

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 20, 2026

The Honorable Marco Rubio
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Rubio:

We write to express our deep concern regarding the State Department's reported plans to issue a limited number of specially designed U.S. passports featuring a picture of President Trump to commemorate the 250th anniversary of our nation's founding. The U.S. passport has never—and should not now—feature an image of a sitting U.S. president. We ask you to halt these plans given the anti-democratic impact this decision will have.

Using our nation's semiquincentennial to elevate the profile of the current president risks turning a unifying national milestone into a vehicle for personal promotion. The U.S. passport is the country's primary form of national identification, used daily by Americans of every political, cultural, and religious background. Its imagery has long reflected our shared national heritage through depictions of iconic landscapes and historic moments, not current political figures.

There is precedent for issuing commemorative passports to mark significant anniversaries. For example, the State Department issued a passport featuring the Liberty Bell for the bicentennial, and in 1993, released a special green passport honoring Benjamin Franklin and 200 years of U.S. consular service. These designs celebrated our shared national history rather than the image of a sitting head of state.

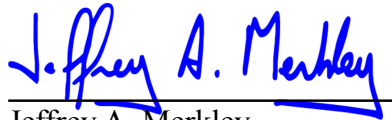
To our knowledge, no country places the portrait of a sitting leader in its passport. Even the most authoritarian and autocratic governments have avoided equating national identity to the sitting president in such a way.

The decision to produce a small run of reportedly only 25,000 passports featuring the president's image raises several questions:

1. What is the production cost associated with redesigning and printing the 250th anniversary commemorative passport?
2. Were alternative design options considered? If so, how was this option selected?
3. Reports indicate these passports will only be available at the Washington Passport Agency. What will the process be for obtaining one? Will applicants be able to opt-out of receiving this design?

We urge you to reconsider this plan. Proceeding would risk politicizing a document that is central to our national identity and could result in unnecessary and wasteful costs to the American taxpayer.


Sincerely,



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



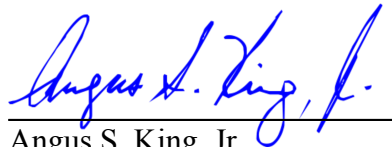
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