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WASHINGTON

BLANCHE CLEARS KEY NOMINATION HURDLE

ANNA ROSE LAYDEN, REUTERS

Acting U.S. Attorney General Todd Blanche walks through the Hart Senate Office Building on Capitol Hill in Washington on Wednesday.

Deal on Trump fund, tax immunity wins senators' vote

DAN ROSENZWEIG-ZIFF
Reuters

WASHINGTON – Todd Blanche cleared a major hurdle Tuesday on his path to nomination for U.S. attorney general as Republicans voted to advance him out of committee on a party-line vote.

But questions persist about a deal he said would end President Donald Trump's "anti-weaponization" fund and narrow an agreement giving Trump immunity from audits of past tax returns.

Blanche, Trump's former personal lawyer and the current acting attorney general, agreed Sunday to amend the terms of the fund and the tax immunity deal to win the backing of two holdout Republican senators, though critics say the amendments do not go far enough.

He issued orders that he said ended the fund, and directed that the related tax immunity agreement only barred audits on past tax returns of Trump, his son and their family business. The agreement, though, allows for tax audits on future tax returns.

"You even have conservatives coming out and saying these are not worth the paper they are drawn on," Sen. Cory Booker, D-N.J., said at Tuesday's hearing. "We got nothing. No guarantees whatsoever that this slush fund still can't go forward. We got nothing that the president of the United States can't cheat on his taxes and have no accountability."

The holdout senators, John Cornyn and Thom Tillis, said Monday they were pleased with the agreement and would vote to advance Blanche's nomination through the Judiciary Committee. Approval by the committee clears the way for a Senate confirmation vote this week.

"Given this agreement with Mr. Blanche, I expect the department to live up to this in future litigation," Cornyn said at Tuesday's hearing, thanking Blanche for being willing to work with him and Tillis to find a solution.

Tillis echoed Cornyn's sentiment, and claimed both Democrats and Republicans politicized the Justice Department to go after their perceived enemies of the opposing side.

"I thought the fund was an insult," Tillis said. "It's been rescinded, and I am satisfied."

Critics called the deal Blanche struck a "farce," arguing it does not prevent Trump from resurrecting the fund later and does not resolve the ethics of Trump's administration shielding him from tax scrutiny. Some called on Republicans to pass legislation that would explicitly bar the fund from being revived and end Trump's tax protections.

The dispute over Trump's tax immunity and the $1.8 billion "anti-weaponization" fund stems from a settlement of Trump's $10 billion lawsuit against the IRS.

The fund is meant to support people who claim they were unfairly prosecuted for their political activities, and could benefit Trump allies who said they were targeted by the federal government for their involvement in the Jan. 6, 2021 attack on the U.S. Capitol.

'Real commitments'

Critics call it a Republican slush fund and noted that Trump's personal lawyers did not sign off on Blanche's order to end it, even though the original settlement requires approval from all parties to make any changes. Trump's lawyers have not publicly commented on the matter.

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Rodriguez finance report raises new questions

MOLLY BECK
Milwaukee Journal Sentinel

Former Democratic candidate for governor Sara Rodriguez's latest finance filing is raising questions about the legality of how her campaign handled money.

In a new report filed Aug. 3, Rodriguez lists a reimbursement of $52,900 to the Wisconsin Forward Fund – a 501©(4) nonprofit organization that spent heavily to back Rodriguez. The campaign noted it was reimbursing for "funds borrowed from C4 in error."

Rodriguez, who upended the Democratic primary for governor on July 12 when she announced she had fired her campaign manager after discovering financial mismanagement, stayed in the race for a few days while she sought to overcome the fallout of the revelation.

Ultimately, Rodriguez ended her campaign less than a week later on July 17, hours before Crowley – who had endorsed her when he dropped out – announced he would return to the race.

The latest campaign finance report provides a new look at what kind of mismanagement took place. Coordination, such as borrowing money, between campaigns and such groups is illegal.

A spokeswoman for Rodriguez's campaign did not immediately answer questions about the reimbursement.

Rodriguez left the race after the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel first reported she reported raising at least $100,000 more than she actually collected.

The Journal Sentinel reviewed Rodriguez's campaign filings after the campaign announced on July 12 the termination of

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USA TODAY NETWORK

Democratic gubernatorial candidate and Wisconsin Lt. Gov. Sara Rodriguez makes remarks during the 2026 Wisconsin Democratic Convention at the Monona Terrace Community and Convention Center in Madison, Wisconsin on June 14, 2026.

