

JOEL KHALILI

BUSINESS OCT 16, 2024 9:53 AM

Trumpcoin Launches With a Whimper

Investors scooped up only a small number of the Trump family's new World Liberty Financial crypto tokens after website reliability issues interfered with a launch event.



PHOTOGRAPH: PETER DAZELEY/GETTY IMAGES



SAVE

The Trump family's new crypto venture, World Liberty Financial, is off to an inauspicious start after website crashes limited the ability for investors to participate in an inaugural token sale event.

The crypto token, WLFI, went on sale at around 9 am Eastern time on Tuesday. At the time of writing, the website continues to be plagued by reliability issues, pushing some visitors to an error page. "We can't connect to the server for this app or website at this time," the notice states.

Data from analytics platform Etherscan shows that only 8,500 people have participated in the token presale so far, purchasing around 750 million tokens—3.75 percent of the total available in the presale—between them. A World Liberty Financial representative had previously said on X that 100,000 accredited US investors had been preapproved after registering interest in the token.

World Liberty Financial adviser Sandy Peng told crypto media outlet CoinDesk that the website went down due to a surge in traffic. More than 70 million unique visitors landed on the site within an hour of the token going on sale, she said. The organization did not immediately respond to a request for further comment.

The website issues make it challenging to accurately assess the appetite for the WLFI token among investors. But the rocky launch will give pause to those concerned about the potential for the Trump project to set back the DeFi industry, should it fail.

Since August, World Liberty Financial has been marketed by the Trump family as a way to "revolutionize finance" and "make finance great again." The website lists presidential candidate Donald Trump as "chief crypto advocate," and his sons—Eric, Donald Jr., and 18-year-old Barron—as "Web3 ambassadors."

The World Liberty Financial platform is set to provide peer-to-peer borrowing and lending, in the spirit of what's known in cryptoland as decentralized finance, or DeFi. But hard details about the project have not been forthcoming. Despite making multiple announcements teasing the project on Telegram and X, and publishing a manifesto of sorts on the project's aim, the Trumps have supplied barely any information about the workings of the platform or range of services to be available to customers.

This created an opening for bad actors. In late August, impersonators used the project's Telegram channel—pitched as “the ONLY [sic] place to get the official news”—to advertise an inauthentic token giveaway. In early September, X accounts belonging to Lara Trump, wife to Eric, and Tiffany Trump, daughter of the former president, were allegedly compromised and used by the hackers to peddle another crypto token purportedly related to World Liberty Financial.

In the manifesto published on October 11, which promised to illuminate the Trumps' “vision for revolutionizing finance” but ultimately shed little light, World Liberty Financial explained that the WLFi token will give people the ability to vote on the future development of the platform. “WLFi is also launching the WLFi governance platform, a DeFi governance platform governance [sic] for \$WLFi token holders to help shape the WLFi protocol through governance,” reads one particularly bewildering passage of the post.

“I think all the enthusiasm for the sale has been undone by confusing marketing,” says Nic Carter, a general partner at crypto-focused VC firm Castle Island Ventures. “The details they did release of the protocol are extremely sparse, so it doesn't surprise me that the market hasn't responded well.”

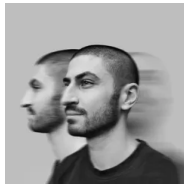
The fumbled token launch, then, is the latest in a series of mishaps and snafus to befall the World Liberty Financial project. Thanks to its affiliation with the Trump family, any mistakes have the potential to attract magnified attention from press and regulatory bodies, too.

“A bigger concern is investors and regulators perhaps using any failure of the project to justify hostility to the whole crypto ecosystem,” says crypto analyst Noelle Acheson, formerly of crypto brokerage Genesis. “Most developers are working on different types of projects and shouldn't be deterred,” she says. “But there will be more scorn heaped on crypto.”

You Might Also Like ...

- **In your inbox:** Upgrade your life with WIRED-tested gear
- A bitcoin mining dream turned into a nightmare
- **The Big Interview:** Marissa Mayer—I am a software girl
- I made a wholesome OnlyFans to try to make ends meet

- **Event:** Join us for [The Big Interview](#) on December 3 in San Francisco



[Joel Khalili](#) is a reporter for WIRED, covering crypto, Web3, and fintech. He was previously an editor at TechRadar, where he wrote about the business of technology, among other things. Before turning his hand to journalism, he studied English literature at University College London.

TOPICS

CRYPTOCURRENCY

DONALD TRUMP

READ MORE

As Trump Takes a Victory Lap, the Crypto Faithful Kiss the Ring

The crypto industry is celebrating the return of Donald Trump to the White House in anticipation of an easier ride under his regime.

JOEL KHALILI

Meet ZachXBT, the Masked Vigilante Tracking Down Billions in Crypto Scams and Thefts

He just untangled a \$243 million bitcoin theft, what may be the biggest-ever crypto heist to target a single victim. And he has never shown his face.

ANDY GREENBERG

Nigeria Drops Charges Against Tigran Gambaryan, Jailed Binance Exec and Former IRS Agent

After eight months, one of the US's most prominent crypto-crime investigators is finally coming home.

Silk Road Creator Ross Ulbricht Is Waiting for Trump to Keep His Word—and Set Him Free

On the campaign trail, incoming US president Donald Trump vowed to release Silk Road creator Ross Ulbricht from prison if reelected. Will he keep his word?

JOEL KHALILI

Kalshi CEO Tarek Mansour On Prediction Markets' Big Night: 'We Even Overtook Pornhub'

Prediction markets like Kalshi beat pollsters in forecasting the 2024 US election. Mansour now says financial marketplaces are the future of political prognostication.

KATE KNIBBS

In the Kentucky Mountains, a Bitcoin Mining Dream Turned Into a Nightmare

When bitcoin was on a hot streak, owners of small industrial facilities in Kentucky struck up crypto mining partnerships with Chinese companies. Then things fell apart.

JOEL KHALILI

Man Arrested for Snowflake Hacking Spree Faces US Extradition

Alexander “Connor” Moucka was arrested this week by Canadian authorities for allegedly carrying out a series of hacks that targeted Snowflake’s cloud customers. His next stop may be a US jail.

MATT BURGESS

Donald Trump's Ground Game in Michigan Is Mostly Glitchy Apps and Vibes

"It’s what happens when you let a bunch of grifters take over,” a Trumpworld source said. Still, the polls remain even.

JAKE LAHUT

Profiteers Are Exploiting US Election Conspiracies and Hate to Make Millions

Unscrupulous online operators are spreading toxic lies to push bitcoin scams and sell MAGA shirts to Facebook users in the run-up to the US presidential election.

MERIE M MAHDHI

DHS Warns Law Enforcement Election Deniers May Attempt to Bomb Drop Boxes

In a series of reports reviewed by WIRED, analysts at the Department of Homeland Security warn of a “heightened risk” of right-wing extremists carrying out attacks around the election.

DELL CAMERON

Election Denial Conspiracy Theories Are Exploding on X. This Time They're Coming From the Left

Conspiracy theories about missing votes—which are not, in fact, missing—and something being “not right” are being spread widely on X in the wake of Donald Trump’s election victory.

DAVID GILBERT

Peter Todd Was ‘Unmasked’ as Bitcoin Creator Satoshi Nakamoto. Now He’s in Hiding

Peter Todd has gone underground after an HBO documentary named him as the creator of Bitcoin, Satoshi Nakamoto, whose real identity has long remained a mystery.

JOEL KHALILI

