

November 12, 2020

Dear President-elect Biden:

After four years of Donald Trump's unfettered governance in service of powerful corporations — and at the expense of everyday Americans — you are in the process of organizing a new administration.

We urge you to build out an administration that is structured so as to be able to meet the historic needs of this moment — and to uphold the highest values of the Democratic Party by operating in service of the wellbeing of the general public.

In particular, we urge you to decline to nominate or hire corporate executives, lobbyists, and prominent corporate consultants to serve in high office. Moreover, we urge you to join our organizations in seeking to elevate to such office people who have proven track records of prioritizing the general welfare. We also believe that representation of the broad diversity of our country is imperative — but diversity alone is not enough: All personnel must have demonstrated that they prioritize the needs of communities of color and service in the public interest. If necessary, we urge you to accomplish this by using tools like the Vacancy Act and recess appointments to overcome any obstruction by Mitch McConnell and Senate Republicans.

Executive branch personnel have sweeping authority over interpreting and enforcing the law. They also will play key roles in helping to develop and implement a legislative agenda. While the Trump administration has embodied extremes of self-dealing, incompetence, and subservience to corporations, sadly the revolving door between big corporations and government pre-dated the Trump administration. The revolving door has generated far too many conflicts of interest and policy outcomes diverging from the public interest under both Republican and Democratic presidents.

As several members of the House of Representatives wrote to the Senate a few weeks ago, “If we are to maintain the trust of the American people, neither party can credibly accuse the other of putting the demands of allied special interests before the public good and then do the same thing when elected to govern.”¹

Moreover, the House members rightly noted that Democrats opposed numerous Trump appointees on the ground that their histories of work prioritizing the wants of corporations and drives towards personal enrichment likely put them at odds with the interests of the American people. To cite just a few examples, Democrats appealed to such concerns as they opposed Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross, Environmental Protection Agency Administrator Andrew Wheeler, Interior Secretary David Bernhardt, and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin.

Ensuring governance that prioritizes the public interest is always imperative — but this is especially evident as our country faces a multilayered crisis, borne of the pandemic and the attendant economic collapse, which demands immediate and forceful action. Moreover, if your administration cares to remedy longstanding ills — like corporate concentration and structural economic inequities, systemic racism, the climate crisis, endless wars, and more — it must be run by people who care foremost about working in service of the general welfare.

¹ <https://grijalva.house.gov/uploads/Revolving%20Door%20Letter%20NEW.pdf>

The revolving door limits the trust Americans have in government and has time and again led to bad policy outcomes. We urge you to take advantage of this historic and unique moment in American history to shut the revolving door closed and rebuild that trust: The nation is depending on you to ensure the executive branch is led by the right people for this critical moment.

Many of the organizations that have signed this letter have also written to Senator Schumer and to Democratic senators and senators-elect to urge them to wield their power in the advice-and-consent process towards the ends described herein.

Sincerely,

Action Center on Race and the Economy
ALIGN : The Alliance for a Greater New York
Americans for Democracy & Human Rights in Bahrain
Americans for Democratic Action (ADA)
American Economic Liberties Project
Americans for Financial Reform
Athena Coalition
Bend the Arc Jewish Action
Center for Constitutional Rights
Center for Digital Democracy
Center for Disability Rights
Center for Popular Democracy
Children's Haven:A Place of Healing & Hope, Inc.
The Climate Mobilization
Consumer Action
Courage California
Daily Kos
Demand Justice
Demand Progress
Democracy For America
Demos
Institute for Local Self-Reliance
Faithful America
Food & Water Action
Friends of the Earth U.S.
Groundwork Collaborative
Indivisible
Jobs with Justice
Just Foreign Policy
Liberation in a Generation
MoveOn
MPower Change
National Network for Immigrant & Refugee Rights
New York Communities For Change
Oil Change U.S.

Open Markets Institute
Open MIC (Open Media & Information Companies Initiative)
Organic Consumers Association
Our Revolution
Partnership for Working Families
People's Parity Project
Presente.org
Progress America
Public Citizen
Revolving Door Project
RootsAction.org
Social Security Works
Strong Economy For All Coalition
SumOfUs
Sunrise Movement
Take on Wall Street
Ultraviolet
Voices for Progress
Win Without War
Working Families Party
X-Lab

CC: Democratic Senators and Senators-elect
Democratic Representatives and Representatives-elect