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Trump's Freedom 250 draws corporate sponsors with business before his administration

[Trump Freedom 250 sponsors include companies with federal business](#)

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[Luke Fountain@Luke_Fountain25](#)

Key Points

- Companies with major federal interests — including Boeing, Lockheed Martin and Oracle — are sponsoring Freedom 250, a Trump-aligned effort celebrating America's 250th birthday.
- Fundraising pitches for the event offer high-dollar donors significant access to the president, including private receptions and photo opportunities, according to reports.
- Although CNBC did not find any evidence of a connection between the sponsorships and the companies' dealings with the administration, the funding structure has watchdogs warning of a new avenue for corporate America to buy influence and navigate power in Washington.



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Who is funding Trump's Freedom 250 celebrations?

WASHINGTON — On the National Mall this week, [Freedom 250](#) signs pointed visitors toward temporary state pavilions, a Ferris wheel and mobile, transitory history exhibits. Sponsor names appeared beside [Trump](#)-aligned programming. Some states were represented by official delegations. Others had [opted out](#), leaving replacement displays or stripped-down booths in their place.

As the country prepares to mark its [semiquincentennial](#), or 250th birthday, the splashiest celebrations in Washington are being shaped by corporate money.

A CNBC analysis found 14 companies backing both [America250](#), the nonprofit supporting the congressionally created U.S. Semiquincentennial Commission, and Freedom 250, the [Trump](#)-backed public-private partnership behind some of the administration's most visible anniversary events.

The companies listed online as backing both are: [Boeing](#), Deloitte, Exiger, [John Deere](#), [Lockheed Martin](#), [Northrop Grumman](#), [Oracle](#), [Palantir](#), Phorm Energy, [RTX SAP](#), [Scotts Miracle-Gro](#), UFC and [United Airlines](#).

Of those companies, only John Deere responded to a CNBC request for comment, but it did not address specific questions about its sponsorship of both organizations. John Deere said it was eager to celebrate the people whose work helped “build power, feed and sustain” the U.S.

Several of those companies have major business before the federal government, including [defense contracts](#), [technology](#) contracts, regulatory interests, merger considerations, tax issues and other policy matters shaped by the Trump administration.

CNBC did not find any evidence of a connection between the Freedom 250 sponsorships and the companies’ dealings with the administration.

But it’s another example of the complex intersection of corporate America and politics under a president who’s been increasingly close with companies.

Watchdogs and ethics experts have said the structure gives companies with business before the administration a new way to seek access to President [Donald Trump](#), with much of the money hidden from public view.

“The concern is not that companies are sponsoring a national celebration. The concern is that this celebration appears to offer access to the president while some of those companies have business before his administration,” said Bruce Freed, the president and co-founder of the Center for Political Accountability that advises companies on political spending.

Democrats on the House Natural Resources Committee released a [report](#) this week criticizing the president and Freedom 250, accusing it of diverting funds and misleading sponsors.

Freedom 250 [fundraising materials](#), first [reported](#) by The New York Times, described tiered sponsorship: Donors giving at least \$500,000 were offered VIP access, invitations and preferred seating at events, according to the New York Times. A \$1 million contribution came with an invitation to a private “thank you” reception hosted by Trump and a photo opportunity, the Times reported, and donors giving \$2.5 million or more were offered speaking roles at a July 4 event in Washington.

For \$10 million or more, companies got VIP access to all Freedom 250 events, logo rights, a tailored press release, a July 4 speaking role and a private Trump-hosted reception with a photo opportunity, according to the Times report.

Those kinds of tiered benefits are common in major event sponsorships. Watchdogs said Freedom 250 is different because some sponsors have business before the administration, the donor structure is opaque and the perks were attached to events built around Trump.

“For a million bucks, you get a meet and greet with the president, and what we’ve seen is when you get in the room with Donald Trump, it tends to be very beneficial for your business,” Matt Dallek, a political historian at George Washington University, told CNBC.

Freedom 250, America250 and the White House did not respond to multiple requests for comment.



