

Truth Social suing Washington Post

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The owners of Truth Social are suing the Washington Post Company for \$3.78 billion, alleging defamation and conspiracy to defame. They filed the [action](#) on May 20, one week following an article in the *Post* alleging money laundering, failures of required disbursement disclosures, and alleged ties to a Russian banker and a “porn-friendly” bank in the Caribbean.

Truth Social and two hit pieces

The outlet *DC Enquirer* has the most detailed [summary](#) of the complaint, and a [link](#) to the complaint itself. John Solomon at *Just the News* [carried the story](#) as well.

Trump Media Technology Group (TMTG), which owns Truth Social, laid out their story in the nineteen-page complaint. The story begins with one Will Wilkerson, a “former employee of TMTG” whom the company “terminated for cause.” Other outlets describe Wilkerson as former Senior Vice-President in Charge of Operations of TMTG, and as a “whistleblower.” He has alleged securities fraud and other wrongdoing against Truth Social since at least October 15, 2022. The *Post* published this [article](#) on that date. A Securities and Exchange Commission complaint against Truth Social did exist at the time. The specific “cause” for the firing of Wilkerson was his disclosure of that complaint, on October 6, 2022, to *The Miami Herald*, in violation of a non-disclosure agreement.

That government case might no longer exist. But according to the complaint, Wilkerson “began to concoct and publicly shop false stories about TMTG to numerous media outlets.”

WaPo “bit” again in May, with this [article](#) describing the involvement of an entity called ES Family Trust, having links to “a porn-friendly bank on a Caribbean island,” with the still-ongoing merger talks between TMTG and Digital World Acquisitions Company (DWAC). DWAC is a Special Purpose Acquisitions Company (SPAC), one of several that help launch startups and take them public. *Their* source is *The Guardian*, which published this [story](#) on March 15.

Further publication – key source of injury

The complaint offers details on the WaPo story, which mentions an \$8 million loan and a \$240,000 finder’s fee. WaPo alleges that TMTG failed to inform the SEC of either transaction, nor about some conflicts of interest involving DWAC.

WaPo, after publishing its article, tweeted it out:

Exclusive: Trump’s media company took out an \$8 million loan in exchange for stock, but no one told the SEC <https://t.co/dZ9JzBi1W6>

— The Washington Post (@washingtonpost) [May 13, 2023](#)

The Twitter community greeted the tweet with a mixed reaction, but the complaint laid emphasis on this tweet:

<pic.twitter.com/CmbR73fgHD>

— Jason Miller (@Jasonmiller321) [May 13, 2023](#)

Among the scoffers was this user who pointed this out about Nancy Pelosi’s insider trades.

Nancy Pelosi and her husband Paul have been profiting millions of dollars off of insider trading for years.

Plot twist: The SEC knows, but turns a blind eye.

— JamieRJN (@JamieRJN) [May 13, 2023](#)

This activity prompted four Representatives, two Republican and two Democrat, to [propose](#) to forbid Members of Congress to trade stocks. Remarkably, they included Reps. Matt Gaetz (R-Fla.) and Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez (D-N.Y.).

Nevertheless, Author Drew Harwell tweeted the article out on his own account:

New: The Truth Social saga just keeps getting weirder. Our latest includes a porn-friendly bank on a Caribbean island and an \$8 million mystery loan:

<https://t.co/GSO8bWdtIA>

— Drew Harwell (@drewharwell) [May 13, 2023](#)

So did his editor, Mark Seibel:

More on the crazy doings at Trump Media: this time they borrowed money from a bank best known for servicing the adult entertainment, pledged a stake in the company for the loan and didn't tell the SEC. <https://t.co/5nWEu8iklv>

— mark seibel (@markseibel) [May 13, 2023](#)

Coauthors Matt Bernardini and Matei Rosca did the same:

NEW with [@drewharwell](#) and [@mateirosca](#) A Russian banker connected to the porn industry could have gained a stake in Trump's Truth Social according to documents.

<https://t.co/qWBTh3f26>

— Matt Bernardini (@MattBernardini7) [May 13, 2023](#)

LATEST EXCLUSIVE in [@washingtonpost](#) with [@MattBernardini7](#) and [@drewharwell](#) ->

Trust linked to porn-friendly bank could gain a stake in Trump's Truth Social – [#Paxum](#)

<https://t.co/DqAcb10ALT>

— Matei Rosca (@mateirosca) [May 13, 2023](#)

WaPo Business Editor Lori Montgomery retweeted Drew Harwell's tweet, and also added one of her own:

SCOOP —> Trust linked to porn-friendly bank could gain a stake in Trump's Truth Social. Oh, and the bank has ties to Russia, Russia, Russia. Via [@drewharwell](#)

<https://t.co/ldvBG0vggL>

— lori montgomery (@loriamontgomery) [May 13, 2023](#)

See also these two other tweets that the complaint mentioned:

👁️ <https://t.co/GEtA8DKpj7>

— Matei Rosca (@mateirosca) [May 13, 2023](#)

Yo WaPo, you buried the lede here, even by calling it a loan from a "porn-friendly bank."

