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PRESIDENTIAL PARDONS IN THE U.S.: LEGACY OR TOOL OF JUSTICE?

ПРЕЗИДЕНТСЬКІ ПОМИЛУВАННЯ В США: СПАДЩИНА ЧИ ІНСТРУМЕНТ СПРАВЕДЛИВОСТІ?

Summary. *Introduction. Presidential pardon in the United States is one of the most powerful discretionary instruments of the head of state, combining elements of humanism, legal regulation, and political responsibility. Its history of application raises numerous ethical, legal, and social discussions, especially in the context of pardons granted to relatives or political allies.*

Purpose. *The purpose of the study is a comprehensive analysis of the institution of presidential pardon in the U.S., identification of its legal, political, and social aspects, as well as the development of recommendations to increase transparency and accountability in the clemency procedure.*

Materials and Methods. *The study uses methods of system analysis, historical-legal, comparative-legal, logical, formal-legal, and structural approaches. The sources include scientific publications, judicial practice, documents of U.S. administrations, as well as statistical reports and analytical memoranda.*

Results. It was found that in a number of cases, presidential pardons are used as political tools that contradict the principles of the rule of law. In particular, cases of pardoning relatives and political allies of U.S. presidents in 2001–2024 were analyzed. The study identifies risks of abuse of power, conflict of interest, and the undermining of public trust. Specific reform proposals are offered, including the creation of an independent advisory body and a prohibition on pardoning relatives.

Further research in this area. Future research should focus on the development of legislative mechanisms for oversight of the implementation of the pardon right, as well as studying its impact on the rule of law and the democratic legitimacy of the executive branch.

Key words: presidential pardon, discretionary powers, U.S. constitutional law, abuse of power, conflict of interest, legal reform.

Анотація. Вступ. Президентське помилування у Сполучених Штатах є одним із найпотужніших дискреційних інструментів голови держави, що поєднує елементи гуманізму, правового регулювання та політичної відповідальності. Історія його застосування викликає численні етичні, правові та соціальні дискусії, особливо в контексті помилувань родичів та політичних союзників.

Мета. Метою дослідження є всебічний аналіз інституту президентського помилування у США, виявлення його юридичних, політичних та соціальних аспектів, а також розробка рекомендацій щодо підвищення прозорості та підзвітності у процедурі помилування.

Матеріали і методи. У дослідженні використано методи системного аналізу, історико-правовий, порівняльно-правовий, логічний, формально-юридичний та структурний підходи. Джерелами слугували наукові публікації,

судова практика, документи адміністрації США, а також статистичні звіти й аналітичні меморандуми.

Результати. Встановлено, що в низці випадків президентське помилування використовується як політичний інструмент, що суперечить принципам верховенства права. Зокрема, проаналізовано випадки помилування родичів і політичних союзників президентів США у 2001–2024 роках. У дослідженні визначено ризики зловживання владою, конфлікту інтересів і підриву суспільної довіри. Запропоновано конкретні пропозиції щодо реформування, включаючи створення незалежного дорадчого органу та заборону на помилування родичів.

Перспективи. Майбутні дослідження мають бути зосереджені на розробці законодавчих механізмів контролю за реалізацією права на помилування, а також на вивченні його впливу на верховенство права та демократичну легітимність виконавчої влади.

Ключові слова: президентське помилування, дискреційні повноваження, конституційне право США, зловживання владою, конфлікт інтересів, правова реформа.

Statement of the problem. The right to grant pardons is one of the most important tools entrusted to the President of the United States to correct judicial errors, mitigate punishment, or implement a humane approach to justice. In the United States, the right to pardon is enshrined in the Constitution under Article II, Section 2 [26], which grants the President the power to "grant reprieves and pardons for offenses against the United States." This article examines the historical application of the right to pardon in the U.S., its evolution, and its impact on the justice system.

However, the use of presidential pardons remains one of the most controversial aspects of the American legal system. On the one hand, they serve as a humanitarian tool to correct judicial errors, mitigate overly harsh sentences, and give convicted individuals a chance at rehabilitation. The lack of clear procedures, transparent criteria, and oversight mechanisms raises doubts about the fairness of their use.