A visitor takes a photo of a replica of the planned Triumphal Arch on the first day of the “Great American State Fair” on the National Mall on June 25, 2026 in Washington, DC.

Al Drago | Getty Images

Dual celebrations

Two separate groups have been planning celebrations for the big July 4 holiday.

The first, America250, grew out of a bipartisan commission Congress created in 2016 to plan the country’s 250th anniversary. Its work has focused on [civic programming](#), including student contests, volunteer initiatives and events around the country.

Freedom 250 emerged after Trump returned to office and sought to put his own stamp on the anniversary. When Trump announced the effort on [social media](#) in December, he promised “the most spectacular birthday party you’ve ever seen.”

Freedom 250 and associated events have become the vehicle for some of Trump’s most touted anniversary events: the [Great American State Fair](#) on the National Mall, a model of a

planned [arch overlooking Washington](#), an [IndyCar race](#) through the capital, a [UFC fight](#) at the White House and more.

Congress set aside \$150 million for the anniversary, but America250 had received only \$25 million as of early June, according to a report obtained by Washington, D.C., based digital news outlet [NOTUS](#). The Trump-aligned effort has received far more: nearly \$80 million in 250th-related grants to the National Park Foundation, NOTUS first reported.

One possible explanation for why companies would back both groups, Freed and other experts said, is that America250 offered traditional patriotic branding, while Freedom 250 put sponsors closer to Trump's preferred version of the celebration.

"If you're a company with federal contracts, regulatory issues or merger interests, being in the room with the president can be worth far more than the sponsorship itself," Freed told CNBC.

UFC may be the clearest example of how Freedom 250 blurred corporate money, Trump's personal network and policy interests.

The company helped stage a Freedom 250 mixed martial arts event at the White House during Trump's birthday weekend. UFC President Dana White, a longtime Trump ally, also sent Trump a May 11 letter asking him to reverse a provision in the "Big Beautiful Bill Act" that capped gambling-loss deductions at 90%, [ESPN reported](#). That provision is still in effect.

UFC declined to comment on its listing on the Freedom 250 and America250 sites. CNBC did not find any evidence that UFC's corporate sponsorship affected the government's decisions.



Fireworks during the UFC Freedom250 fight on the South Lawn of the White House in Washington, DC, US, early on Monday, June 15, 2026.

Saul Loab | Bloomberg | Getty Images

Business rationale

Corporate money has long been part of [national anniversaries](#).

The 1976 Bicentennial drew so much corporate sponsorship that critics derided it as the “[buy-centennial](#).” Former President Richard Nixon, too, was accused of trying to steer the commemoration through the executive branch during the run-up to celebrations before resigning in 1974.

One high-profile Bicentennial project, the [American Freedom Train](#) was funded by five companies — [Pepsi-Cola](#), Atlantic Richfield, [General Motors](#), [Prudential](#) and Kraft Foods — that contributed around \$5 million each in initial grants to the project, according to Ford Library records. Adjusted for inflation, that would be worth roughly \$20 million.

But historians and watchdogs said Freedom 250 raises a different set of concerns because of the access-style sponsorships, opaque funding structure and the degree to which the anniversary has been built around Trump.

“There’s the America250 for everyone else, and then there’s this small shadowy organization [Freedom 250] doing essentially Trump rallies and things for Trump

supporters,” Dallek said. The structure, he added, “doesn’t really play to the idea of unity very much.”