It's PAXUM BANK, one that's almost surely tied to Russian Mafiya \$\$\$ from sex trafficking of cam girls in Romania and around the world. Its owner just resigned yesterday. <https://t.co/1UyS83hz3J>

— Eric Garland (@ericgarland) [May 14, 2023](#)

The Truth Social complaint sites these examples of reader reaction to establish the damage to Truth Social's reputation:

The beautiful thing about this is that it could potentially lead to charges against Devon Nunes ... <https://t.co/PMmn612eHt>

— Dave WinX (@dave_winx) [May 14, 2023](#)

And it goes, on and on. Someone, please put this corrupt mf'er in jail!
<https://t.co/xW9o8rRsNh>

— Keysie (@KeyLargo2) [May 13, 2023](#)

They also cited this example of [reader comments](#).

The WaPo article made one allegation about an alleged investor who lost his "life savings" in the Truth Social venture. Drew Harwell virtually laughed at him:

No matter how your day is going, at least you didn't spend your life savings on Truth Social-related stock, paying \$175 for shares that now sell for \$13

Free-to-read link: <https://t.co/79K3ARYEvx> pic.twitter.com/Q7AbNgaklr

— Drew Harwell (@drewharwell) [May 13, 2023](#)

The complaint offers five more tweets "republishing" the story, from accounts they call "prominent anti-TMTG users."

HA! The Russian tied to the bank that loaned Truth Social \$8M to stay afloat also donated \$30K to Ron DeSantis, and the bank is the "#1 trusted payment service" for the porn industry.

Oh, the tangled web they weave. <https://t.co/Zf8z1YpbAL>

— Mueller, She Wrote (@MuellerSheWrote) [May 14, 2023](#)

Seems up-and-up. Trump appears to be secretly seeking a loan from a relative of a Putin ally via a secretive porn financing bank, and is arranging w/o telling it's own shareholders. Normal stuff. <https://t.co/DlwlKoC22n>

— John Sipher (@john_sipher) [May 13, 2023](#)

Has Trump ever been involved in a normal business that provided a normal good or service that didn't get investigated for fraud in some manner? <https://t.co/0chtgrjVe6>

— S.V. Dáte (@svdate) [May 13, 2023](#)

Who woulda guessed that Trump's Truth Social is snarled in a Federal investigation of money laundering and that the cash is linked to a Putin-allied oligarch and that Trump Media shareholders are being kept in the dark? <https://t.co/XGUw9DBBFL>

— eztempo (@eztempo) [May 13, 2023](#)

So much corruption. So little time: Trust linked to porn-friendly bank could gain a stake in Trump's Truth Social <https://t.co/oHi3oqNOPe>

— Craig Unger (@craigunger) [May 13, 2023](#)

Truth social responds: all lies

Truth Social insists that the statements Harwell, Bernardini, and Rosca made in the article are “materially false.” They admit the \$8 million loan but *not* the finder’s fee. As Florida Statutes require, the company demanded a retraction – and didn’t get one.

Truth Social is seeking \$2.78 billion in compensatory damages and \$1 billion in punitive damages. To substantiate that demand, they list the damages they have suffered in Paragraph 27 of the complaint:

As a direct result of WaPo’s defamation, TMTG suffered damages, including, but not limited to,

- Loss and injury to its business, brand and good will,
- Lost future earning capacity,
- Damage and injury to reputation (past and future),
- Costs, and
- Other out-of-pocket expenses,

in the sum of \$2,780,000,000.00 or such greater amount as is determined by a jury.

Truth Social also alleges conspiracy to defame, said conspiracy including WaPo, “outside third parties,” Will Wilkerson, and his attorneys.

Trump and his lawsuit experience

Donald Trump himself is no stranger to legal controversy. Last year he sued CNN after they compared him to Adolf Hitler and wouldn't take that back. That last is ironic, because Trump agreed to appear on CNN for a Town Hall meeting in New Hampshire. (He also made a fool of CNN's chosen anchor person. So if CNN thought they could make the lawsuit go away, they paid too high a price for that. And that's even assuming they *could* make that lawsuit go away.)

He also has a lawsuit pending against *The New York Times*, arising out of a 2018 article that misrepresented his tax and other financial status.

The Washington Post has no comment on the case of *TMTG v. WP Company LLC*. That case is pending in the Twelfth (Florida) Judicial Circuit Court in Sarasota County, where Truth Social has its headquarters.

In contrast to WaPo, the *New York Post* covered the *Guardian* story on the day of publication. And they've never touched the story since, as a search on "ES Family Trust" on their site proves. They also expressed doubt that *The Guardian* had actually shown anything illegal.

As Trump said when he sued CNN, that other organ was only his first target. *The Washington Post* laid themselves wide-open on this one. Unlike the *New York Post*, *The Washington Post* assumed – even asserted – guilt. Beyond a certain point, "he's a public figure" is no longer a defense against a defamation charge.