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Trump's Threat to Revoke O'Donnell's Citizenship Stirs Controversy

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Donald Trump has once again ignited debate by suggesting he may seek to strip comedian Rosie O'Donnell of her US citizenship, a proposal that legal experts immediately condemned as unconstitutional. The provocative statement, made via a social media post on Saturday, has drawn sharp criticism for its apparent disregard for constitutional protections.

In his post, Trump declared, "Given that Rosie O'Donnell's actions are not in the best interests of our Great Nation, I am seriously considering revoking her citizenship." However,

under US law, presidents have no authority to revoke citizenship unilaterally, particularly for native-born citizens. He further remarked that O'Donnell, who reportedly relocated to Ireland in January 2025, should remain there "if they'll have her." However, public records confirm that O'Donnell maintains dual residency and has not formally renounced her US citizenship. The comments mark the latest chapter in a years-long clash between the two, which has intensified recently due to O'Donnell's vocal criticism of Trump's administration, particularly its recent tax cuts and spending reductions.

This is not the first time Trump has made statements about revoking citizenship. Earlier this year, he also made a similar threat toward Elon Musk, who is a South African-born naturalised US citizen. However, Musk has not faced any formal legal action related to his citizenship status. O'Donnell's case is distinct because she was born in the United States, making her a birthright citizen protected by the 14th Amendment.

Legal experts have been quick to condemn Trump's remarks as unconstitutional. Amanda Frost, a law professor at the University of Virginia School of Law, stated in an email on Saturday, "The president has no authority to strip a native-born US citizen of their citizenship. The Supreme Court made this clear in the 1967 ruling *Afroyim v. Rusk*, which affirmed that the 14th Amendment protects against such actions." She added, "Our nation was built on the principle that the people choose the government, not the other way around."

The US State Department clarifies that citizenship can only be relinquished voluntarily by a citizen, with the explicit intent to abandon it. There is no legal mechanism for involuntarily revoking birthright citizenship except in cases of proven fraud during the naturalization process, which does not apply to native-born citizens like O'Donnell. Involuntary revocation, as implied by Trump's statement, lacks legal grounding.

O'Donnell's recent social media posts have sharply criticised Trump's policies, particularly the economic measures his administration has championed. These critiques appear to have provoked the former president's latest outburst, which many see as an attempt to silence dissent.

The controversy comes amid wider global debates about free speech and political dissent, although comparisons to the UK's domestic politics are not directly relevant in this context. Trump's remarks, however, raise broader questions about the use of executive power to target critics, a tactic that resonates with concerns about overreach in any administration.

While O'Donnell has not publicly responded to Trump's latest comments, the feud shows no signs of abating. The suggestion of revoking citizenship, though legally impossible, underscores the polarised climate in which such rhetoric can gain traction.

This episode serves as a reminder of the enduring strength of constitutional safeguards, even in the face of inflammatory political rhetoric. As the debate unfolds, it remains to be seen whether Trump's remarks will prompt further legal or public backlash.

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