The most concerning aspect is the politicized use of presidential pardons, particularly when pardons are granted to political allies, financial donors, or family members of the president. The lack of sufficient oversight and accountability mechanisms allows for the potential abuse of this power. Scholars argue that without adequate checks, presidential pardons can be used not only as instruments of justice and mercy, but also for political loyalty and as a means of evading accountability for serious crimes. This issue has sparked ongoing debate about the need for reforms to ensure that pardon powers are used fairly and transparently, and to address the ethical implications of such discretionary powers.

Research Methodology. The methodological basis of this study is a combination of general and specialized methods of scientific research, which allows for a comprehensive analysis of the institution of presidential pardon in the United States and its impact on the justice system.

The general scientific dialectical method became dominant in the research. With its help, the problems considered in the work are analyzed in the unity of their social content and legal form, which allows us to determine both the historical and modern context of the application of presidential pardons.

The following special methods were used in the study:

System analysis - used to determine the place of presidential pardons in the general system of criminal law and justice in the USA, as well as its interaction with other legal institutions.

Comparative legal method - used in the study of legislation of the USA and other states, which regulates the institution of pardons, in order to identify common features and differences in its legal application.

Historical and legal method – was used to analyze the formation and development of US legislation on presidential pardon, starting from its enshrining in the Constitution of 1787 to modern discussions on its reform.

Formal and logical method – helped to clarify the legal nature of pardon as an instrument of humanity, correction of judicial errors and, at the same time, a potential mechanism of political manipulation.

Structural method – was used to analyze the relationship of the constituent elements of the institution of pardon, including the procedure for application, restrictions and legal consequences.

Analysis of recent research and publications. In addition to the use of general and special research methods, the analysis was carried out on the basis of a review of secondary sources. The work used the scientific works of leading researchers of the institution of pardon, in particular Bowman [4], Crouch [7], Duker [31] as well as other legal scholars Harvard Law Review [13] etc., who studied the constitutional and political aspects of this phenomenon.

Additionally, government reports containing statistical data on the use of presidential pardons in different historical periods were taken into account, as well as legal commentaries that highlight modern discussions on possible reforms of this institution. Such a comprehensive approach allows us to assess not only the legal aspects of presidential pardons, but also their functioning in the context of the US political and judicial system.

The use of these methods allowed a deeper understanding of the essence, functions and potential risks of presidential pardon, as well as to formulate practical recommendations for its improvement.

The purpose of the study is to provide a comprehensive legal and political analysis of the institution of presidential pardon in the United States, identify the risks of its misuse, and develop practical recommendations aimed at increasing transparency, accountability, and fairness in the exercise of this constitutional power.

Presentation of the main material of the research. The origins of the right to pardon in the U.S. can be traced to English common law, where kings wielded absolute authority to pardon criminals. This tool was incorporated into the American Constitution, albeit with certain restrictions, such as the inability to pardon cases of impeachment [31].

When the U.S. Constitution was drafted, its framers included the pardon power in Article II, Section 2, but with certain limitations to prevent abuse. Unlike English monarchs, the president of the United States cannot issue pardons in cases of impeachment, ensuring that this power will not be used to shield officials from accountability. The Founding Fathers, including Alexander Hamilton, defended the pardon power as a necessary tool for correcting injustice and providing relief in times of emergency. Hamilton, in *The Federalist Papers* No. 74, argued that the pardon power should be vested solely in the executive branch, since a multi-member body may lack the decisiveness and ability to act quickly in matters of justice [12].

The right to pardon in the U.S. encompasses:

- Complete exemption from punishment (absolute pardon).
- Mitigation of punishment, such as the reduction of a prison term.
- A reprieve or postponement of the execution of a sentence.
- Rehabilitation, which includes the restoration of rights lost as a result of conviction.

In the United States, the right to pardon is divided into two main categories:

1. Federal pardons, which are exercised exclusively by the President of the United States. These apply to offenses under federal law. The President has full

discretionary power to pardon, commute sentences, grant amnesty, or delay the execution of a sentence.

2. State pardons, which are granted by governors or specially created commissions within each of the 50 states. These pardons apply to crimes under the jurisdiction of state laws. It should also be noted that in some states, governors exercise this right independently (e.g., Alabama, Kansas, New York, Virginia), while in others, they act only upon the recommendation of a pardon board or commission (e.g., Florida, Louisiana, Nevada, Oklahoma). The legislation governing this process varies from state to state.

