

“THE SWAMP MONSTER”

400 Ways in 400 Days

How the Trump Administration Is
Flooding the Swamp in Washington



FEBRUARY 26, 2018

DEMOCRACY REFORM TASK FORCE

REP. JOHN SARBANES, CHAIR

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

President Donald J. Trump campaigned on a promise to “drain the swamp” in Washington. He vowed that as President he would take steps to break the “cycle of corruption” and end “decades of special interest dealing,”ⁱ and he pledged to aggressively pursue meaningful reforms to improve transparency and accountability in government.ⁱⁱ As President Trump marks his 400th day in office, this report – the fourth edition in the Democracy Reform Task Force’s series of “100 Ways” oversight reports – documents 400 ways in which the Trump Administration has broken its campaign promises.

Specifically, this report explores how the Trump Administration has:

- **Made a Mockery of Ethics Law and Regulation**
- **Promoted a Culture of Secrecy in the Executive Branch**
- **Stacked His Cabinet with Big Money Campaign Donors**
- **Installed a Special-Interest Revolving Door into the Trump White House**
- **Put Big Money Ahead of the Public Interest**
- **Turned the Presidency into a Profit-Making Enterprise**
- **Pursued Public Policy for Trump’s Personal Benefit**
- **Raided the Treasury to Pay for Vacation & Private Business Promotion**

Four hundred days in and the Trump Administration is defiant in its disregard for the laws and norms in place to prevent corruption and promote accountability. What’s more, the Trump Administration is running away from its stated goal of “transferring power to the people.” Instead, it has empowered a narrow class of wealthy and well-connected insiders. Trump’s promise to “drain the swamp” has been broken. As one lobbyist-turned-Trump Administration-official put it, “the swamp continues.”ⁱⁱⁱ

ⁱ Donald J. Trump Campaign, TRUMP PLEDGES TO DRAIN THE SWAMP AND IMPOSE CONGRESSIONAL TERM LIMITS. October 18, 2016. <https://www.donaldjtrump.com/press-releases/trump-pledges-to-drain-the-swamp>.

ⁱⁱ *Ibid*

ⁱⁱⁱ Derek Kavitz, Issac Arnsdorf, & Marina Affo, ProPublica, Lifting the Veil on Another Batch of Shadowy Trump Appointees. August 31, 2017. <https://www.propublica.org/article/lifting-the-veil-on-another-batch-of-shadowy-trump-appointees>.

Made a Mockery of Ethics Law and Regulation

President Donald Trump’s “Ethics” Executive Order was supposed to “drain the swamp.” As our past three reports at the 100-day, 200-day and 300-day mark demonstrated, the Executive Order was just another example of President Trump’s tendency to overpromise and underdeliver. Over the past 100 days since our last report, we have continued to witness the Administration openly flouting ethics regulations and conflict-of-interest law.

Examples include:

- 301) Trump Hires Family Members for Posts Throughout the Administration ³⁰¹
- 302) Wilbur Ross Accused of Insider Trading ³⁰²
- 303) Kushner’s Financial Ties to Israel Deepen Even with Mideast Diplomacy Role ³⁰³
- 304) Lawsuit Alleges Trump Took Illegal Contributions from Private Prison Contractor ³⁰⁴
- 305) Trump Towers Buyers in India Offered Chance to Meet Donald Trump Jr., Raising Ethics Concerns ³⁰⁵
- 306) Title of Don Jr.’s Remarks in India Changes Amid Backlash Over Conflicts ³⁰⁶
- 307) Close Friend of Kushner and Ivanka Trump May Be Leveraging Relationship to the Benefit of China ³⁰⁷
- 308) Trump’s Inaugural Committee Paid \$26 Million to Firm of First Lady’s Adviser ³⁰⁸
- 309) Interior Secretary Zinke Held onto Undisclosed Shares in Gun Company ³⁰⁹
- 310) Trump Appointee to CMS May Have Violated Ethics Agreement ³¹⁰
- 311) Zinke’s Agency Held Up Indians’ Casino After MGM Lobbying ³¹¹
- 312) HUD Lawyers Warned Ben Carson Risked Running Afoul of Ethics Rules ³¹²
- 313) Trump Business Forges Ahead with Deal in Dominican Republic, Despite Pledge for No New Foreign Deals ³¹³

- 314) Husband of Former Trump Household Aide Scores Government Job ³¹⁴
- 315) Over 40 Percent of Trump's Cabinet Picks Faced Ethical or Other Controversies ³¹⁵
- 316) China's Occupancy of Trump Tower Represents Major Conflict of Interest ³¹⁶
- 317) Trump Organization's Many Tenants Pose Countless Conflicts of Interest ³¹⁷
- 318) Railroad Administrator Forced to Resign After Questions Surrounding His Continued Employment at PR Firm ³¹⁸
- 319) NLRB Inspector General Says Trump NLRB Appointee Should Have Recused Himself from Key Board Action ³¹⁹
- 320) Trump's Former Bodyguard Makes \$15,000 a Month from a GOP 'Slush Fund' ³²⁰
- 321) Trump Campaign Website Offers to Flash Donors' Names During Speech ³²¹

Promoted a Culture of Secrecy in the Executive Branch

Prior to his election, Donald Trump often criticized the Obama White House for its supposed lack of transparency – going so far as to label President Obama the “least transparent President ever.”^{iv} But it's President Trump who, in the first 40 days of his Administration, has instituted a culture of secrecy in the in the Executive Branch and the White House.

Examples include:

- 322) E.P.A. Contractor Has Scoured the Agency for Anti-Trump Officials ³²²
- 323) After a Year in Office, Questions About Trump's Foreign Deals Go On and On ³²³
- 324) No One Will Say Where Trump's \$107 Million in Inauguration Money Went ³²⁴
- 325) Watchdog: Payment to Porn Star Was Illegal Donation to Trump Campaign ³²⁵

^{iv} Chris Cillizza, CNN, DONALD TRUMP ISN'T BIG ON THE WHOLE TRANSPARENCY THING. April 17, 2017. <http://www.cnn.com/2017/04/17/politics/donald-trump-transparency-visitor-logs-taxes/>.

