next day, October 21, 2025. NOTUS, CBS News and The Free Press describe McDowell as a friend of Don Jr.; no business tie or payment between the two has been reported.

Binance and Zhao also paid BakerHostetler, whose lobbyist Teresa Goody Guillén has represented Zach Witkoff, according to CBS News. Its filings show $260,000 from Binance over the first three quarters of 2025 and $30,000 from Zhao, with executive relief listed from the second quarter. Checkmate kept reporting income from Binance after the pardon under the same issue description. The White House said Trump was exercising his constitutional authority.

POTENTIAL VIOLATION

No legal question has been raised by anyone with standing or expertise in the sources reviewed, so this field is left blank rather than supplied by the ledger.

THEIR RESPONSE

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt said Trump exercised his constitutional authority and that Zhao was prosecuted despite no allegations of fraud or identifiable victims.

SOURCES

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President Trump pardons former Binance CEO Changpeng Zhao
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Trump-Tied Stablecoin Used for MGX's $2 Billion Binance Deal
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Cointelegraph (citing Politico) Oct 26, 2025 news
https://cointelegraph.com/news/cz-pardon-binance-lobbying-trump-washington
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U.S. Senate Office of Public Records (LDA filing by Checkmate Government Relations) Oct 20, 2025 primary
Lobbying report (LD-2), third quarter 2025, client Binance Holdings Ltd.
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U.S. Senate Office of Public Records (LDA database) Oct 18, 2026 primary
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Super Rich? In Prison? Lobbyists Want to Help Score You a Trump Pardon.
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CBS News May 7, 2026 news
https://www.cbsnews.com/news/trump-pardon-recipients-democrats-congressional-investigation-pay-to-play/
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The Free Press Jan 23, 2026 news
Two Drinks with . . . Don Jr.'s Hunting Buddy
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> **House Judiciary Committee Democratic staff** Aug 2026 congressional
> Pardons, Inc. (staff report)
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Last verified Oct 21, 2026.

REACH CONGRESS

Committees with jurisdiction over this kind of action:

HOUSE Judiciary, Financial Services

SENATE Judiciary, Banking Housing and Urban Affairs

Find your representative | Contact your senators

Both links go to the official finders. This page stores no contact information.