Thus, in the United States, the right to pardon is distributed between the federal level (for federal offenses) and state levels (for crimes regulated by state laws), reflecting the nature of the federal system of governance. This work focuses on the federal right to pardon exercised by the President of the United States.

Early U.S. Presidents, such as George Washington and Thomas Jefferson, used the power of pardon to reduce tensions following political crises. For instance, George Washington pardoned participants of the 1794 Whiskey Rebellion to prevent further escalation of violence. Abraham Lincoln and Andrew Johnson used pardons to restore national unity; Andrew Johnson, for example, granted amnesty to thousands of former Confederate soldiers in exchange for their oath of allegiance to the Union [5; 10].

However, the history of pardons has not been without controversy. President Richard Nixon was pardoned by President Gerald Ford on September 8, 1974, following the Watergate scandal (named after the Watergate Hotel in Washington, where the events that sparked the scandal began). This pardon, which absolved Nixon from potential criminal prosecution for any crimes he might have committed during his presidency, sparked public debate about the balance between justice and political

stability. At that time, the Justice Department issued a memorandum concluding that the president lacked the constitutional authority to grant themselves a pardon. This memorandum has since served as a key reference in discussions on the limits of executive clemency [7; 27].

Another notable controversial pardon occurred when President Bill Clinton, on his last day in office, pardoned Marc Rich, a financier charged with tax evasion, leading to allegations of corruption [10].

In recent years, presidents such as Barack Obama and Donald Trump have utilized the power of pardon to address social and political issues. President Obama focused on granting pardons to individuals convicted of non-violent drug offenses, whereas President Trump used the power of pardon for his political allies and figures connected to his administration [24].

Among the latest pardons, the most notable and controversial in late 2024 was President Joe Biden's pardon of his son, Hunter Biden, which predictably drew criticism from legal experts and human rights advocates. The application of the right to pardon in relation to close relatives, such as a son, raises significant ethical concerns.

First, when a president exercises the power of pardon for family members, it creates the risk of a conflict of interest, as personal relationships may influence the impartiality of the decision-making process.

Second, pardoning a relative can be perceived as the use of state authority for personal gain, undermining public trust in governmental institutions and the justice system. According to a December 2024 Associated Press poll [18], only 22% of Americans approved of President Biden's decision to grant a comprehensive pardon to his son, Hunter Biden, especially as the president had repeatedly stated he would not do so.

Lastly, and most importantly, such actions may set a dangerous precedent, encouraging future leaders to exploit the power of pardon to protect their close associates or allies, thereby weakening the rule of law [29]. Many experts and politicians have expressed concern over this decision. Representatives of the Republican Party condemned the pardon, accusing President Biden of abuse of power and evasion of accountability. Some members of the Democratic Party also voiced doubts, arguing that it establishes a perilous precedent [19].

Following the aforementioned controversy, President Biden signed an order granting pardons to 39 individuals convicted of non-violent offenses and commuted the sentences of nearly 1,500 prisoners. The White House described this decision as "the largest single instance of pardons in modern history" [24].

Furthermore, on his final day in office, President Biden preemptively pardoned three of his relatives and two of their spouses, citing concerns that they might become targets of "unfounded and politically motivated investigations" [6]. According to the president, this decision should not be interpreted as an admission of guilt or confirmation of any wrongdoing on their part. In our view, this move constitutes an abuse of presidential powers, as such "preventive" pardons undermine the very essence of the principle of equality before the law. It creates a dangerous precedent whereby high-ranking officials may use their positions to shield personal interests and their close circles from potential accountability, even in the absence of explicit charges or investigations. See (Table 1).

Table 1

Comparative table detailing presidential pardons for family members across recent U.S. presidents

President	Family Members Pardoned	Notable Examples	Context
Joe Biden	5	Three siblings and two spouses preemptively pardoned for potential politically motivated investigations.	Preemptive pardons issued at the end of term, citing potential investigations.
Donald Trump	0	No known pardons for family members.	Focused pardons on political allies and notable individuals outside family.
Barack Obama	0	No known pardons for family members.	Highly selective use of pardon power, no family involvement.
George W. Bush	0	No known pardons for family members.	Rare use of pardons, limited to non-family cases.
Bill Clinton	1	Half-brother of Hillary Clinton pardoned for drug-related charges.	Controversial pardon at end of term, raising ethical questions.
Ronald Reagan	0	No known pardons for family members.	Minimal use of pardons overall, no family pardons.