- 326) Trump Allies Profit from Outside Groups, Testing Campaign Finance Laws ³²⁶
- 327) Kushner Excluded U.S. China Experts from Interaction with China Diplomat ³²⁷
- 328) Trump White House Resists Effort to Disclose Visitor Logs ³²⁸
- 329) Dozens of Trump Officials Still Lack Full Security Clearance ³²⁹
- 330) Trump Hotel Paid Millions in Fines for Unpaid Work ³³⁰

Stacked His Cabinet with Big Money Campaign Donors

Candidate Trump regularly decried the influence of big campaign donors and well-connected insiders. He promised to dismantle the “rigged” political system that rewards campaign donors with plum cabinet posts. He pledged to change the system of the “powerful protecting the powerful.”^v However, in his first 400 days, President Trump has done the opposite, stacking his cabinet with many of his largest campaign donors, while relying on numerous well-connected Washington insiders for top Administration positions.

Examples include:

- 331) 44 Trump Officials Have Close Ties to Right-Wing Billionaire Koch Brothers ³³¹
- 332) Trump Carries on Tradition of Putting Campaign Donors in Embassies ³³²
- 333) Trump Taps Big Money Donor for Ambassador – Two Weeks Later Nominee Pledges to Fund Gala at Mar-a-Lago ³³³
- 334) Adelson Offers to Help Pay for Jerusalem Embassy ³³⁴
- 335) Trump Pick for Chile Ambassador Entwined in Kushner Family Deals ³³⁵

^v Tim Hains, Real Clear Politics, FULL REPLAY/TRANSCRIPT: DONALD TRUMP GIVES FIRST CAMPAIGN SPEECH SINCE HIRING BANNON & CONWAY. August 18, 2016.

http://www.realclearpolitics.com/video/2016/08/18/watch_live_donald_trump_gives_first_campaign_speech_since_hiring_stephen_bannon.html.

Installed a Special Interest Revolving Door into the Trump White House

Donald Trump made criticism of Washington lobbyists and special interests a hallmark of his campaign, regularly pledging to exclude special-interest lobbyists from his Administration.^{vi} In June 2016, he declared he would have “no problem” banning lobbyists from working in his Administration.^{vii} But since taking office, the Trump White House has broken that pledge time and time again, stocking the White House – and the broader Executive Branch – with long-time Washington lobbyists and influence peddlers to an unprecedented degree.

Examples include:

- 336) Trump Taps Health Care Executive to Replace Tom Price as HHS Secretary³³⁶
- 337) Fifteen Energy Lobbyists Hired Using Trump's Weakened Rule³³⁷
- 338) White House Memo Justifying CFPB Takeover Written by Payday Lender Attorney³³⁸
- 339) Trump Pick to Head Consumer Safety Board Is Too Close to Industries³³⁹
- 340) A Former Panama Agent Is Guiding Trump's Homeland Security Pick³⁴⁰
- 341) CDC Director Resigns Over Financial Conflicts³⁴¹
- 342) Former Airline Lobbyist to Take Over for Outgoing FAA Chief³⁴²
- 343) How Trump's HHS Nominee's Drug Company 'Gamed' a Patent³⁴³
- 344) Corn Syrup Lobbyist Is Helping Set USDA Dietary Guidelines³⁴⁴
- 345) Trump Mine Safety Nominee Is Lawyer Who Defended Coal Companies³⁴⁵
- 346) Revolving Door Between Trump Pentagon, Contractors Spins Faster³⁴⁶

^{vi} Mark Hensch, The Hill, TRUMP: I DON'T WANT LOBBYISTS, SPECIAL INTERESTS. August 23, 2016. <http://thehill.com/blogs/ballot-box/presidential-races/251753-trump-i-dont-want-lobbyists-special-interests>.

^{vii} Tim Perry, CBS, DONALD TRUMP WOULD HAVE "NO PROBLEM" BANNING LOBBYISTS AND BIG DONORS FROM WORKING IN HIS ADMINISTRATION. June 6, 2016. <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/donald-trump-on-banning-lobbyists-and-big-donors-from-his-administration/>.

347) Gun Lobbyist Helped Write ATF Official's Proposal to Deregulate ³⁴⁷

Put Big Money Ahead of the Public Interest

Throughout the 2016 election, candidate Donald Trump was quite candid about how big money operates in the American political system. He would often brag during stump speeches about his own campaign contributions to politicians and the influence they bought, declaring, “As a businessman and a very substantial donor to very important people, when you give, they do whatever the hell you want them to do.” ^{viii}

Trump pledged that he would do things a different way. “I turned down \$5 million last week from a very important lobbyist because there are total strings attached to a thing like that. He’s going to come to me in a year or two years and he’s going to want something for a country that he represents or a company that he represents. That’s the kind of money I won’t take,” he promised. ^{ix} Yet, despite this promise and many more like it, President Trump continues to give big campaign donors a big hug.

Examples include:

- 348) Big Money Donors Threatened to Withhold Campaign Checks to the Republican Party If They Fail to Pass Tax Giveaway ³⁴⁸
- 349) GE’s Successful Effort to Change GOP Tax Bill Shows Lobbying Clout ³⁴⁹
- 350) Trump Gives Donors Tax Cuts, Then Asks Them for Campaign Donations ³⁵⁰
- 351) Bob Murray Had Early Access to Rick Perry to Share Coal Plan ³⁵¹
- 352) With Billions at Stake in Tax Debate, Lobbyists Played Hardball ³⁵²
- 353) E.P.A. Delays Bans on Uses of Hazardous Chemicals ³⁵³
- 354) Drug Industry Spent Big to Temper Talk About High Drug Prices ³⁵⁴

^{viii} David Graham, The Atlantic, WAS TRUMP FIBBING ABOUT BUYING POLITICIANS THEN OR NOW? September 6, 2016. <https://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2016/09/trump-buying-politicians/498749/>.

