



288-unit apartment project proposed near Doherty High

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Trump's Freedom 250 faces scrutiny

Some raise concerns over transparency, donor access

Karissa Waddick

USA TODAY

As America prepares to celebrate its 250th anniversary, some have questions about transparency and politicization they say is hanging over the organization President Donald Trump created to support his flashy plans for the celebration.

Congressional Democrats and

watchdog groups have raised concerns that the group, Freedom 250, created as a subsidiary of the National Park Foundation, lacks transparency, skirts federal rules and allows companies and wealthy individuals to buy access to the president's office.

Members of the House of Representatives on Feb. 10 probed leaders of the National Park Foundation during a public hearing after The New York

Times reported allegations that Freedom 250 is exchanging access to Trump for donations.

In exchange for donations ranging from \$1 million to nearly \$10 million, groups giving to Freedom 250 were offered an array of perks, including an "invitation to a private Freedom 250 thank you reception hosted by President Donald J. Trump" and speaking opportunities at major events, according to the Times.

Now, in a new letter sent Feb. 11, Sen.

Adam Schiff, D-California, is requesting the Trump administration provide transparency about Freedom 250's donors, fundraising practices and governance structure.

"Linking private contributions – explicitly or implicitly – to invitations to White House events, photo ops, ceremonial roles, or other forms of access unavailable to the general public, raises serious concerns about the auctioning

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Dudley families angered over PFAS contamination



'Gloom and dread'

Henry Schwan

Worcester Telegram & Gazette

USA TODAY NETWORK

DUDLEY – Kristina and Nicholas Caruso thought they had their dream house.

It sits on 6 acres in a quiet, wooded area where they can raise their four young children. The plan was to grow old in the house and leave it to their kids. That idea may be over.

"This was supposed to be our forever house. Now it's gloom and dread," said Nicholas Caruso while standing in his basement next to a contraption of pipes and canisters called a point-of-entry treatment system that is supposed to keep the water safe from the family's private well.

It also represents the constant fear the Carusos say they're experiencing, not knowing if the filtration system is keeping them and their children protected from contamination.

It was installed after a massive fire on the night of Aug. 18, 2022, at Mace Polymers & Additives Inc.,

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Mace Polymers & Additives Inc. is accused of contaminating nearby wells after a 2022 fire.
TOP: Kristina Caruso of Dudley, with her sons Tommy and Nicholas, stands by her family's expensive water filtration system.

PHOTOS BY ALLAN JUNG/TELEGRAM & GAZETTE

Court rejects sewer fee appeal

Worcester owes Holden more than \$35 million

Brad Petrishen

Worcester Telegram & Gazette

USA TODAY NETWORK

The state's highest court has declined to take up Worcester's appeal in a long-running sewer fee lawsuit with Holden that, with interest, is expected to cost the city more than \$35 million.

"If mishandling an issue were an Olympic sport, Worcester would have five gold medals by now for this one," Holden Town Manager Peter Lukes said in a statement Friday, Feb. 13.

The Supreme Judicial Court's decision to not take up the appeal is the latest in a string of losses in the case for Worcester. Holden alleged Worcester severely overcharged for the use of its sewer system.

A jury awarded Holden \$15 million in 2022 after a trial capped nine years of litigation; the judgment at the time swelled to \$27 million after a judge added in costs and interest.

As interest has continued to accrue at about \$9,000 per day, Worcester has continued to appeal its loss, saying in 2023 it was "very confident" the decision would be reversed.

But the Massachusetts Appeals Court instead affirmed the decision last summer, at which time Holden's lawyer, Christopher Petrucci, urged the city to avoid more interest and pay up.

Petruci told the Telegram & Gazette on Feb. 13 that the city now owes Holden more than \$35 million. At a rate of more than \$250,000 per month, the failed bid for Supreme Judicial Court review has cost the city around \$1.5 million since August, he estimated.

Petruci and Lukes said the judgment

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