Source: created by the author based on publicly available data

In fact, throughout U.S. history, the pardoning of direct relatives has occurred only twice. Aside from the recent preventive pardons granted by President Joe Biden to his relatives, there is the case of President Bill Clinton pardoning his half-brother, Roger Clinton, who was convicted in 1985 for drug-related offenses. However, unlike President Biden's pardoning of his relatives, Clinton's half-brother was indeed convicted of a crime [16].

The right to pardon is a unique institution within the justice system, combining elements of humanitarianism, legal regulation, and political accountability.

Analyzing the structure, application, and limitations of this right offers a deeper understanding of its role in ensuring justice.

The primary purpose of this institution, as noted by legal experts, is to correct judicial errors or serve a humanitarian function. The right to pardon allows for the rectification of judicial mistakes and the mitigation of excessive punishments, particularly relevant in the context of historically harsh sentences for non-violent offenses.

Another key function of this institution, highlighted by legal scholars, is its corrective role. The use of the pardon power helps to address miscarriages of justice, especially in cases where due process was violated or a fair trial was not ensured. This includes situations where the rights of the convicted were violated during arrest, or evidence was collected in violation of existing legal standards [22; 23].

Additionally, the social significance of the pardon is a critical aspect of this institution. For example, in cases of large-scale amnesties, such as the amnesty of Civil War participants or the mitigation of sentences for drug-related offenses, the right to pardon plays a vital role in societal restoration and resolving public conflicts.

In our view, several applications of the pardon power provoke the most active discussions:

1. The institution of pardons is often subject to excessive politicization. Pardons are frequently criticized for being used for political purposes, undermining trust in the justice system. For instance, pardons granted to presidential allies or relatives raise concerns about abuse of power.

2. The lack of effective mechanisms for appeal also presents a challenge, as decisions on pardons are effectively unreviewable, leaving them entirely at the president's discretion.

3. The absence of clear criteria or guidelines for exercising the pardon power can lead to inconsistency in its application.

Despite the president's near-absolute authority in matters of pardons, there are also legislative restrictions that can be categorized as constitutional, legal, and political.

Among the constitutional limitations is the provision that the pardon power cannot be applied to impeachment proceedings [27], thus safeguarding the mechanism of political accountability.

Legal limitations stipulate that pardons can only be granted for federal crimes. Violations of state laws are governed by governors or other authorized officials at the state level. Political limitations involve the fact that the exercise of the pardon power is subject to public scrutiny, which serves as a check against excessive or arbitrary use.

The President may not attach conditions that would deprive a pardon recipient of rights not already stripped by dint of conviction. Put differently, pardon conditions may not deprive the recipient of additional rights beyond those already forfeited as a result of the pardon recipient's crime. For preemptive pardons, which "carry an imputation of guilt," the pardon conditions may affect only rights that would be forfeited upon conviction for the crime pardoned. Specific examples illuminate this limit's contours. Unobjectionable conditions include those that merely reemphasize a pardon recipient's existing obligations. For example, President Harding pardoned a convicted counterfeiter on the condition "that he be law-abiding and not connected with any unlawful undertaking" [15]. At least one Civil War-era pardon required the recipient refrain from acquiring slaves and pay all fines and fees that he owed. The Civil War amnesties conditioned upon an oath to support the U.S. Constitution and abide by the laws of Congress also fall in this category. Because these conditions impose no new restrictions or obligations, they do not violate the identified limit [13].

For example, Frank Bowman finds that while the presidential pardon power is broad, it is not absolute and is subject to constitutional and jurisdictional limitations. In particular, he emphasizes that pardons cannot be used to create impunity and evade accountability. The author recommends careful but measured use of investigative tools, such as congressional hearings, special prosecutors, and prosecutions, to test credible allegations of misconduct by former presidents and their associates. He argues that despite presidential pardons, individuals involved in crimes may still be investigated and their actions reviewed in civil and administrative proceedings, as well as under state laws to which pardons do not apply [4].

Several significant precedents in the American legal system can be highlighted.

The U.S. Supreme Court has repeatedly affirmed that the right to pardon is a final and irreversible act once granted. For example, in the case of *Ex parte Garland* (1866), the court stated that a pardon fully releases an individual from punishment and the consequences of conviction, and it cannot be reviewed [9].