^{ix} *Ibid* 5

- 355) Trump Promised to Kill Carried Interest and Lobbyists Kept it Alive ³⁵⁵
- 356) Trump Overturned Key Regulations on Fracking ³⁵⁶
- 357) Companies that Funded Trump's Inauguration Came Up Big in 2017 ³⁵⁷
- 358) Trump Weakens Oil Spill Prevention Regulations ³⁵⁸
- 359) Trump Pulls Back Regulations to Protect Migratory Birds ³⁵⁹
- 360) Trump Restores Questionable Mining Leases in Minnesota ³⁶⁰
- 361) Trump Limits Fines Against Nursing Homes in Incidents of Improper Care or Death ³⁶¹
- 362) Trump Weakens Pay Day Lending Rules After Contributions from Industry ³⁶²
- 363) CFPB Drops Investigation into Payday Lender and Mulvaney Contributor ³⁶³
- 364) Lobbying During Trump Administration Surges to Highest Level in 7 Years ³⁶⁴
- 365) U.S. Consumer Protection Official Puts Equifax Probe on Ice ³⁶⁵
- 366) Questions Surround FCC's Actions to Benefit Sinclair Broadcasting Corporation ³⁶⁶
- 367) NRA Honors FCC Chair Ajit Pai with Rifle for Repealing 'Net Neutrality' ³⁶⁷

Turned the Presidency into a Profit-Making Enterprise

In his first 400 days in office, President Trump still has not taken any concrete steps to unwind his business interests in his many companies and investments, despite ongoing calls from ethics experts and watchdog organizations to do so. Predictably, numerous instances illustrate how the Trump Organization has profited from the Office of the Presidency, as foreign governments, domestic interests and high-powered individuals seek to curry favor with the new Administration by doing business with the Trump Organization. And this behavior doesn't stop with President Trump. Throughout the Trump Administration, senior officials have embraced their public service as a means for private gain.

Examples include:

- 368) Mar-A-Lago's New Winter Season: The Trumpettes Are In ³⁶⁸
- 369) Ticket Prices Go Up for Trump's New Year's Eve Bash At Mar-A-Lago ³⁶⁹
- 370) Foreign Governments Find Ways to Do Favors for Trump's Business ³⁷⁰
- 371) Trump Sold \$35 Million in Real Estate in 2017, Mostly to Secretive Buyers ³⁷¹
- 372) SEC Looks Into Kushner Cos. Over Use of EB-5 Program for Investors ³⁷²
- 373) Trump Organization Sees Influx of Business from Political Groups ³⁷³
- 374) Fracking Lobbyists Plan to Spend Big at Trump Hotel ³⁷⁴
- 375) Trump Business Ethics Pledges Left Plenty Room for Profiting ³⁷⁵
- 376) Trump's D.C. Hotel Charges More Than Competitors ³⁷⁶
- 377) More Than \$1 Million in Campaign Donors' Money Went to Trump Org. in 2017 ³⁷⁷
- 378) Trump Hosts Another Fundraiser at Mar-a-Lago ³⁷⁸
- 379) NRCC Offers Donors Chance for All-Inclusive Trump Winery Trip ³⁷⁹
- 380) Trump Business May Have Profited Off of Trump Inauguration ³⁸⁰
- 381) Document Shows GSA Employees Spending at the Trump Hotel ³⁸¹
- 382) Donald Trump Jr. Heads to India to Sell Condos and Make "Foreign Policy Speech" ³⁸²
- 383) America Legislative Exchange Council to Hold Annual Gala at Trump Old Post Office Hotel ³⁸³
- 384) Ivanka Trump Continues to Use White House Perch to Promote Her Fashion Company ³⁸⁴
- 385) Hotel Carrying New Trump Brand Secures \$6 Million Tax Break ³⁸⁵

386) Pro-Israel Charity Schedules New Gala at Mar-a-Lago in Hopes President Trump Will Drop By ³⁸⁶

387) Kuwaiti Embassy Returns to Trump Hotel in D.C. for Its National Celebration ³⁸⁷

Pursued Public Policy for Trump's Personal Benefit

President Trump's business interests appear to color his pursuit of certain policy priorities. In several instances, the Trump Administration has avoided policies that would be detrimental to the Trump Organization, while in other instances, the Administration has pursued policies that would directly benefit the Trump Organization's bottom line.^x

Examples include:

388) Trump Winery Again Seeks to Hire Foreign Guest Workers ³⁸⁸

389) Tax Plan Crowns a Big Winner: Trump's Industry ³⁸⁹

390) Special Giveaways in Tax Bill Benefit Family Members, Colleagues of GOP Senators ³⁹⁰

391) Cornyn's Fossil Fuel Provision Would Enrich Republican Lawmakers ³⁹¹

392) Trump and Cabinet Heirs Stand to Gain More Than \$20.7 Million ³⁹²

393) Donald Trump and GOP Leaders Could Be Enriched by Last-Minute Tax Break Inserted Into Final Bill ³⁹³

394) Trump Administration Waives Punishment for Convicted Banks, Including Deutsche Bank — Which Trump Owes Millions ³⁹⁴

395) Florida (and Mar a Lago) to Be Spared in Offshore Drilling Expansion ³⁹⁵

^x The full extent to which is unknown given his aforementioned refusal to disclose his tax returns and return information.

Raided the Treasury to Pay for Vacations & Private Business Promotion

President Trump continues to embrace frequent travel since assuming the Office of the Presidency at great expense to the American taxpayer – and often to the benefit of the Trump-owned properties, which he visits. All the while, his adult children – namely, his two sons who manage the family business’s day-to-day operations – continue to exhaust significant taxpayer dollars on Secret Service protection as they travel the globe in promotion of their private interests, all with the false imprimatur of the United States government. This same profligacy with taxpayer money has infected Trump’s Cabinet, with numerous officials exhausting significant sums on first class travel.