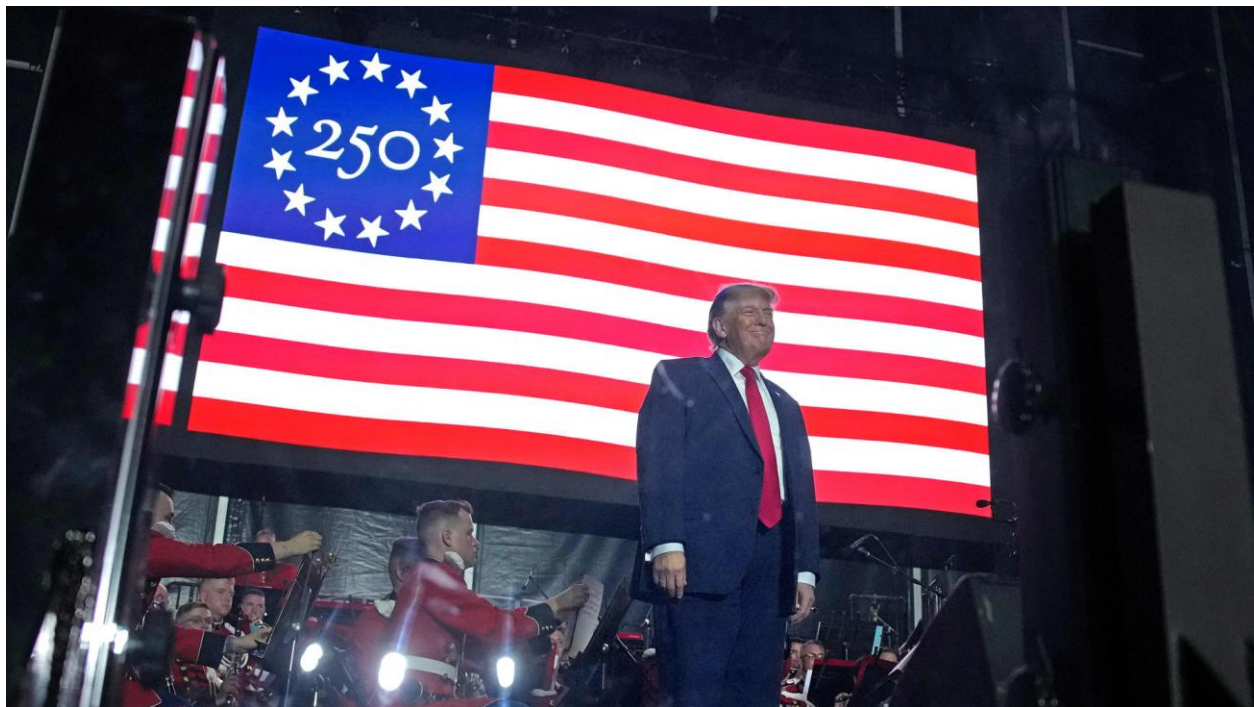
America250 publicly lists dozens of sponsors. Freedom 250 has referred to some backers as “strategic partners.” And the National Park Foundation’s president has told Congress that donors who request anonymity will not be disclosed, according to [congressional Democrats](#).

That opacity is another part of the appeal, corporate political consultants said.

“Companies are hedging,” Freed said. “They want the safe patriotic branding of America250, but they also don’t want to be absent from the president’s preferred celebration.”

The blurred lines extend beyond corporate sponsorship.

According to [NASA](#) employee sources and materials reviewed by CNBC, a department-wide NASA email sent in June encouraged employees to shop the Freedom 250 store. The link resolved to the Trump campaign website, according to those materials.



U.S. President Donald Trump arrives to speak during a rally to kick off the Great American State Fair on the National Mall on June 24, 2026 in Washington, DC.

Andrew Harnik | Getty Images

A rocky start

The anniversary rollout has also been plagued by problems on the ground.

The Great American State Fair on the National Mall was billed as a 16-day centerpiece of the celebration. But at least eight states, most led by Democratic governors, declined to participate officially, citing exhibit costs ranging from \$100,000 to \$1 million and concerns about the event's partisan tone.

The fair has also faced sparse crowds, power outages, an intermittently broken Ferris wheel and a model triumphal arch whose covering had begun to buckle, according to media reports.

Several artists, including Martina McBride, [Young MC](#), the Commodores and [Bret Michaels](#), pulled out after being announced or associated with Freedom 250 events. Some said they had been misled about the partisan nature of the celebration.

Trump responded by suggesting in a [Truth Social post](#) the concerts be replaced with a "MAKE AMERICA GREAT AGAIN RALLY" and later moved to headline the fair's opening himself.