



The illustration shows Hunter Biden, the US president's son. In the background, parts of his indictment are included and highlighted. © CNN

Hunter Biden came to greater public attention in the waning days of the 2020 presidential campaign, when an email in his laptop (which he left unclaimed at a repair shop) indicated that his father had at least one meeting with a Burisma colleague, creating a possible conflict of interest. The laptop also contained videos of the younger Biden using the drug that if his father is to be believed, warranted five years in prison.

The laptop affair should have been a bigger news story but was quashed by the Biden campaign in collusion with corporate media, especially social media platforms such as Facebook and the site then known as Twitter. Twitter and Facebook censored any links about the laptop from appearing in any posts. In addition, the Biden campaign convened a group of intelligence "experts" who claimed the laptop story was little more than a Russian disinformation campaign. This conspiracy among the media and the permanent government may have killed the story late in the campaign, but the establishment interference was never forgotten or forgiven.

The case can be made that absent being Joe Biden's child, Hunter wouldn't be facing any charges at all. But it isn't surprising that there is so much conversation about the pardon, especially after Biden previously stated that he would not pardon his son.

In addition to doing what he said he would not do, there are two other problems for the el-

der Biden. One is his lackluster record of issuing pardons for others during his term in office. He can pardon anyone convicted of a federal offense before January 20, 2025, the date he leaves office and Donald Trump returns to the white house. But to date, his pardon record has been stingy, with the fewest number of presidential pardons since Richard Nixon.

The other issue is Ukraine. Hunter Biden's pardon is interesting because it covers any crimes committed from January 1, 2014, to the present. The year 2014 is the year of the US-backed Maidan coup against the elected Ukrainian government. He was charged with an illegal gun purchase made in 2018 and of tax evasion from 2016 to 2019. Why does the pardon begin in 2014?

Vice President Biden was the Obama administration's point man on Ukraine. The Maidan coup was the beginning of an effort to destroy Russia's economy and use Ukraine as a proxy in that conflict. As president, Biden is very much committed to this misguided plan, claiming in 2022 that sanctioning Russia's economy would "turn the ruble to rubble". Now as he leaves office, he is escalating conflict with Russia in Ukraine and in Syria.

It isn't clear what the younger Biden might have been doing on his Burisma seat that caused his father to extend the pardon back to 2014. It's possible that there isn't really much to find out, that Hunter Biden existed as a cipher for his father, and

contributed little to his position, but we are only left with speculation. Now, we will never know or if we ever do, it won't matter because Hunter Biden cannot be prosecuted for any activity related to his work in Ukraine. Young Biden was at the center of a scandal, but, all in all, things turned out well for him. He wrote a memoir, "Beautiful Things," and he even sold artwork which netted him \$1.5 million. He made money from a book and his paintings, and, in all probability, didn't worry about his legal troubles, knowing that his father would pardon him.

The outrage generated by the pardon is, in large part, due to Hunter's failson status. He is a man who only succeeded in life because his father was a powerful senator, then vice president, and finally president of the United States. His drug addiction created personal problems for himself and for his family, but he once smoked crack in a rental car, which means his identity could have been easily traced, but no one called the police.

If father and son have anything in common, it is mediocrity. Biden was never thought of as an intellectual giant in the Senate. He was known as a race-baiting right winger. In 1977, he warned that school busing would create a "racial jungle," and in later years, he proudly shepherded Bill Clinton's 1994 Crime Bill through the Senate and bragged about the draconian sentences and mass incarceration that resulted.

Senator Biden's conservatism

made him an attractive running mate for Barack Obama, who had marketed himself as a progressive when he was anything but that. The phony leftist needed racist, right-wing cover, and the senator who bragged about the "death penalty for jaywalking" was the perfect antidote. Biden was no different as vice president, known for blurting out what are kindly referred to as gaffes, a nice way of saying that he is not very bright. This not very bright man was influential however, and was able to make sure that his lightweight son had every undeserved advantage.

Hunter Biden was troubled though, so addicted to drugs that he forgot he left a laptop in a Delaware repair shop and that it contained videos of sex acts and drug use. Of course, it caused embarrassment to his equally mediocre father, who was fortunate to have the Democratic Party establishment and oligarchy coalesce around his presidential campaign in 2020. Aside from deadender democrats, most of the nation is sick of Joe Biden. Some 7 million people who voted for him couldn't bring themselves to vote for Kamala Harris, his handpicked successor. Instead of concluding his affairs as a lame duck soon to leave office, he extended the anti-Russia proxy battle from Ukraine to Syria and continues funding the Israeli genocidal apartheid government.