There is also precedent for a pardon being revoked before it is formally accepted by the convicted individual. In the case of *United States v. Wilson* (1833), the court ruled that the convicted must either accept or reject the pardon. Until acceptance, the act of pardon can be altered [25].

Although traditionally, a pardon is considered an irrevocable act once accepted, there are situations that may lead to its revocation: one such situation could be fraud or deception in the application for a pardon. If it is revealed that a pardon was based on false information, its validity may be questioned. However, revocation in such cases typically requires separate legal proceedings.

In other legal systems, such as those in certain European countries, the revocation of a pardon is possible if it was granted in violation of the law or based on false information. Such cases, however, require a separate judicial decision.

For example, in Germany, the right to pardon is divided between federal and state levels. The Federal President holds the power to grant pardons but may delegate this authority to others, such as the Chancellor or Minister of Justice. If a pardon was granted based on false data or in violation of the law, it could be annulled through legal proceedings. However, no documented cases of such revocation in Germany have been identified [3].

In the United Kingdom, the Royal Prerogative of Mercy allows the monarch to grant pardons. If it is found that a pardon was obtained fraudulently or in violation of procedure, it may be revoked. However, such cases are rare and also require judicial intervention [20; 1].

In the U.S. legal system, a pardon is final and irrevocable once accepted by the convicted individual. Exceptions, as noted, include cases where the pardon has not yet come into effect or was obtained through fraudulent means. This protection of the institution of pardon serves to strengthen trust in legal mechanisms and uphold individual rights.

The right to pardon is an essential component of the justice system, incorporating elements of humanitarianism and flexibility. However, ensuring its fair application requires consideration of its limitations and the potential risks of politicization. In our opinion, an important future step could be the development of more transparent procedures and criteria for exercising this power.

Improper application of the pardon power can have serious legal, political, and social consequences, as it affects issues of justice, the rule of law, and public trust in the justice system.

One of the primary risks is the erosion of the rule of law. Improper pardons - particularly those based on personal gain, corruption, or political favoritism - undermine the foundation of the rule of law. This creates precedents for the abuse of such powers in the future.

Another issue, in our view, is the lack of mechanisms for appeal. In most legal systems, a pardon is considered a final act and is not subject to judicial review. This makes its consequences irreversible, even if subsequent violations or abuses are revealed.

Some scholars also highlight the so-called problem of enforcement. If a pardon is granted to an individual convicted of serious crimes, it may create challenges for law enforcement and the judicial system, including complications in prosecuting accomplices.

Improper use of pardons may also lead to political consequences, such as:

- Loss of public trust: Scandalous or improper acts of pardon - such as pardoning political allies or individuals involved in corruption schemes - undermine public confidence in government institutions and justice.

- Political instability: Improper pardons can provoke societal backlash, leading to mass protests, political pressure, or a crisis of trust in state leadership.

Violating the rules for granting pardons also weakens democratic principles. It is evident that using the pardon power for personal gain or to consolidate political power disrupts the balance between branches of government and undermines the foundations of democracy.

Among the social consequences of improper pardons are the following:

- Injustice in the eyes of society: Unlawful pardons, particularly in cases involving serious crimes, create a sense of injustice among the public and undermine faith in equality before the law.

- Challenges with reintegration of pardoned individuals: When pardons are granted without proper justification, reintegration into society can be accompanied by stigmatization and protests from victims or their families.

- Deterioration of social stability: Such actions can provoke increased social tension, especially when they involve sensitive issues like racial, ethnic, or political conflicts.

Additionally, the ethical consequences of such actions include:

- Corruption and favoritism: Pardons granted in exchange for material benefits or political support undermine the ethical foundation of governmental institutions.
- Discreditation of the institution of pardon: Improper use of this power creates the perception that pardons serve personal interests rather than justice [17].

There are several historical examples of controversial uses of the pardon power in the United States. For instance, the scandal surrounding the pardon of Marc Rich in 2001: President Bill Clinton pardoned businessman Marc Rich, who was accused of tax evasion. This led to accusations of corruption and damaged Clinton's reputation, although the legal consequences were minimal [8].

Similarly, in 2020, the pardoning of President Donald Trump's allies, who were linked to his political activities, sparked significant public outrage. Many critics accused the former president of abusing his power and using the pardon right for personal and political purposes, which eroded trust in the justice system [28].

