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WASHINGTON

## ADMINISTRATION DROPS 'WEAPONIZATION' FUND



EVELYN HOCKSTEIN, REUTERS

Acting U.S. Attorney General Todd Blanche responds to U.S. Rep. Madeleine Dean, D-Pa., during his testimony Tuesday before a House Appropriations Commerce, Justice, Science, and Related Agencies Subcommittee oversight hearing on Capitol Hill in Washington.

### Agreement remains to prohibit IRS audits for Trump, family

DAN ROSENZWEIG-ZIFF, NANDITA BOSE  
AND RICHARD COWAN  
Reuters

WASHINGTON — The Trump administration abandoned the president's nearly \$1.8 billion "weaponization" fund, U.S. Acting Attorney General Todd Blanche told lawmakers Tuesday, after a rare backlash from Republican senators.

"We are not moving forward with the fund," Blanche said. "Period."

The fund emerged from a legal agreement between President Donald Trump and the Justice Department to resolve an unprecedented \$10 billion lawsuit against the IRS over the alleged mishandling of his tax records.

The agreement with Trump to bar future audits into his or his family's past tax records will remain in place, Blanche told lawmakers.

The fund was dropped as furious senators faced an impasse over a \$72 billion bill to fund immigration and border patrol operations.

Congressional leaders questioned whether they could pass the bill if the fund was not killed, and a person familiar with the White House's thinking said Blanche's future hinged on his ability to address those concerns.

The \$1.776 billion fund was meant to pay people who claimed they were subjected to government abuse, and Blanche angered senators last month when he would not commit to barring people who assaulted police officers during the Jan. 6, 2021, Capitol riot from receiving funds.

White House officials spent much of Monday calling lawmakers to assure them there would be no payouts after the

Republican revolt, said two sources familiar with the matter, speaking on the condition of anonymity.

That assurance did little to quiet Republican demands ahead of Blanche's House subcommittee hearing Tuesday afternoon, where lawmakers pressed for a definitive promise that the fund was dead.

#### Trump response

The White House referred questions on Blanche's comments to the Justice Department, which did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

On Monday, the department said it would abide by a court order that temporarily paused the fund until June 12 but did not say what that meant for the fund permanently.

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## Supreme Court decisions could reshape midterms

JAN WOLFE  
Reuters

The U.S. Supreme Court this year already has given a boost to President Donald Trump and his fellow Republicans in the nationwide battle over redrawing electoral maps. In the coming weeks, it could rule in favor of the Republicans in two more significant cases related to elections ahead of the November elections that will decide control of Congress.

In a case from Mississippi, Republican Party officials are seeking to strike down state laws that allow late-arriving mail ballots to be counted as long as they are post-marked by Election Day. Trump has sought to cast doubt on the security of mail-in ballots, though evidence of voter fraud is

rare, and Democratic voters tend to use this mode of voting more than Republicans.

In a separate case involving Trump's Vice President JD Vance, Republicans are seeking to further chip away at legal limits on money in political campaigns — specifically involving spending coordinated between party organizations and candidates.

They argue such curbs violate the U.S. Constitution's First Amendment protections against government abridgment of freedom of speech. The court has proven receptive to such an argument, including in its landmark 2010 decision in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*.

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USA TODAY NETWORK

Mail-in ballots are tabulated at the Maricopa County Elections Headquarters in Phoenix on Oct. 20, 2020.