Examples include:

- 396) Secret Service Spent \$7,500 on Golf Carts on Trump's Mar-A-Lago Trip ³⁹⁶
- 397) Wife of Interior Secretary Increases Department’s Expenses Due to Out of the Ordinary Travel Demands ³⁹⁷
- 398) Interior Official Stayed at Resort Owned by Zinke’s Billionaire Friend ³⁹⁸
- 399) EPA Administrator Pruitt Regularly Flies First Class on Tax Payer’s Dime ³⁹⁹
- 400) VA Watchdog to Says Chief Wrongly Accepted Wimbledon Tickets, Airfare ⁴⁰⁰

CONCLUSION

At President Trump's inauguration on January 20, 2017, he made a critical promise to the American people. The President declared:

For too long, a small group in our nation's Capital has reaped the rewards of government while the people have borne the cost. Washington flourished – but the people did not share in its wealth. Politicians prospered – but the jobs left, and the factories closed. The establishment protected itself, but not the citizens of our country. That all changes – starting right here, and right now. Because today we are not merely transferring power from one administration to another, or from one party to another – but we are transferring power from Washington, D.C. and giving it back to you, the American People.^{xi}

So far, President Trump has broken this promise to the American people.

As this report details, President Trump has failed to transfer power to the people, and instead, has flooded the proverbial “swamp” and accumulated even greater power in the hands of a select few. Americans of all political stripes should be concerned by the Trump Administration's actions and should ask themselves, “Whose side is the President on?”

Four hundred days in and the answer seems more and more clear.

^{xi} NPR, PRESIDENT TRUMP'S INAUGURAL ADDRESS, ANNOTATED. January 20, 2017.
<http://www.npr.org/2017/01/20/510629447/watch-live-president-trumps-inauguration-ceremony>.



ABOUT THE DEMOCRACY REFORM TASK FORCE

The **Democracy Reform Task Force** is a concerted effort in the House of Representatives to build a government that puts the public interest ahead of special interests. Despite promises to “drain the swamp,” President Trump and the Republican-controlled Congress are pursuing an agenda that primarily benefits the wealthy and well-connected, while flouting long-established norms and laws that prevent public corruption.

To fight back, the **Democracy Reform Task Force** – chaired by Congressman John Sarbanes – is working to confront the Trump Administration’s conflicts of interest and ethical lapses and fight back against special-interest policies in Congress, while advancing positive reforms to improve accountability and transparency in government.

ENDNOTES

- ³⁰¹ [Make Nepotism Great Again: 20 Families Got Jobs in Trump Administration](#): A review of public records shows that at least 20 families related to the Trump family and/or senior cabinet officials – by either blood or marriage – have extended family members who have received jobs in the Trump Administration.
- ³⁰² [European Parliament Report Accuses Wilbur Ross of Insider Trading](#): Evidence has emerged that Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross may have engaged in insider trading, says a new report from the European Parliament.
- ³⁰³ [Kushner's Financial Ties to Israel Deepen Even with Mideast Diplomacy Role](#): White House Senior Advisor Jared Kushner has seen a recent influx of Israeli investment in his family's real-estate business, while he is serving as the point person in Middle East peace relations.
- ³⁰⁴ [Lawsuit: Trump Super PAC Took Illegal Donation from Private Prison](#): The Campaign Legal Center is suing a private prison company – and major backer of Trump – for violating a ban on campaign contributions from federal contractors.
- ³⁰⁵ [Trump Towers buyers in India offered chance to meet Donald Trump Jr., raising ethics concerns](#): Buyers for new Trump condos in India are being offered a chance to meet with Donald Trump Jr., leading some ethics watchdogs to argue that the Trump Organization is selling access to the Trump White House via the President's son.
- ³⁰⁶ [Title of Don Jr.'s remarks in India changes amid backlash over conflicts](#): After being roundly criticized for the way in which the Trump Organization was billing Donald Jr.'s "foreign policy speech" in India – as part of their sales roadshow for new Indian condos – the organizers modified the description of the speech to scrub any suggestion the President's son was somehow speaking for the Trump Administration.
- ³⁰⁷ [U.S. Warned Jared Kushner About Wendi Deng Murdoch](#): Friend and business colleague of Jared Kushner and Ivanka Trump, Wendi Deng Murdoch, is thought to be an agent of China, according to US intelligence. This raises further questions about Kushner's failure to separate himself from his business assets before taking a position in the White House.
- ³⁰⁸ [Trump's Inaugural Committee Paid \\$26 Million to Firm of First Lady's Adviser](#): Recently-disclosed tax information shows the Trump Inaugural Committee paid Melania Trump's adviser's personal firm over \$26 million, raising questions of sweetheart deals and financial improprieties.
- ³⁰⁹ [Interior Secretary Zinke Held Onto Undisclosed Shares in Gun Company](#): Interior Secretary Zinke failed to disclose a financial stake in a gun manufacturer during his confirmation process. The firm is said to have benefited directly from decisions impacting the hunting industry made by the Interior Secretary.
- ³¹⁰ [Top Dem Presses Trump Health Official on Potential Ethics Violation](#): Senator Ron Wyden has alleged that Seema Verma of CMS violated her ethics agreement when she reviewed waiver applications for three states her former consulting firm counts as clients.

