



Written by [R. Cort Kirkwood](#) on December 16, 2024

Biden's Last-minute Clemencies Include "Drug Lords, Ponzi Schemers, and Corrupt Officials"

President Joe Biden's list of last-minute pardons and sentence commutations is less interesting for what it doesn't say than what it does.

While the list at the White House website shows details on more than three dozen of those whom he pardoned, it is silent on the rest of the almost 1,500 whose sentences he commuted.

And for a reason.

The commutations include those for criminals guilty of much more serious crimes, including scamsters who stole millions, drug dealers, and major healthcare fraudsters. Or, as the [Washington Free Beacon reported](#), "drug lords, Ponzi schemers, and corrupt officials."



AP Images

Active in Church

Indeed, the 39 whom Biden pardoned and offered details on seem fit for a Hallmark movie. All were guilty of "non-violent" or "non-violent drug" crimes but have since completely reformed. Some are decorated veterans who served overseas.

And many are active in, serve at, contribute to, or volunteer for their churches or churches' activities.

They've received master's degrees and doctorates, and some became educators. They are otherwise, apparently, good folks who would make great neighbors and, perhaps, boon companions on a Caribbean cruise.

Example: [Russell Thomas Portner](#), of Toutle, Washington. The 74-year-old pleaded guilty to a nonviolent drug offense. He served in the U.S. Army during the Vietnam War. A Bronze Star recipient, "he married, raised four children, operated a successful business, and developed a reputation for charitable generosity and community service. He is currently a member of several veterans organizations. Neighbors, business associates, and friends describe him as trustworthy, loyal, and as a respected businessperson."

Another veteran is James Edgar Yarbrough, 79 also a nonviolent offender. Honorably discharged from the Air Force as a captain, he earned more than a dozen decorations, including the Purple Heart. "Since his conviction, he worked for a shipping company for nearly 30 years," [WhiteHouse.gov says](#). "Now retired, he spends much of his time volunteering and is active in his church. Mr. Yarbrough's business acquaintances, neighbors, church members, and friends all reflect a consistent high level of regard for Mr. Yarbrough, commenting on his impressive civic engagement, good character, and generosity."



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Few if any would object to those pardons.

Drug Dealer Who Killed, Now Free

But Biden also commuted the sentences of 1,499 convicts, the [White House reported](#), who were “on home confinement during the COVID-19 pandemic and who have successfully reintegrated into their families and communities.”

Again, some are “drug lords, Ponzi schemers and corrupt officials,” the [Washington Free Beacon divulged](#). “Many of the recipients were serving sentences for serious crimes.”

One is Daniel Fillerup.

In 2019, Fillerup, then 33, landed 10 years in prison for selling a woman the fentanyl that killed her, the Justice Department reported at the time.

“On September 29, 2016,” Fillerup confessed, he “arranged with Kate Centofanti, via text message and phone call, to supply her with two bags of heroin,” [DOJ explained](#):

Fillerup met with Centofanti in Schenectady, New York, where Centofanti gave Fillerup \$36. He acquired bags of what he believed to contain heroin, and gave Centofanti two of the bags. Centofanti ingested the substance Fillerup gave her, which was fentanyl. The ingestion of the fentanyl caused Centofanti’s death due to fentanyl intoxication.

Healthcare Fraudster, Now Free

Another whose sentence Biden commuted is Shelinder Aggarwal, a “pill mill” doctor and healthcare fraudster.

In 2017, a federal judge sentenced him to prison for 15 years because he illegally prescribed opioid painkillers. He “was the nation’s highest Medicare prescriber of opioid painkillers at the height of his practice.” As well, he defrauded Medicare and Blue Cross Blue Shield of Alabama of \$9.5 million “in unneeded and unused urine tests,” [DOJ explained](#). And he “directly contributed to the opioid epidemic that is plaguing our nation.”

“Alabama pharmacies filled about 110,013 of Aggarwal’s prescriptions for controlled substances in 2012.” That would be “423 prescriptions per day if he worked five days a week, and resulted in about 12.3 million pills,” federal prosecutors proved.

Continued DOJ:

Medicare data shows Aggarwal was the highest prescriber in the United States of Schedule II controlled substances under Medicare in 2012. Schedule II substances include the opioid painkillers oxycodone, oxymorphone, hydromorphone and morphine.

But Wait, There’s More

But those mightn’t be the worst of the cavalcade of stars on Biden’s Hit Parade, the [Free Beacon found](#):

Rita Crundwell was the comptroller and treasurer of Dixon, Illinois, when she “embezzled more than \$53 million from the city in what the DOJ described as ‘the largest theft of public funds in state history.’” In 2013, she was sentenced to 19 years in prison. [She was out](#) of prison when Biden commuted her sentence.



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In 2017, drug kingpin Wendy Hechtman landed 15 years in the slammer. With her husband, she “manufactured and distributed carfentanil, which the CDC [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention] says is the ‘most potent fentanyl analog detected in the United States.’”

Another particularly dangerous felon whose sentence Biden commuted is Meera Sachdeva. In 2012, [she was sentenced](#) to 20 years in prison “for defrauding Medicare by providing diluted chemotherapy drugs and old needles to cancer patients. One patient of Sachdeva’s clinic claimed to have contracted HIV because of old needles.”

Joseph Shereshevsky targeted Orthodox Jews with a \$255 million real-estate Ponzi scheme and landed 22 years in prison in 2011.

“Paul Burks, sentenced to more than 14 years in prison in 2017 for operating a \$900 million internet Ponzi scheme, is now free,” the [website continued](#). “As is Eric Bloom, who was sentenced to 14 years in prison for defrauding his financial firm’s clients of more than \$665 million.”

When Biden will pardon the [nonviolent defendants imprisoned](#) for participating in the mostly peaceful protest at the U.S. Capitol on January 6, 2021 isn’t known.



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