

Trump reaches deals with 5 law firms, allowing them to avoid prospect of punishing executive orders





WASHINGTON (AP) — [President Donald Trump](#) announced deals Friday with five law firms that will allow them to avoid the prospect of punishing executive orders and require them to together provide hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of free legal services for causes his administration says it supports.

The resolutions reflect the Republican president's continued success in [bending prominent law firms to his will](#) as they seek to cut deals with his administration to avoid being targeted by White House sanctions like the ones confronting others in the legal community.

The White House said that the firms of Kirkland & Ellis LLP; Allen Overy Shearman Sterling US LLP; Simpson Thacher & Bartlett LLP; and Latham & Watkins LLP would each provide \$125 million in free legal work for causes including veterans affairs and combatting anti-Semitism. As part of the agreement, the administration agreed to withdraw letters from the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission demanding information about whether the firms were engaged in discriminatory hiring practices.

In a separate deal also announced Friday, Trump said that the firm of Cadwalader, Wickersham & Taft would agree to dedicate \$100 million in pro bono services. The agreements also required the firms to disavow any "illegal" diversity, equity and inclusion considerations in their hiring and to agree to accept clients regardless without regard to political beliefs.

The executive committee of Kirkland & Ellis told the firm Friday that the resolution would help it resolve the EEOC investigation and avert an executive order, and that it would continue to operate with the "non-partisan basis" and "merit-based philosophy that is and has always been the essence" of the firm.

"It is also consistent with the values that underpin our firm and cement us together, including our culture that prioritizes ability and opportunity, not politics," the committee wrote in an email obtained by The Associated Press.

Representatives from the four other firms did not immediately return messages seeking comment.

The spate of executive orders directed at the legal community and top law firms over the last two months has been part of a broader effort by Trump to reshape civil society and to extract concessions from entities whose work he opposes. The orders have threatened to upend the day-to-day business of the firms by stripping their lawyers' security clearances, barring their employees from access to federal buildings and terminating federal contracts held by the firms or their clients.

Since Trump levied the first of his orders, several major law firms — including [WilmerHale](#), [Perkins Coie](#) and Jenner & Block — have won court rulings that have temporarily halted enforcement of most of the provisions. But other firms have sought to avert punishment by striking a deal with the White House.

Another firm that Trump targeted this week, Susman Godfrey, which won a \$787 million settlement in a libel lawsuit against Fox News for repeating the president's lies about fraud in the 2020 election, sued Friday night to block the latest order. The firm's complaint in Washington, DC federal court called Trump's act "a gave threat" to a "foundational premise of our Republic. The President is abusing the powers of his office to wield the might of the Executive Branch in retaliation against organizations and people that he dislikes."

[Paul Weiss was the first to settle with Trump](#), agreeing to provide \$40 million in pro bono legal services and make other changes in exchange for the administration rescinding an executive order issued just days earlier. Other firms that have since cut deals include Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom, as well as [Willkie, Farr & Gallagher](#), and Milbank.

Some of the firms that have been targeted, including WilmerHale and Jenner & Block, have associations with lawyers who previously investigated Trump or have represented prominent Democrats. The first firm to face an executive order, [Covington & Burling](#), employs lawyers who have provided legal representation to special counsel Jack Smith, who [investigated Trump and brought criminal charges](#) against him between his first and second terms.

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