-
- ³¹¹ [Zinke's Agency Held Up Indians' Casino After MGM Lobbying](#): Indian tribes in Connecticut are alleging the Trump Interior Department illegally delayed their plans to build new casino operations in the state. The tribes allege Secretary Zinke was pressured to do so by the MGM Casino company.
- ³¹² [HUD Lawyers Warned Ben Carson Risked Running Afoul of Ethics Rules](#): Ethics officials told HUD Secretary Ben Carson that his son's involvement in the business of the agency could possibly implicate federal ethics law. Ignoring the warning, the Secretary relied on his son – a businessman – to organize a listening tour of Baltimore area businesses.
- ³¹³ [Trump Org. Revives Project in Dominican Republic, Roiling Local Politics](#): Despite a pledge from the President that his businesses would press pause on any new foreign deals while he is in office, the Trump Organization is proceeding with new plans for developments in the Dominican Republic.
- ³¹⁴ [Husband of Former Trump Household Aide Scores Government Job](#): The husband of a Trump family household staffer, Dagmara Kopec, has secured a job at the New York regional EPA office, continuing the Trump Administration's practice of hiring individuals closely linked to the Trump business or family.
- ³¹⁵ [Over 40% of Trump's Cabinet Picks Faced Ethical or Other Controversies](#): A review of the Trump Administration appointees found that 9 out of 22 Cabinet-level posts have faced ethical scrutiny or scandal since their respective appointments.
- ³¹⁶ [Trump's Biggest Potential Conflict of Interest is Hiding in Plain Sight](#): A Chinese bank – largely considered an apparatus of the Chinese government – is a tenant in the Trump Tower in New York City, paying the Trump Organization an estimated \$2 million a year in rent, leading critics to question the potential conflict of interest.
- ³¹⁷ [Trump's Tenants Pose Hundreds of Possible Conflicts of Interest](#): New reporting has identified over 150 tenants to the Trump Organization, representing over \$75 million in annual income and raising the potential of numerous conflicts of interest for the Trump Administration.
- ³¹⁸ [Top Official Departs 'Rudderless' Railroad Safety Agency](#): Head of the Federal Railroad Administration resigned amid questions concerning his continued employment at a private company in Mississippi.
- ³¹⁹ [Trump Appointee 'Conflict' Throws Key Labor Ruling Into Doubt](#): The Inspector General of the National Labor Relations Board says William Emanuel – a Trump Appointee – should have recused himself from the so-called “joint-employer” decision, citing conflict of interest law and his prior work for a company challenging the initial ruling of the Board.
- ³²⁰ [Trump's Former Bodyguard Makes \\$15,000 a Month from a GOP 'Slush Fund'](#): Keith Schiller – Trump's former bodyguard – is reportedly receiving \$15,000 a month from the Republican National Committee for “security services.” The funds are being paid from the 2020 Republican National Convention fund, leading campaign finance watchdogs to cry foul.
- ³²¹ [Trump Campaign Website Offers to Flash Donors' Names During Speech](#): Blurring the line between official business of the White House and campaign activity, the Trump reelection campaign offered to display names of donors during the State of the Union Address, causing some to question the legality of the action.

³²² [E.P.A. Contractor Has Scoured the Agency for Anti-Trump Officials](#): In a move ripped from the pages of Orwell, Scott Pruitt's EPA hired a contractor to review EPA career officials for potential "anti-Trump" bias.

³²³ [After A Year In Office, Questions About Trump's Foreign Deals Go On. And On](#): Despite pledges from President Trump to offer full transparency of the Trump Organization's business with foreign governments, the Trump Organization has largely failed to comply with their self-imposed limitations on new deals and transmissions of foreign profits.

³²⁴ [No One Will Say Where Trump's \\$107 Million in Inauguration Money Went](#): Trump's Inaugural Committee has failed to disclose where the excess funds from the Committee have gone.

³²⁵ [Watchdog: Payment to Porn Star Was Illegal Donation to Trump Campaign](#): An apparent payment of 'hush-money' by Trump's personal attorney to a woman who had a relationship with Donald Trump may be a violation of campaign finance law, says ethics watchdog.

³²⁶ [Trump Allies Profit from Outside Groups, Testing Campaign Finance Laws](#): A cadre of Trump advisers are earning millions running Trump-aligned political organizations. While campaign finance law is clear that these organizations must remain independent of Trump and his reelection campaign committee, many wonder if the rules are being followed.

³²⁷ [Jared Kushner Is China's Trump Card](#): White House Adviser, Jared Kushner, has rankled career officials in the U.S. diplomatic service by regularly meeting with the top Chinese diplomat in 'confidential' settings, without the presence U.S. officials.

³²⁸ [Trump Admin. Agrees to Post Visitor Logs for Some White House Offices](#): The White House has refused to fully release visitor logs for the White House offices. Recently, the White House was compelled by a court settlement to release partial logs.

³²⁹ [Dozens of Trump Officials Still Lack Full Security Clearance](#): The Trump Administration has come under scrutiny for the number of White House staffers without permanent security clearances.

³³⁰ [Trump Hotel Paid Millions in Fines for Unpaid Work](#): In an apparent effort to resolve business disputes before taking the White House, the Trump Organization quietly settled outstanding liens on the Trump Old Post Office Hotel. Reporting suggests that the Trump Organization gave more favorable terms to those contractors who publicly stated they supported Trump, raising ethical concerns.

³³¹ [44 Trump Officials Have Close Ties to Right-Wing Billionaire Brothers](#): Over forty Trump political appointees across the federal government have direct ties to the Republican mega donors, Charles and David Koch.

³³² [Trump Carries on Tradition of Putting Campaign Donors in Embassies](#): Trump has tapped numerous big money campaign contributors for ambassadorships across the globe.

³³³ [Two Weeks After Trump Chose Him for Ambassador, Nominee Pledged Money for a Gala at Trump's Club](#): Leandro Rizzuoto Jr. was tapped recently by President Trump to be ambassador to Barbados. Two weeks later, Rizzuoto committed to underwrite a gala at Mar-a-Lago at the "presidential" level.

³³⁴ [Adelson Offers to Help Pay for Jerusalem Embassy](#): Mega GOP donor and Trump backer, Sheldon Adelson, is offering to privately finance the moving of the United States' Israeli embassy to Jerusalem, further blurring the ethical line between the functions of the U.S. government and big money campaign donors in the Trump Administration.

