

Ethics Watchdogs Agree: Crypto Ethics Rules Must Cover Elected Officials and Their Families

Leading ethics, democracy, anticorruption, and good-government organizations and experts warn that Congress cannot pass a serious crypto bill unless it adds conflict-of-interest rules covering both elected officials and their immediate family members

June 15, 2026

WASHINGTON, D.C.—As Congress considers major crypto market structure legislation known as the CLARITY Act, leading ethics, democracy, anticorruption, and good-government organizations and experts are warning that the bill lacks basic conflict-of-interest rules for elected officials and their immediate family members.

Their core point: the CLARITY Act cannot responsibly create new rules for the crypto market while leaving elected officials and their spouses, children, and other immediate family members free to profit from crypto ventures affected by federal policy. And Congress should not try to solve that problem halfway: any ethics rule that reaches only the officeholder while ignoring the family members through whom conflicts can just as easily run would leave open an obvious loophole. The groups also warn that ethics enforcement cannot depend primarily on the Department of Justice, especially amid recent reporting raising concerns about DOJ involvement in IRS matters involving President Trump, his family, and business interests associated with them.

Walter Shaub, former Director of the U.S. Office of Government Ethics (OGE), said the following:

Any legislation that fails to address conflicts of interest for federal government leaders will institutionalize the rot at the top. It would not only let the fox into the hen house, it would let the fox build the hen house. The CLARITY Act should address the president's conflicts of interest.

Ambassador Norman Eisen (ret.), Executive Chair of Democracy Defenders Action, said the following:

The CLARITY Act doesn't even attempt to regulate conflicts of interest in the crypto market it's trying to build. Senators of both parties should insist that the CLARITY Act stop the president, vice president, and all senior government officials, and their spouses and dependent children, from owning, trading, issuing, or endorsing crypto products—or profiting in any way from the crypto market. A crypto ethics bill without these provisions will create a crypto market where conflicted officials write and enforce the rules of the road. This isn't serious legislation—it is a roadmap for corruption.

Christine Wood, Co-Director of the Declaration for American Democracy (DFAD), said the following:

Cryptocurrency legislation cannot become a back door for corruption and conflicts of interest. As a broad pro-democracy coalition representing millions of Americans, and the civil society coalition that led the push for the Freedom to Vote Act, the Declaration for American Democracy knows that democracy depends on clear rules, real accountability, and public trust. Congress should not pass the CLARITY Act unless it includes strong safeguards to prevent elected officials and their families from using digital asset ventures to cash in on public power.

Debra Perlin, Vice President of Policy for Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW), said the following:

This bill fails to establish meaningful ethics and anticorruption guardrails and should not move forward as currently drafted. It is

important that any crypto market structure legislation incorporate strong ethical safeguards surrounding government officials' use of crypto, including extending conflict laws to the president and vice president, banning members of Congress and other senior officials from owning crypto, requiring disclosure of officials' crypto transactions and strengthening criminal anti-corruption enforcement. The American people cannot trust that the public's interests are being served and protected while government officials are allowed to use crypto to reap potentially massive undisclosed profits.

Eric Kashdan, Director of Federal Advocacy at Campaign Legal Center (CLC), said the following:

Congress cannot credibly regulate cryptocurrency without also addressing the financial interests of those writing the rules. This administration's self-dealing actions signal that political power can be bought; if those writing and enforcing the law can own and profit from digital assets without ethical safeguards, the public has no assurance that any future legislation will truly protect the public interest. We need clear protections against conflicts of interest and even their appearance. Otherwise, Americans' trust in government could be further undermined at a time when confidence in our democracy is already threatened.

Abigail Bellows, Senior Policy Director for Anti-Corruption and Accountability at Common Cause, said the following:

Democracy depends on the public knowing that elected leaders are writing laws for the country, not for their own household balance sheets. A crypto ethics provision that excludes family members would be an invitation to evade the rule. The standard should be simple: no elected official, spouse, child, or other immediate family member should be allowed to profit from crypto ventures affected by federal policy.

Gabe Lezra, Senior Policy Strategist at Democracy Defenders Action, said the following:

The Trump era has shown exactly how democratic systems break down when presidents use political power to enrich their families through opaque financial ventures. Anyone serious about preventing presidential self-enrichment must demand ethics rules that cover not just elected officials, but their immediate family members. If crypto legislation leaves families free to own, promote, or profit from digital assets while an administration writes the rules governing that industry, the public will recognize it for what it is: a loophole built for exactly this moment.

Bartlett Naylor, Financial Policy Advocate for Public Citizen, said the following:

Laundering money for human, narcotics, and arms traffickers constitutes crypto's prime use case. That crypto promoters now shower some of their ill-gotten gains into unprecedented political spending to intimidate members of Congress represents one of the most craven episodes in the history of American corruption. Letting presidents, lawmakers, and their families cash in on this racket while Congress writes the rules would turn corruption from a scandal into a business model.

Andrew O'Neill, National Advocacy Director of Indivisible, said the following:

Lawmakers cannot claim to crack down on corruption while backing the CLARITY Act, which creates major accountability gaps and ignores the growing ties between the crypto industry and people close to Donald Trump, even as crypto money floods our elections. The bill weakens oversight by sidelining the SEC and creating new loopholes that would make self-enrichment and dark money influence even harder to stop. Members of Congress should reject this bill outright instead of legitimizing an unchecked industry seeking to buy political influence in Washington.

Scott Greytak, Deputy Executive Director of Transparency International U.S. (TI US), said the following:

Crypto legislation should not create a new channel for elected officials and their families to monetize public office. The line should be clear: if immediate family members are excluded, the rule is too easy to evade and too weak to matter. Congress also should not make DOJ the sole ethics cop for these conflicts. Recent events show why powerful officials should not be allowed to rely on political discretion to police their own conflicts.

Transparency International U.S. is part of the world's largest coalition against corruption. In collaboration with national chapters in more than 100 countries, we are leading the fight to turn our vision of a world free from corruption into reality.

Related Resources

- [Read](#) the text of the cryptocurrency proposal approved by the Senate Banking Committee.

Media Contact

Victoria Brusa, Communications and Media Affairs, Transparency International U.S.

Telephone: +1 771 250-8065 / +54 9 3492 652098 (WhatsApp)

Email: vbrusa@us.transparency.org

Twitter: @TransparencyUSA