Notable Pardons and Commutations

Comparison of high-profile executive clemency actions by President Donald Trump (first and second terms) and President Joe Biden. This document focuses on notable individual recipients. Full official lists are available from the Office of the Pardon Attorney (justice.gov/pardon). Thousands of additional recipients exist, particularly under mass proclamations and drug-related commutations.

Trump – First Term (2017–2021)

Name	Crime / Offense	Original Punishment	Clemency
Joe Arpaio	Criminal contempt of court	Convicted; not yet sentenced	Pardon
Michael Flynn	Making false statements to the FBI	Convicted; not sentenced	Pardon
Paul Manafort	Tax fraud, bank fraud, conspiracy	~7+ years prison	Pardon
Roger Stone	False statements, witness tampering, obstruction	40 months prison (commuted earlier)	Pardon
Steve Bannon	Fraud related to border-wall fundraising	Pending trial	Pardon
Charles Kushner	Tax evasion, witness retaliation	16 months prison (served)	Pardon
Rod Blagojevich	Corruption (selling Senate seat)	14 years prison	Commutation
Kwame Kilpatrick	Racketeering, bribery, fraud	28 years prison	Commutation
Alice Marie Johnson	Drug conspiracy	Life sentence	Commutation (later full pardon)
Dinesh D'Souza	Campaign-finance violations	Probation + fine	Pardon
Scooter Libby	Perjury, obstruction	30 months prison	Pardon
Blackwater contractors (4 men)	Killing Iraqi civilians (Nisour Square)	Long prison terms	Pardons

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Trump – Second Term (2025–present)

Name	Crime / Offense	Original Punishment	Clemency
~1,500–1,600 Jan. 6 defendants (mass)	Various (obstruction, assault on officers, seditious conspiracy, etc.)	Varied (many prison terms)	Full pardons (most); 14 commutations to time served
Enrique Tarrio	Seditious conspiracy (Proud Boys)	22 years prison	Full pardon
Stewart Rhodes	Seditious conspiracy (Oath Keepers)	18 years prison	Commutation to time served
Ross Ulbricht	Operating Silk Road (drug trafficking, money laundering)	Life + 40 years	Full pardon
Rod Blagojevich	Prior corruption conviction	Prior 14-year sentence (already partially served)	Full pardon
George Santos	Fraud	Prison sentence	Commutation
Todd & Julie Chrisley	Bank fraud, tax evasion	Todd: 12 years; Julie: 7 years	Pardons
Changpeng Zhao (Binance)	Anti-money-laundering program failure	4 months prison + $50M fine	Pardon
Juan Orlando Hernandez	Drug trafficking conspiracy	Long prison term	Pardon
Peter Edward Rose	Tax fraud (false returns)	Prior conviction	Pardon

Biden (2021–2025)

Name	Crime / Offense	Original Punishment	Clemency
Hunter Biden	Gun charges + tax offenses (and any other federal offenses 2014–2024)	Pending sentencing on convictions	Broad full pardon
James Biden, Sara Biden, Valerie Biden Owens, John Owens, Francis Biden	Any nonviolent federal offenses 2014–Jan 2025 (preemptive)	None charged	Preemptive pardons
Anthony Fauci	Any offenses related to his COVID/NIAID service 2014–2025 (preemptive)	None charged	Preemptive pardon
Mark Milley	Any offenses related to his military service 2014–2025 (preemptive)	None charged	Preemptive pardon
Jan. 6 Committee members/staff + police witnesses	Any related federal offenses (preemptive)	None charged	Preemptive pardons
37 federal death-row inmates (e.g., Shannon Agofsky, Kaboni Savage, etc.)	Murder and related capital offenses	Death sentences	Commutations to life without parole
Thousands via proclamations	Simple marijuana possession / use / attempted possession (federal & D.C.)	Prior convictions (most already completed)	Categorical pardons
~1,500 + ~2,490 individuals (batches)	Non-violent drug offenses (many crack/powder or home-confinement cases)	Varied prison terms	Commutations

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Name	Crime / Offense	Original Punishment	Clemency
Leonard Peltier	Murder of two FBI agents	Life sentence	Commutation
Viktor Bout	Arms trafficking / terrorism-related conspiracy	25 years prison	Commutation

Criteria and Rationales for Clemency

The U.S. Constitution grants the President plenary clemency power under Article II, Section 2. The Office of the Pardon Attorney (OPA) traditionally reviews petitions using Justice Manual standards (primarily post-conviction conduct and rehabilitation, seriousness and recency of the offense, acceptance of responsibility/remorse, and payment of restitution). These standards are advisory only; presidents may bypass the OPA process entirely.

Trump – First and Second Terms

- Frequently bypassed the traditional OPA petition process in favor of direct grants, often for political allies, associates, donors, and high-profile supporters.
- January 6, 2021 Capitol-related cases: Framed as correcting a “grave national injustice” and promoting “national reconciliation.” Covered nearly all charged or convicted individuals (including those convicted of assaulting officers and seditious conspiracy).
- Second term also included a “Pardon Czar” (Alice Marie Johnson) role focused on perceived injustices, plus grants for election-related figures, white-collar cases, and other allies.
- Some first-term grants involved non-violent drug or long-sentence cases advocated by outside parties (e.g., Alice Marie Johnson).

Biden

- Emphasized criminal justice reform priorities: non-violent drug offenses (especially those reflecting prior crack/powder sentencing disparities), individuals on home confinement during COVID-19 who had reintegrated successfully, and categorical relief for simple marijuana possession.
- Death-row commutations: Converted 37 of 40 federal death sentences to life without parole, consistent with a moratorium on federal executions except in cases of terrorism or hate-motivated mass murder. Explicitly aimed at preventing resumption of executions under the incoming administration.
- Preemptive pardons: Issued for family members, Dr. Anthony Fauci, Gen. Mark Milley, January 6 Committee participants, and related police witnesses, citing protection against potential politically motivated prosecutions.
- Used both traditional OPA review for some individual cases and large-scale policy-driven proclamations and batch commutations.

Key Notes

- Trump’s largest single action was the near-blanket January 6 clemency covering approximately 1,500–1,600 individuals.
- Biden’s volume is dominated by drug-related commutations and the marijuana proclamations; his individual pardons were fewer and included several preemptive grants.
- Official, searchable lists: justice.gov/pardon (Pardons and Commutations sections by president).

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