³³⁵ [Trump Pick for Chile Ambassador Entwined in Kushner Family Deals](#): Trump tapped Andrew Gellert for the Ambassadorship to Chile. Gellert is a close personal friend and business partner of the Kushner family and a financier of the struggling Kushner investment, 666 Fifth Avenue, raising ethical questions about the appointment.

³³⁶ [Health Nominee Grilled on Commitment to Lower Drug Prices](#): Alex Azar II, Trump's pick for HHS Secretary, has come under fire for his career as a senior pharmaceutical executive, leading critics to doubt his commitment to lowering prescription drug prices – a purported priority of the Trump Administration.

³³⁷ [15 Energy Lobbyists Hired Using Trump's Weakened Rule](#): Exploiting the Trump Administration's loophole-ridden "ethics pledge," fifteen energy industry lobbyists entered the Administration – individuals who would have otherwise been prohibited from serving under the Obama era ethics rules.

³³⁸ [WH Memo Justifying CFPB Takeover Written by Payday Lender Attorney](#): A former senior attorney for the payday lending industry authored the legal opinion permitting Mick Mulvaney to serve as the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau Director, while simultaneously serving as the head of the OMB. Following Mulvaney's appointment, the Bureau terminated CFPB rules and proceedings designed to bring greater oversight to the payday lending industry.

³³⁹ [Trump Pick to Head Consumer Safety Board Is Too Close to Industries](#): President Trump tapped a fierce opponent of consumer protection measures to head the Consumer Product Safety Commission, drawing fire from consumer advocates and ethics watchdogs.

³⁴⁰ [A Former Panama Agent Is Guiding Trump's Homeland Security Pick](#): A prominent lobbyist was tapped to help Kirstjen Nielsen navigate the Senate confirmation process to lead the Department of Homeland Security. The lobbyist had previously lobbied DHS, raising concerns of conflicts of interest.

³⁴¹ [CDC Director Resigns Over Financial Conflicts](#): Following reports CDC Director Fitzgerald was trading tobacco stocks while serving in her official capacity, Director Fitzgerald resigned her post.

³⁴² [Former Airline Lobbyist to Take Over for Outgoing FAA Chief](#): Daniel Elwell – a former senior lobbyist for the Airlines for America airline trade association – was tapped by the Trump Administration to take over the Federal Aviation Administration.

³⁴³ [How Trump's HHS Nominee's Drug Company 'Gamed' a Patent](#): Former pharmaceutical executive Alex Azar was tapped to lead HHS, leading some to question his past efforts to game the drug patent regime he now will in part oversee.

³⁴⁴ [Corn Syrup Lobbyist Is Helping Set USDA Dietary Guidelines](#): Kailee Tkacz – a USDA political appointee and former lobbyist for the corn syrup industry – is now helping to draft the USDA's dietary guidelines, requiring the White House counsel to grant a broad ethics waiver given her past employment and conflicts.

³⁴⁵ [Trump Mine Safety Nominee Is Lawyer Who Defended Coal Companies](#): Marco Rajkovich – a former lawyer for the coal industry and opponent of stronger mine safety rules – has been tapped by the Trump Administration to chair the Federal Mine Safety and Health Review Commission.

³⁴⁶ [Revolving Door Between Trump Pentagon, Contractors Spins Faster](#): New reporting shows that more than 80 percent of the top Defense Department officials under the Trump Administration have defense contractor work experience, sparking concerns about conflicts of interest within the DoD.

³⁴⁷ [Gun Lobbyist Helped Write ATF Official's Proposal to Deregulate](#): New documents show that Mark Barnes – a lawyer and lobbyist for the National Rifle Association – helped draft and edit a white paper for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, raising concern about the gun industry's influence on the Bureau's actions.

³⁴⁸ [Republican Donors Are Mad as Hell and Closing Their Checkbooks](#): Frustrated by Trump and the Republican Party's failure to pass tax cuts, major campaign donors threatened to cease contributing to the Republican Party.

³⁴⁹ [GE's Successful Effort to Change GOP Tax Bill Shows Lobbying Clout](#): General Electric successfully lobbied the Trump Administration and the Republican Congress to remove a tax provision detrimental to their bottom line.

³⁵⁰ [Trump Gives Donors Tax Cuts, Then Asks Them for Campaign Donations](#): President Trump wasted no time in asking major Republican donors – significant beneficiaries of the Republican tax giveaway – for campaign contributions following the Senate's passage of the legislation.

³⁵¹ [Bob Murray Had Early Access to Rick Perry to Share Coal Plan](#): Energy executive and major Republican donor Bob Murray was granted special access to the Department of Energy to advance a policy plan favorable to his businesses and the coal industry.

³⁵² [With Billions at Stake in Tax Debate, Lobbyists Played Hardball](#): The “swamp” was in full effect throughout the writing of the Republican tax bill, in many instances successfully bending the resulting legislation to their industries' benefit.

³⁵³ [E.P.A. Delays Bans on Uses of Hazardous Chemicals](#): The Environmental Protection Agency moved to indefinitely postpone bans on certain uses of three toxic chemicals found in consumer products, inciting the ire of consumer advocates and ethics watchdogs.

³⁵⁴ [Drug Industry Spent Big to Temper Talk About High Drug Prices](#): Following President Trump's public proclamation he would work to lower the cost of prescription drugs, big pharma collected over \$270 million in dues from its member businesses in an effort to push back with heightened lobbying, campaign contributions and other forms of influence-peddling.

³⁵⁵ [Trump Promised to Kill Carried Interest, Lobbyists Kept It Alive](#): After the President campaigned on the promise of ending the so-called carried interest loophole, the Republican-passed tax giveaway preserved the provision in full – a victory for the “swamp.”

³⁵⁶ [Trump's True Priorities Revealed in Holiday News Dumps](#): On the final business day of 2017, the Department of the Interior rescinded Obama-era rules governing hydraulic fracturing, weakening government oversight and environmental protections on the risky extraction process.

