

# [***T-shirts and silver balls: Politics get mixed in with the profane at a Trump store***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6B42-VXB1-DY7V-G03J-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

Boones Mill, Virginia (CNN) &#8212; Walk into Trump Town USA in Boones Mill, Virginia, and you may marvel at the breadth of human creativity, as long as you're not distracted by how the merchandise tackles some of the most controversial political issues in the most vulgar way possible. The most spectacular specimens are in the back right corner: pairs of silvery, veiny metal testicles hanging from a ring and wrapped in protective clear plastic. "That's Trump's balls," the store's owner, Whitey Taylor, explains. The smaller set costs $75, the larger, $125. They're heavy.

There are dozens of independent stores across the country selling items supporting [*former President Donald Trump's reelection bid.*](https://www.cnn.com/election/2024) They are another unique feature of Trump's appeal and what their customers buy offers some insight into what they want politically - and that is not subtlety.

Taylor's outlet is a prime example. A couple of weeks before the Iowa caucuses, business was brisk with out-of-towners flocking to a decommissioned church in a tiny village that is now packed with Trump merch. It's like the Cave of Wonders from the movie Aladdin, except with more references to butts, poop and pee. A bumper sticker shows a cartoon Trump urinating on "Putin." A keychain can be squeezed to make a tiny Trump defecate. "Moonie Trump" figurines depict the former president mischievously showing his naked backside. "We sell a lot of those," said Taylor, who has long sought to create controversies of his own.

The gag gifts may raise a smile among the customers, but they also show their passion, pride and faith in Trump.

Dale Copeland was buying some Trump hats and a Trump sign to put over the garage he'd just built, "so when you pull in the driveway you see it. And then I'm going to post it all over Facebook."

He said he was afraid of an economic crisis to rival the Great Recession of 2008 and counting on Trump to prevent it.

Back then, he said, "I lost everything I had. I barely survived ... This is leading up to the same thing again. So, it's coming. The downfall is coming." He thought Trump could right the ship.

He said he did brick and concrete work for a living in North Carolina, and his own business had been busy the last few years. But the economy had been tougher for his adult children, who he said would struggle to afford a home and car and were "more poor than what they should be." Talking to Taylor, the store owner, he seemed to like the idea that Trump might mete out some retribution. "One thing about it: if he gets back in there, somebody's going to prison," Copeland said.

The economy is on a lot of customers' minds, said Melinda Williams, who works behind the register at Trump Town USA. "They're very scared, I think, because of the way things are going," she said. "They feel like where we're at right now is stagnant, like it's not going anywhere. And it's definitely not going in a positive direction."

Another shopper, Mary-Jean Palmer, spoke thoughtfully about her ***politics*** and why she felt the criminal indictments against Trump were "just totally evil."

"I'm a reasonable woman," she said. "I often wonder, what encourages people to be a Democrat? Because I don't see a lot of kindness. I don't see a lot of help for our country. And I see a lot of talk, no action. That's why I like Trump." Over her shoulder was a a rack of stickers, some reading "F\*\*k Biden."

But while Taylor offers many items denigrating President Joe Biden, Vice President Kamala Harris and their Democratic Party, they don't sell well. "They like the slogan. They like to read it," Taylor said of the anti-Biden merchandise. But, "they won't wear it." Taylor had offered merch with a picture of Hillary Clinton in prison, "And they would say, 'I don't want that b\*tch's picture on my back.' It was terrible."

Taylor keeps a close eye on political news to be ready for the next trend. When a big political meme pops up it sells well in the moment but fades within weeks. [*Trump's mugshot from his criminal case in Fulton County, Georgia*](https://www.cnn.com/2023/08/24/politics/trump-mug-shot-analysis/index.html) - available on T-shirts, yard signs, flags, and, of course, mugs - was "really hot" for about two months, Taylor said, before sales began to cool off. Same thing happened with the [*"Let's Go Brandon"*](https://www.cnn.com/2021/11/01/politics/lets-go-brandon-joe-biden/index.html) merch that sprung up after a sports reporter misheard a "F\*\*k Joe Biden" chant.

Taylor gets items from wholesalers and mom-and-pop shops around the country, and not everyone is a winner. Canned "AOC Brand Cow Farts" - a reference to [*a paper from (and later disavowed by) Democratic New York Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez linking Big Agriculture to climate change*](https://www.cnn.com/2019/02/12/politics/fact-checking-some-of-trumps-el-paso-speech/index.html) - have not sold well. "This old guy spent $25,000 in Greensboro having that label made and all. Then he passes away. His wife calls me - she says, 'You want all these cow farts? ... Please come and get them out of my garage,'" Taylor explained. "I said, 'OK, I'll come get 'em." They sat stacked on a shelf next to the Moonie Trumps.

There were prints of a painting showing Trump addressing reporters who were dressed like clowns, dart boards with Biden's face, floral aprons with "Trump 2024" embroidered on them, Trump baby onesies, Trump clocks, a "Trump Train" flag, an "America First" flag anda flag that blended the American and Israeli flag. And then there's a flag of the American Stars and Stripes being pulled upward by a muscular arm to reveal a Confederate flag behind it.

What's the next bestseller? "Who knows?" Taylor said. "Just have to wait. And the more the Democrats talk about MAGA crazy people, then, you know, something will spin off of it."

Taylor is well-known locally for stirring up controversy and getting his name in the newspapers. He owned a racetrack for decades, and said he knew how to pull stunts - like wet t-shirt contests or announcing a cockfighting match he never intended to hold - to make people mad and get attention. He's long sold merch at big events, like special sunglasses for viewing the solar eclipse. (He made more money, he said, in the parts of the country where the sun was only 90% eclipsed than in the path of totality, where there was more competition.)

Early in the 2016 race, before Trump had taken over the Republican Party, Taylor was selling racing merch at the Daytona 500, and prayed to God for guidance. "My son said, 'Dad, what's God telling us?' It came in my spirit: 'He wants me to help Trump,'" Taylor said. His son started laughing, "and profusely." Taylor said he'd order 1,000 T-shirts. His son begged him to start with just 100. "I said, 'Go big or go home, boy.' I said, 'If God's telling me, we'll sell every one of 'em, and if not, we'll throw 'em in the trash can and leave."

His first item was a white T-shirt, and on the back, it read, "Donald Trump: Finally someone with balls." Taylor said, "I became known as 'the Balls Man' on the tour." If he skipped a campaign rally, other merchants would tell him college kids had come looking for him, asking, "Where's the Balls Man?"

In September 2020, he opened his store inside a hundred-year-old church by a stoplight on Highway 220. "Religious people come in here and they say, 'Is this God's house?' I say, 'No! it's the house that Trump paid for.'"

After the election, his big seller was "Stop the Steal." Taylor believes the 2020 election was stolen (it wasn't). But he thought the storming of the Capitol on January 6, 2021, was "a bad thing," that the rioters "never should have gone inside." Still, he said he did not blame Trump for the insurrection, and did not think Trump had a responsibility to convince the rioters to calm down.

While making money is his business, Taylor also said he probably would not be interested in running a Trump store if the former president himself wasn't so controversial.

As for whether Trump himself - like some of the merchandise - was too crass, too vulgar and not presidential, Taylor responded: "The whole world has changed."

"It's not really good that he does that ... when he hollers 'bullsh\*t this' and 'bullsh\*t that,'" Taylor said. "But, it is bullsh\*t. Bottom line."

By Elle Reeve, Samantha Guff and Frank Fenimore, CNN

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