Millions of people watched a man whose health declined, yet who continued his re-election bid. The top-down oligarchic machinations that made Kamala Harris the nominee were a bridge too far, and, of course, she was defeated.

Now, with less than two months in office, Joe threw his disgraced son a lifeline. President Biden will not be missed. Even before he was shoved out of the race, his approval ratings were in the basement.

He said himself he was a "transitional" figure. He should have acted like it and accepted being a one-term president. In doing so, he would have kept his dignity and his party's fortunes intact. Instead, he'll be remembered for genocide, cognitive decline, and a failed son who always manages to land on his feet.

Biden's unpardonable hypocrisy

By Jonathan Chait
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OPINION

When President Joe Biden was running for a second term as president, he repeatedly ruled out granting a pardon to his son Hunter, who has pleaded guilty to tax fraud and lying on a form to purchase a gun. "He was very clear, very up-front, obviously very definitive," White House Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre said of one of his many promises to this effect. Biden professed a willingness to abide by the results of the justice system as a matter of principle. But in breaking his promise and issuing a sweeping pardon of his son for any crimes he may have committed over an 11-year period, Biden has revealed his pledge to have been merely instrumental.

In a defiant statement, Biden insisted that his son's prosecution was selective and unfair. "No reasonable person who looks at the facts of Hunter's cases," he wrote, "can reach any other conclusion than Hunter was singled out only because he is my son — and that is wrong."

It is probably true that one of the crimes charged to Hunter Biden, lying on a form to obtain a firearm, is the sort of thing an average person would be unlikely to face charges over. (Hunter affirmed on the form that he was sober but later admitted to having been in the throes of addiction.) The other charge, blatantly failing to pay millions of dollars in taxes, is routinely brought against people who are not political targets. That it's true Hunter Biden was more likely to get caught than the average tax cheat is an indictment of the tax system. (It is also, ironically, an aspect of the system Joe Biden has set out to change by beefing up the IRS's enforcement capacity.)

give Hunter's clients anything of value. There is no proof to the contrary, and extensive Republican efforts to dig up evidence that Joe shared in the profits from Hunter's access-peddling business came up empty. But Joe Biden's defense of Hunter's influence peddling by stressing its narrow legality merely serves to highlight the hypocrisy of his fatherly indulgence. The black letter of the law was a fence to protect Hunter from the consequences of his sleazy behavior. And when the law itself trapped him, he simply opened a door and walked through it — a door no average American could access. The most bewildering passage in Biden's pardon statement posits some amorphous conspiracy against him by Justice Department prosecutors: "There has been an effort to break Hunter — who has been five and a half years sober, even in the face of unrelenting attacks and selective prosecution. In trying to break Hunter, they've



President Joe Biden sits down with ABC News' David Muir in Normandy, France, on June 6, 2024. In this interview, Biden once again said that he would not pardon his son Hunter amid an ongoing felony gun trial. © ABC NEWS

President Biden's complaint about the higher standard applied to his son reflects the perspective of myopic privilege. Crimes by family members of powerful public officials are far more damaging to public confidence than similar crimes by anonymous people. Holding them to account through strict enforcement of the law is good and correct.

What the president fails to note in his self-pitying statement is that Hunter Biden for years engaged in legal but wildly inappropriate behavior by running a business based on selling the perception of access to his father. The only commodity Hunter had to offer oligarchs in Ukraine, China, and elsewhere was the belief, or hope, that he could put in a good word for them with his dad.

Joe Biden's defense in these cases was that he did not actually

tried to break me — and there's no reason to believe it will stop here. Enough is enough." Trying to break Hunter? And his father? To what end? It would be tempting, but unfair, to draw a simple equation between Joe Biden's situational ethics and that of his successor. A willingness to evade the rule of law is the foundation of Donald Trump's entire career in business and politics, not a nepotistic exception. Still, principles become much harder to defend when their most famous defenders have compromised them flagrantly. With the pardon decision, like his stubborn insistence on running for a second term he couldn't win, Biden chose to prioritize his own feelings over the defense of his country.

The article first appeared on The Atlantic.



The pouch that held Hunter Biden's firearm, which was dumped in a trash can in Delaware, was examined later by FBI officials, where they found traces of cocaine. © AFP

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