³⁵⁷ [Companies That Funded Trump's Inauguration Came Up Big in 2017](#): A recent survey of the financial performance of business donors to the Trump Inaugural Committee show many earned federal contracts under the Trump Administration.

³⁵⁸ [Trump's True Priorities Revealed in Holiday News Dumps](#): On the final business day of 2017, the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement at the Department of the Interior released new regulations that watered down rules put in place following the 2010 BP oil spill.

³⁵⁹ [Trump's True Priorities Revealed in Holiday News Dumps](#): On the final business day of 2017, the Department of the Interior cancelled regulations that imposed fines on companies whose energy production results in the death of certain migratory birds.

³⁶⁰ [Trump's True Priorities Revealed in Holiday News Dumps](#): On the final business day of 2017, the Department of the Interior renewed expired mining leases on a copper and nickel mine that abuts the Boundary Water Canoe Area Wilderness in Northern Minnesota. The move benefits a Chilean mining firm owned by Andronico Luksic – who happens to be Ivanka Trump and Jared Kushner's landlord in Washington, D.C.

³⁶¹ [Trump's True Priorities Revealed in Holiday News Dumps](#): On Christmas Eve, 2017, the Trump Administration reversed Obama-era rules that imposed fines on nursing homes when individuals received improper care or died while at a covered facility.

³⁶² [Trump Got Cash from Payday Lenders, Then Weakened Lending Rules](#): Only two weeks after his appointment to head the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, Mick Mulvaney scrapped tighter rules on payday lending companies. The payday lending industry gave big to Republicans, including to President Trump and then Congressman Mulvaney, over the years.

³⁶³ [CFPB Drops Investigation Into Payday Lender and Mulvaney Contributor](#): CFPB director Mick Mulvaney suspended an investigation of a payday lending firm. The firm is from Mulvaney's home state and is a long-time political supporter of the Director.

³⁶⁴ [Lobbying During Trump Administration Surges to Highest Level in 7 Years](#): The so-called "swamp" saw a surge in lobbying expenditures during Trump's first year in office, as businesses rushed to capitalize on the new Administration's legislative and regulatory agenda.

³⁶⁵ [U.S. Consumer Protection Official Puts Equifax Probe on Ice](#): The Consumer Financial Protection Bureau Director, Mick Mulvaney, has slowed an investigation into the Equifax security breach, which compromised the personal information of millions of American households.

³⁶⁶ [FCC Watchdog Looks Into Changes That Benefited Sinclair](#): The Inspector General of the Federal Communications Commission is investigating potential improprieties in the Commission's recent actions, which greatly benefited Sinclair Broadcasting. Specifically, the IG is looking into whether Chairman Pai coordinated the Commission's action with Sinclair officials.

-
- ³⁶⁷ [NRA Honors FCC Chair Ajit Pai with Rifle for Repealing 'Net Neutrality'](#): After working to undo the Obama Administration's 2015 net neutrality rules, the National Rifle Association (NRA) awarded Federal Communications Commission (FCC) Chairman Ajit Pai with the "Charlton Heston Courage Under Fire Award."
- ³⁶⁸ [Mar-A-Lago's New Winter Season: The Trumpettes Are In](#): Trump-owned properties are experiencing a surge in new business from Republican-aligned organizations eager to host their functions at Trump properties.
- ³⁶⁹ [Ticket Prices Go Up for Trump's New Year's Eve Bash At Mar-A-Lago](#): The Trump-owned Mar-a-Lago resort increased ticket prices for their annual New Year's bash.
- ³⁷⁰ [Foreign Governments Find Ways to Do Favors for Trump's Business](#): In an apparent effort to curry favor with the Trump Administration, foreign governments have been engaging in preferential treatment of Trump-owned business ventures in their countries – a breach, ethics watchdogs contend, of the Constitution's Emoluments Clause.
- ³⁷¹ [Trump Sold \\$35M in Real Estate in 2017, Mostly to Secretive Buyers](#): The Trump Organization sold more than \$35 million in real estate in 2017 using LLC shell-companies to conceal purchasers' identities. Prior to Trump's bid for the White House, this purchase method was rarely used for sales of Trump-owned properties.
- ³⁷² [SEC Looks Into Kushner Cos. Over Use of EB-5 Program for Investors](#): The Kushner Company – a real estate firm owned by the family of Senior White House Advisor Jared Kushner – is being investigated for its use of the EB-5 visa program, which grants visas to foreign investors.
- ³⁷³ [How Much Money Has Trump Made from His Hotels and Golf Clubs?](#): The Trump Organization saw an influx of business from political organizations in 2017, according to a recent report by Public Citizen, fueling concerns these political interests are using their patronage of Trump-owned properties to curry favor with the Trump Administration.
- ³⁷⁴ [Fracking Lobbyists Plan to Spend Big at Trump Hotel](#): The Independent Petroleum Association of American is planning on holding its 2018 annual Washington, DC lobbying event at the Trump International Hotel.
- ³⁷⁵ [Trump Business Ethics Pledges Left Plenty Room for Profiting](#): The President's promised "red line" between his business interests and his responsibilities as President of the United States was never drawn, shows reporting over his first year in office.
- ³⁷⁶ [Trump's D.C. Hotel Was Pricier and Emptier Than Peers in 2017](#): The Trump Old Post Office Hotel in DC charged more than 40% more than its competitors in 2017, new data shows.
- ³⁷⁷ [More Than \\$1M in Campaign Donors' Money Went to Trump in 2017](#): Trump's campaign and other Republican candidates for office have spent more than \$1 million at Trump properties – revenue that flows directly to the President.
- ³⁷⁸ [Mar-a-Lago Make-Up: Trump to Headline March 3 Fundraiser](#): Trump is set to host a \$100,000 per plate fundraiser at Mar-a-Lago on March 3, juicing his campaign account and his business' bottom line.

379 [NRCC Offers Donors Chance for All-Inclusive Trump Winery Trip](#): A political arm of Congressional Republicans is sponsoring a raffle for campaign donors. The prize: an all-expenses-paid trip to a Trump-owned winery.

