

Name: Alert ID: TMML2024036929542 Midway through the Republican National Convention on Tuesday, Pam Bondi, the former attorney general of Florida, railed against the supposed corruption of the Biden family: "A corrupt Ukrainian oligarch put Hunter [Biden] on the board of his gas company, even though he had no experience in the country ■ or in the energy sector." That may sound familiar, because that supposed malfeasance was at the heart of the scandal that led to President Donald Trump's impeachment late last year. Impeachment proceedings in the House of Representatives showed that Trump threatened to withhold crucial military aid unless Volodymyr Zelensky, then Ukraine's president-elect, opened an investigation into the Biden family and the discredited theory that Joe Biden intervened to end a criminal probe into the gas company where Hunter was on the board. The House voted to impeach Trump after several key actors in this scheme testified against him. It's a bold move to remind voters of the extensive scandal for which you were impeached less than a year ago. But Tuesday night's RNC lineup amounted to an almost proud display of three and a half years of the Trump administration's corruption ■ from the mingling of the presidency and the Trump Organization, which the president did not divest from, to several flagrant displays of using federal resources to advance Trump's re-election campaign. Four years after he campaigned on "draining the swamp," Trump is showing off his graft. Bondi was enmeshed in an entirely different Trump corruption scandal herself, although she claimed on Tuesday: "I fought corruption and I know what it looks like." As Florida's attorney general in 2013, Bondi was considering joining the state of New York in a lawsuit against an affiliate of Trump University, Trump's now-defunct for-profit education company, which was facing allegations of fraud. But after Trump donated \$25,000 through his charity to a political action committee supporting Bondi's re-election — violating federal tax laws in the process ■ Bondi quietly decided not to join the case. (Trump's campaign later claimed the donation was a "mistake," and Trump himself paid a \$2,500 IRS fine, because as a nonprofit, his charity is prohibited from making political gifts.) Bondi is also a registered lobbyist for Qatar, which the U.S. Department of Justice has accused of bribing FIFA officials in exchange for hosting the 2022 World Cup, as The Daily Beast reported. And then there was Eric Trump, who is still executive vice president of the Trump Organization but spoke during prime time at the RNC, urging people to vote for his father. It was another bold move: Earlier in the day, the New York state attorney general asked a judge to force Eric Trump to answer subpoenas about whether the Trump Organization committed fraud by inflating its assets to get loans and tax breaks. To date, Eric has refused to comply with seven subpoenas about the matter. His appearance underscored the extent to which President Trump has joined his company to his White House. In January 2017, there was a thin but pleasant fiction that once he became president, Trump would set aside the billion-dollar Trump Organization. In the first full press conference as president-elect, on Jan. 11 of that year, Trump said that while he wouldn't divest from the Trump Organization, he would turn full control over to his sons Don Jr. and Eric. His lawyer told the press that day that the Trump family was "committed to ensuring that the activities of the Trump Organization are beyond reproach and cannot be perceived to be exploitive of the office of the presidency." And Eric Trump told ABC News the following week that "we've taken extraordinary measures to make sure the two are separate and distinct." Eric's convention speech eliminated any such distinction, but it was already largely gone. At least 12 foreign governments made payments to Trump Organization properties during Trump's first two years in office, according to the watchdog group Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington. Scores of political committees and special interests have done the same. Trump has constantly visited Trump Organization properties as president, and even awarded the Group of 7 summit to his Trump National Doral resort in Florida before reversing course. Even now, Trump appears to be putting staffers who are paid by tax revenue to work on his campaign. Trump may have coerced White House employees into violating the Hatch Act, which prohibits federal employees from engaging in partisan political activities while on duty or on government property. Hundreds of staffers helped produce videos for the RNC, exposing them to potential legal ramifications including termination. In another possible Hatch Act violation, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo addressed the RNC from Jerusalem, where he taped his remarks while on a foreign tour. Democrats are launching an investigation into Pompeo's participation in the convention, but State Department officials preemptively claimed that Pompeo — America's top diplomat — would be speaking in a personal capacity, and therefore would not be breaking the law. "What the hell does that mean?" one former Trump

administration official, who requested anonymity to speak freely, said in an interview with HuffPost. “What personal capacity does a secretary of state have outside of, say, the bathroom?” The showiest parts of Tuesday night’s RNC were two presidential acts, a pardon and a naturalization ceremony, carried out on live television — unprecedented events for a political convention. It was a stunning merger of Trump’s presidency with his re-election effort, and was immediately decried by ethics experts. “Simple enough, if this were not an attempt to influence the election, it wouldn’t happen at the convention,” said a statement from CREW. But Trump has consistently run his presidency, and American foreign policy, as a political campaign and a profit-making scheme all at once. On Tuesday night, that was broadcast on television for the world to see.