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fraudulent tax returns in 2018, and tax evasion.

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In a screenshot from the DNCC's livestream of the Democratic National Convention, Hunter Biden, son of then Democratic presidential nominee Joe Biden, addresses the virtual convention on Thursday, Aug. 20, 2020. (DNCC/Getty Images/TNS)

*By Matt Hamilton, Los Angeles Times (TNS)*

Hunter Biden, the president's son, was indicted Thursday in Los Angeles on several federal tax charges, marking the start of a second criminal case that will proceed during his father's reelection campaign.

Biden, who resides in Malibu, was accused of failing to pay his taxes on time from 2016 to 2019, filing false and fraudulent tax returns in 2018, and tax evasion,

according to the 56-page indictment.

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But prosecutors contend that he “willfully” failed to file and pay his taxes on time, and that rather than pay the IRS, he plunked down cash for a bacchanalia across L.A. featuring “drugs, escorts and girlfriends, luxury hotels and rental properties, exotic cars, clothing, and other items of a personal nature.”

Further, prosecutors allege that when preparing tax returns in 2020, in the early months of his sobriety, Biden misclassified a litany of personal expenses from 2018 as business expenses to reduce his tax burden. Those expenses include tuition for his daughter and a Venmo payment to an exotic dancer, according to the indictment.

If convicted of all charges—six misdemeanors and three felonies—Biden would face a maximum penalty of 17 years in prison, although federal guidelines would call for a far lower sentence.

The case was unsealed on the eve of President Joe Biden’s arrival in Southern California for his first in-person fundraising trip here since Hollywood strikes put a pause on campaign events.

The charges come months after Hunter Biden was set to enter a plea deal for tax and firearms violations. The deal would have avoided time behind bars and included immunity from additional federal charges, but it collapsed under questioning by a federal judge in Delaware. Shortly after, Attorney General Merrick Garland appointed David Weiss, the U.S. attorney in Delaware, as special counsel.

Weiss has since brought a fresh indictment in Delaware against Biden for the firearms violations, accusing him of lying about his drug use in 2018 when purchasing a gun that he briefly owned. Biden has pleaded not guilty to the charges, which are rarely filed as a standalone case.

The special counsel also brought the tax charges against Biden in California,

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Lowell said, an apparent nod to millions of people who annually fail to pay their taxes on time.

“Now, after five years of investigating with no new evidence—and two years after Hunter paid his taxes in full—the U.S. attorney has piled on nine new charges when he had agreed just months ago to resolve this matter with a pair of misdemeanors.”

Lowell noted that he had written to the special counsel's office this week, seeking a “customary meeting” to discuss the tax inquiry. “The response was media leaks today that these charges were being filed,” Lowell said.

The indictment offers the most detailed window into the Department of Justice's long-running inquiry into Biden.

In his memoir and in several interviews, Biden has been open about the depths of his addiction and unsavory lifestyle in L.A., when he lived out of the Chateau Marmont, Hollywood Roosevelt and other luxury hotels in a haze of sex and crack-induced euphoria. “I never slept. There was no clock. Day bled into night and night into day,” Biden wrote in “Beautiful Things,” in which he recounts his journey to sobriety.

Still, the grand jury indictment outlines how such sordid travails were fiscally carried out—with \$7 million in income from 2016 to 2020 from various business dealings—and uses Biden's own words to claim discrepancies in his tax returns.

The most serious charges stem from the filing of 2018 tax returns for Biden and his business, Owasco PC, which prosecutors allege were fraudulent and evasive.

Those returns were prepared in early 2020 by an accounting team in L.A. Prosecutors describe a three-hour meeting that Biden had with the accountants that year where he reviewed records to confirm their accuracy and used a yellow highlighter to indicate outlays that should not be deducted as business expenses.

According to the indictment, Biden failed to identify several personal expenses,

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— *Staff writer Stacy Perman contributed to this report.*

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