380 [Did Trump Profit from His Own Presidential Transition?](#): New reporting indicates that the Trump Organization may have received significant compensation from American taxpayers during Trump's transition, raising concerns about improper payments.

381 [Document Shows GSA Employees Spending at the Trump Hotel](#): New documents show a Government Service Administration employee spent \$900 to stay at the Trump Old Post Office Hotel in 2017 – the first known instance of federal taxpayer funds flowing to the Trump-owned hotel. The GSA has primary jurisdiction over the government's lease to the Trump Organization.

382 [The Ethics of Donald Trump Jr.'s India Adventure](#): Donald Trump Jr. recently traveled to India to pitch condo sales for a new development project. As part of his itinerary, he will be giving a speech on foreign policy, raising questions if the Trump Organization is exploiting President Trump's status as Commander-in-Chief for personal gain.

383 [This Group Helps Lobbyists Influence Public Officials. The Trump Hotel Is Hosting Its 2018 Gala](#): ALEC – the controversial corporate advocacy outfit – has announced plans to hold its annual gala at the Trump Old Post Office Hotel, fueling concerns the hotel enables political organizations to curry favor with the Trump Administration through private business.

384 [The Trump Administration Won't Stop Promoting Ivanka's Brand, Might Be Running Afoul of Federal Law](#): Ivanka Trump is once again coming under scrutiny for the unlawful use of public office for personal gain, after her private label fashion line continued to leverage her White House position and actions to promote her brand.

385 [Hotel Carrying New Trump Brand Secures \\$6 Million Tax Break](#): A Trump hotel development project in Mississippi recently received a significant tax break from the state, raising questions about the timing and purpose of the preferential development funding.

386 [Pro-Israel Charity Schedules New Gala at Mar-a-Lago in Hopes President Trump Will Drop By](#): The International Fellowship of Christians and Jews plans to hold their annual fundraising event at Trump's Mar-a-Lago, in hopes the President "would be able to stop by" – eliciting concerns about the President profiting directly from his role as President.

387 [Kuwaiti Embassy Returns to Trump Hotel in D.C. for Its National Celebration](#): For the second year in a row, the Kuwaiti Embassy will hold a large National Day celebration at President Trump's hotel in downtown Washington. An invitation obtained by The Washington Post said the event is scheduled to be held in the hotel ballroom the evening of Feb. 26.

388 [Trump Winery Again Seeks to Hire Foreign Guest Workers](#): Despite cultivating a public perception that he is opposed to increased immigration, President Trump's businesses petitioned once again to utilize the H-2B Visa program, which enables American businesses to hire foreign guest workers in place of American workers.

³⁸⁹ [Tax Plan Crowns a Big Winner: Trump's Industry](#): The Republican tax plan included major changes to tax law impacting the real estate industry – changes that will significantly benefit the Trump Organization and Trump family.

³⁹⁰ [Special Giveaways in Tax Bill Benefit Family Members, Colleagues of GOP Senators](#): Taking a cue from President Trump, Republican Senators included provisions impacting the alcohol industry in the tax bill that directly benefit their families and those of their friends.

³⁹¹ [Cornyn's Fossil Fuel Provision Would Enrich Republican Lawmakers](#): A little-noticed tax provision in the Republican's tax giveaway greatly benefited several members of Congress who own an esoteric investment vehicle – so-called energy-related master limited partnerships.

³⁹² [Trump and Cabinet Heirs Stand to Gain More Than \\$20.7 Million](#): Changes to the estate tax included in the Republican tax giveaway are estimated to benefit Trump Administration officials and their heirs to the tune of \$20,000,000.

³⁹³ [Donald Trump and GOP Leaders Could Be Enriched by Last Minute Tax Break Inserted Into Final Bill](#): The Republican tax giveaway included a provision permitting large real-estate-related LLCs to deduct a portion of their “pass-through” income from their taxes – a change that will benefit the Trump Organization, as well as members of Congress with significant real estate holdings.

³⁹⁴ [Trump Administration Waives Punishment for Banks That Trump Owes](#): During the Christmas holiday week, the Trump Administration waived fines on five financial institutions implicated in a global interest rate fixing scandal. One of the benefiting institutions – Deutsche Bank – is owed at least \$130 million in outstanding debt by President Trump.

³⁹⁵ [Florida \(and Mar a Lago\) to Be Spared in Offshore Drilling Expansion](#): The Trump Administration's plan to open offshore drilling along the coast of the United States exempted Florida – and thereby the President's Mar-a-Lago estate – from its plan.

³⁹⁶ [Secret Service Spent \\$7,500 on Golf Carts on Trump's Mar-A-Lago Trip](#): Government security officials were required to spend more than \$7000 in taxpayer funds on golf cart rentals from the Trump-owned property – revenue that directly benefits the bottom line of the Trump Organization and President Trump.

³⁹⁷ [Zinke's Wife's Travel Caused Headaches for Interior Staff](#): Lola Zinke has exhausted federal tax dollars with out of the ordinary travel demands, causing some ethics watchdogs to cry foul.

³⁹⁸ [Interior Official Stayed At Resort Owned by Zinke's Billionaire Friend](#): A senior aide to Interior Secretary Zinke stayed three nights at a high-end conference center in Montana on the taxpayer's dime. The property is owned by a billionaire Republican donor and friend of Zinke.

³⁹⁹ [First-Class Travel Distinguishes Scott Pruitt's EPA Tenure](#): EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt and his staff have flown first class on the taxpayer dime on numerous occasions – a break from past precedent of EPA Administrators and government-paid travel.

⁴⁰⁰ [VA Watchdog to Say Chief Wrongly Accepted Wimbledon Tickets, Airfare](#): A report from the Inspector General of the Department of Veterans Affairs found that Secretary Shulkin was wrong to accept tickets to the Wimbledon tennis tournament and misused federal funds in financing his wife's travel to Europe.