

**NAME**

Mini Pardon final.mp3

**DATE**

December 12, 2020

**DURATION**

4m 27s

**10 SPEAKERS**

CPB  
Bush  
Jacqui  
News Anchor  
Tat  
Obama  
Ford  
Andrew  
Carter  
Oprah

**START OF TRANSCRIPT****[00:00:00] CPB**

Civics 101 is supported in part by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting, his final pardoning of the turkey as commander in chief.

**[00:00:09] Bush**

Well, this turkey must have said some prayers of his own and we're going to grant him a special presidential pardon.

**[00:00:18] Jacqui**

During a president's lame duck phase, the 70 days before a new president takes office, an interesting thing happens. Many departing presidents going to pardoning spree.

**[00:00:30] News Anchor**

President Trump wiping out the conviction of his former national security adviser, Michael Flynn, who had pleaded guilty to lying to the FBI in the Russia investigation.

**[00:00:42] Jacqui**

This is Civics 101. I'm Jacqui Fulton.

**[00:00:45] Tat**

And I'm Tat Bellamy- Walker, a fellow here at Civics 101.

**[00:00:49]**

Today, we're answering a question from Robert. Why do outgoing presidents pardoned so many people?

**[00:00:55] Obama**

I hereby argue what is a presidential pardon?

**[00:00:59] Jacqui**

Article two of the Constitution gives the president the power to grant reprieves and pardons for federal crimes.

**[00:01:07] Tat**

It's a get out of jail free card, but not just jail. When pardoned, a person is no longer required to pay fines, follow the terms of parole, or discuss the conviction on job applications. The president can pardon pretty much anyone who has committed a crime.

**[00:01:22] Ford**

Now, therefore, I, Gerald R. Ford, president of the United States, have granted a full, free and absolute pardon onto Richard Nixon for all offenses against the United States.

**[00:01:41] Andrew**

Article two, Section two of the Constitution says that president shall have power to grant reprieves and pardons for offenses against the United States except in cases of impeachment. So that's a pretty broad power.

**[00:01:55] Jacqui**

That's Andrew Rouda Levitch, professor of government at Bowdoin College. We talked to him in 2017 for a civics episode about presidential pardons.

**[00:02:05] Tat**

Andrew says there are two exceptions.

**[00:02:07] Andrew**

One is that it has to be a crime against the United States so state crime wouldn't count. And secondly, the pardon power can't be used as a way of avoiding impeachment.

**[00:02:17] Jacqui**

Think less murder, more white collar crime.

**[00:02:22] Tat**

It's purely discretionary, even if the prison staff doesn't agree with it.

**[00:02:26] Tat**

President Jimmy Carter, for example, granted a blanket pardon to draft dodgers to all those who had defected from the military in order to avoid service in Vietnam.

**[00:02:37] Carter**

I didn't pardon deserters.

**[00:02:38] Jacqui**

Request for pardons go through the office of the pardon attorney.

**[00:02:43] Andrew**

There is a set of regulations that are designed to systematize this process. I mean, presidents get many thousands of requests for pardons or commutations of sentences every year. And so most of the people that the president pardons, he doesn't know that they are.

**[00:03:01] Jacqui**

That brings us back to the 11th hour pardons.

**[00:03:05] News Anchor**

President Obama will leave office Friday with the most commutations in White House history. He pardoned 64 people yesterday.

**[00:03:13] Jacqui**

Why the sudden flurry of mercy?

**[00:03:16] Tat**

In many cases, it's a matter of legacy during the final days in office. Outgoing presidents may try to rush through pet projects and grant pardons to burnish their image.

**[00:03:27] Jacqui**

There have been controversies in the past when presidents bypass the process to give last minute pardons to friends or donors.

**[00:03:35] Tat**

Two hours before Bill Clinton left office, he pardoned financier Marc Rich, whose wife had been a big donor to the Clinton Presidential Library.

**[00:03:45] News Anchor**

Well, Marc Rich was a Clinton confidante who was on the FBI's 10 most wanted list because he had a habit of trading with regimes that were under U.S. sanctions. And so he was facing life in prison for racketeering, tax evasion and trading with the enemy.

**[00:03:58] Tat**

Some thought Rich had bought his pardon with a donation like.

**[00:04:07]**

So there you go, presidential pardons extravaganza, if you have any questions, send them our way.

**[00:04:15] CPB**

Go to Civics 101 podcast, nhpr.org.

**[00:04:18] Oprah**

Everybody in the audience and listen to me carefully is being given a full pardon.

**END OF TRANSCRIPT**



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