

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

May 14, 2026

The Honorable Scott Bessent
Secretary of the Treasury
1500 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20220

Dear Secretary Bessent,

We write to urge you to rescind any consideration of producing a gold or circulating coin or currency featuring President Donald J. Trump’s likeness during his lifetime. Such an action would conflict with federal law, congressional precedent, and well-established principles governing United States currency.

The prohibition of using the likeness of any living person on U.S. currency is clear and has been for 160 years. Congress has repeatedly confirmed its intent on this issue, as recently as 2005.

In 1886, Congress passed the Thayer Amendment prohibiting the placing the image of any living person on U.S. bonds, securities, notes, and postal currency. Although the language does not explicitly mention coins, it established a strict conventional and statutory barrier against living-person likenesses on any form of U.S. money. In Alexander Hamilton’s “Report on the Establishment of the Mint” in 1791, Secretary Hamilton pondered six questions, including “what ought to be the nature of the money unit of the United States?” Here it was understood that both paper and metallic currency – coins – are the ‘money units’ of the nation. Likewise, the First Bank of the United States, established by Congressional Charter in 1791, and championed by Treasury Secretary Hamilton, was the first institution to issue paper money. From this historical context, it is understood that the Thayer Amendment likewise applies to coins as both coins and paper currency were the ‘money unit’ of the United States.

31 U.S.C. § 5114(b) stipulates, “Only the portrait of a deceased individual may appear on United States currency and securities.” This provision is clear and unambiguous, granting authority exclusively for posthumous portrayal.

In 2005, President George W. Bush signed the Presidential \$1 Coin Act into law, which further reinforces the restriction: “No coin issued . . . may bear the image of a living former or current President, or of any deceased former President during the 2-year period following the date of the death of that President.” Although specific to the presidential dollar series, the principle reflects long-standing congressional intent against depicting living presidents on official coinage.

Issuing a coin with President Trump’s likeness while he is alive directly contradicts § 5114(b). While the Treasury Department has argued that 31 U.S.C. § 5112 gives the Treasury Secretary “sole discretion on final design selection,” that discretion should not supersede federal law and blatant congressional intent regarding the prohibition of the use of a living individual’s likeness. Even if structured as a commemorative offering under the Circulating Collectible Coin Redesign Act, using an image of President Trump – or any living person – would violate the statutory mandate that only deceased individuals may appear on U.S. minted money or securities.

Sanctioning a living individual's image, particularly a current or former president, risks politicizing currency and undermines impartial public trust in the neutrality of U.S. money. It erodes the apolitical foundation on which our national symbols rest.

Due to the statute's clear prohibition and the broader historical and policy rationale, we respectfully urge you to immediately halt any consideration, planning, minting, printing or distribution of coinage or currency featuring President Trump's likeness while he is alive.

Thank you for your careful attention to this matter, which is critical to preserving both legal integrity and public confidence in the nation's money.

Sincerely,



Steve Cohen
Member of Congress



Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



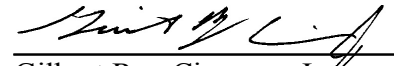
Zoe Lofgren
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Betty McCollum
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Gilbert Ray Cisneros, Jr.
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