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# Pardon Us, Please

## • Time to rein in the power of the Executive Branch

By the AFP Staff

**A**s the final days of 2024 tick away, President Joe Biden pardoned and commuted the sentences of over 1,500 people. While the Christian ideal of mercy is laudable during the Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Year's holidays, Biden's brazen last-minute clemencies have even some Democrats saying he went too far and needs to be reined in.

"This whole process cries out for reform," Sen. Amy Klobuchar (D-Minn.) told CBS News in an interview on Dec. 15.

Klobuchar was responding to criticisms directed at some of the names on Biden's "nice list," including a former doctor who watered down medications and used dirty needles on his cancer patients as part of a massive fraudulent Medicare billing scheme. Another individual who should have never made it on the list was Michael Conahan. The former Pennsylvania judge was convicted of ethics violations in 2011 for accepting \$3 million in bribes in return for funneling more than 2,000 children, some as young as eight, to two for-profit juvenile prisons in the state.

Klobuchar was also critical of Biden pardoning his son Hunter, who had been convicted of three felonies and pled guilty to tax charges. Hunter was looking at 25 years in prison for his crimes—that is, until his father granted him a sweeping pardon for unspecified crimes that, oddly enough, went

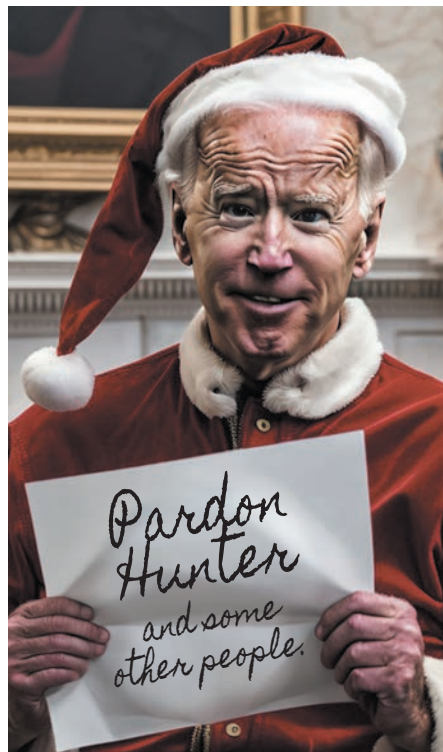


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all the way back to 2014. No doubt about it: These are crimes for which you and I would have spent time behind bars.

"We should have some kind of an outside board that governors have," she told CBS News. "Governors have the ability to give mercy to people after years have gone by, but a lot of them have boards that make recommendations and other things, instead of people just doing it in the middle of the night."

Everyone knows Biden never pored

over lengthy lists of previously convicted criminals to compile a solid list of 1,500 people who deserve a pardon. That is a task he is simply incapable of doing these days. These names were assembled by unelected bureaucrats in the White House and then slipped in front of the octogenarian president for his shaky John Hancock.

In the spirit of giving this time of year, if Congress really wanted to present a Christmas gift to their fellow countrymen, they would go even further than Klobuchar's call for oversight of presidential pardons and pass Kentucky Sen. Rand Paul's Regulations from the Executive in Need of Scrutiny (REINS) Act. It is a long-needed reform to restrict the out-of-control power of the chief executive.

Introduced in September, Paul's REINS Act would effectively end the president's limitless power to enact endless rules and regulations with little to no congressional oversight.

If passed, the legislation would require that any major rules estimated to have an economic impact on the country of \$100 million or more would need to be affirmatively approved by Congress and then signed by the president.

As it is now, every year, tens of thousands of new rules and regulations drawn up by agencies under the Executive Branch take effect unless Congress specifically disapproves of them—something that almost never happens in official Washington.

"Nameless, faceless, unelected bureaucrats in Washington have had too much power over the American people for far too long," said Rep. Kat Cammack (R-Fla.), who introduced a version of Paul's bill into the House. "The REINS Act is a critical step toward 'reining' in this unchecked power and restoring the lawmaking authority to Congress instead of the Executive Branch." ★

### THE INSIDE SCOOP



4

**Feds claim they know nothing about mystery drones over N.J.**

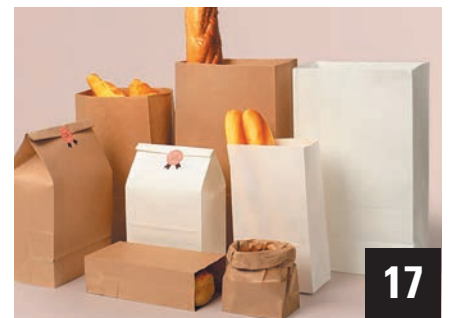
See page 4



11

**What should Musk, Ramaswamy focus on cutting out of U.S. budget?**

See page 11



17

**Identifying "forever chemicals" and how we can avoid them.**

See page 17



21

**U.S. meddles with "democracy" after "wrong" Romanian wins.**

See page 21