It should be noted that internal White House memorandum play a significant role in decisions regarding pardons. Copies of memorandums issued during the administration of President George W. Bush on May 2, 2001, and during the Obama administration on July 13, 2010, were obtained and published by USA Today in 2015, providing insight into how pardon evaluation criteria evolve over time. Although the two memoranda were written by different White House advisors during different administrations, they share several similarities. Both assert that the president considers five primary factors outlined in the Guidelines to be appropriate for the Department of Justice to use when evaluating petitions submitted for presidential review. They also acknowledge and reaffirm the necessity for the Office

of the Pardon Attorney (OPA) and the Deputy Attorney General (DAG) to continue fulfilling their "traditional advisory roles." Furthermore, they describe various situations where the likelihood of presidential pardons would be low. Thus, each administration establishes its own criteria for reviewing pardon petitions [28], as shown in (Table 2).

Table 2

Disfavored Situations in Presidential Pardon Memos

Subject Area	Bush Memo (May 2001)	Obama Memo (July 2010)
Violence	Violent offense (e.g., murder, rape)	Violent offenses involving serious bodily harm (e.g., murder, rape)
Weapons or Arson	Use of firearms, deadly weapons, or explosives; arson	Use of deadly weapons (e.g., unlawful firearms, explosives); arson
Illegal Drugs	Illegal drug trafficking (i.e., manufacturing, import/export, distribution, sale)	Significant role in large-scale drug trafficking
Minors	Harm to children or sex-related offenses involving minors	Physical harm to children
National Security	Treason, sabotage, espionage, terrorism, damage to national security	Terrorism and other offenses directly impacting national security
Corruption	Public corruption	Public corruption involving significant breaches of public trust
Fraud	Not discussed	Financial fraud harming significant numbers of individuals or substantial loss to federal government
Time Since Conviction	Felony conviction less than ten years old	No fixed rule beyond existing DOJ five-year standard; recentness of offense viewed in context of entire application, including the offense's seriousness
Prior Convictions	Extensive criminal history (e.g., three or more convictions)	Three or more convictions absent 'extraordinary post-conviction rehabilitative history'

Source: Bureau of Justice Statistics [5]; Gonzales [11]; Bauer [2]

An interesting fact about the tradition and the special "symbolic" right of pardon in the United States is the National Thanksgiving Turkey Presentation [14]. During this annual November event, the President symbolically pardons a domestic turkey, sparing it from being slaughtered for the holiday feast, and allowing it to live out the rest of its life on a farm [21].

Conclusions of this research and prospects for further research in this area. Based on the above, it can be concluded that the improper use of the right to pardon leads to significant consequences, affecting legal, political, social, and ethical aspects. To minimize risks, it is essential to introduce mechanisms for transparency and public oversight of this process, such as:

- Developing clearer criteria for exercising the right to pardon.
- Possibly establishing an independent advisory body authorized to assess each case before the President makes a decision.

Only adherence to the principles of justice and the rule of law can ensure that the right to pardon is exercised in the interests of society, rather than for personal or political gain.

Thus, it can be concluded that to strengthen public trust in the institution of pardon, the following changes could be proposed:

- Increasing the role of public oversight in the process;
- Revising legislation to eliminate legal loopholes and ensure fairness in the application of this right;
- Introducing restrictions to exclude the possibility of pardoning relatives, friends, or individuals connected to decision-makers, in order to minimize the risks of political bias and personal gain.

The presidential pardon power plays a significant role in the US legal and political system, serving as a mechanism for humanizing justice and correcting miscarriages of justice. However, the history of its use reveals a dual nature: while it

can be a powerful tool for justice and mercy, it also raises concerns about potential political favoritism, lack of transparency, and abuse for personal or political gain.

Stronger oversight and accountability mechanisms are needed to maintain public trust in this institution. Ensuring that pardon decisions are transparent and based on clear legal and ethical criteria can help prevent abuses and strengthen the integrity of the justice system. While the constitutional limitations of presidential pardons are the subject of ongoing debate, reforms aimed at increasing transparency, such as independent review boards or congressional oversight, can help achieve a balance between the absolute powers of the executive branch and the principles of fairness and justice. Only a responsible and well-regulated approach to the use of pardons can preserve their legitimacy and effectiveness in the eyes of the public.

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