LETTER TO PRESIDENT BIDEN ON FINANCIAL DISCLOSURES

January 21, 2021

Dear President Biden:

In the past few weeks, your nominees and appointees have begun to release their Personal Financial Disclosures outlining their previous private sector work. From Blackstone and Gilead, to Palantir and Facebook, to Raytheon Technologies and Ridgeline Partners, the corporate clients referenced in the disclosures released so far include a number of firms with significant stakes in federal and international policymaking. For example, Palantir provides technology to the Department of Defense, Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), and local police departments. The firm’s technological offerings have facilitated ICE’s mass deportations. Palantir was also closely tied to Cambridge Analytica, the firm that illegally captured Facebook data to help influence the 2016 presidential election. It is vital we understand the extent of the private sector work performed by Biden’s nominees and appointees on behalf of corporations and foreign governments.

Unfortunately, these financial disclosures provide insufficient details on the nature of work your nominees and appointees have performed for their clients, making it nearly impossible to determine the full scope of the potential conflicts.

The Trump era made clear the dangers of unchecked conflicts of interest among American foreign policy officials. The Trump Administration made weapons sales to countries such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates a priority, while simultaneously continuing to support the Saudi and U.A.E. war in Yemen; tearing up the Iran nuclear agreement; and even assassinating Iranian general Qasem Soleimani, risking a US war with Iran. These actions were inseparable from the business ties that the Trump family has with Saudi Arabia and the U.A.E., as they were from the administration’s failures to hold Saudi Prince Mohammed bin Salman responsible for the murder of Washington Post journalist Jamal Khashoggi.

You have committed to rooting out the corruption of the previous Trump administration and have proposed sweeping government ethics proposals, which we commend. But in order to stick to these promises and to assure the American public that your administration will put national security concerns over corporate profits or foreign interests, we urge you to, at the very least, direct your nominees and appointees to clearly describe the specific nature of their past work for the private sector actors, especially those under investigation by or in ongoing contracts with the federal government. Earlier this week, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, recognizing the significance of these conflicts, requested additional information on nominees’ private sector work. The undersigned groups urge you to complete this request swiftly and ensure all of your appointees disclose the full scope and nature of their private sector work.

Specifically, we urge you to direct your nominees and appointees to:

1. Provide a detailed description of the work performed for corporate clients or foreign governments in a consulting capacity, including on which policy areas and federal agencies they advised, how long they maintained a professional relationship with each client, what specific advice they offered on these policy areas and federal agencies, and whether those recommendations were ultimately implemented.
2. Describe how specifically they came to be consulting with these corporate clients or foreign governments, and why they chose to take them on.

3. Disclose any guidance they provided to clients related to federal procurement and list the federal contracts advised on.

4. Describe in detail any investments that are not readily intelligible based on the name of the entity, particularly overseas investments, including the value of those investments and the identities of all beneficial owners.

The public has a right to receive full transparency from their public servants. This means not just providing the bare minimum on public financial disclosures, but fully detailing private sector work.

Signed,

350 Butte County
350 Silicon Valley
American Friends Service Committee
Arms Control Association
Call to Action Colorado
CatholicNetwork.US
Center for Constitutional Rights
Center for Economic & Policy Research
Center for International Policy
Chicago Religious Leadership Network on Latin America
CODEPINK
Colorado Businesses for a Livable Climate
Common Defense
Courage California
Defending Rights & Dissent
Demand Progress Education Fund
Earth Action, Inc.
Fix Democracy First
Friends of the Earth
Government Accountability Project
Grassroots Global Justice Alliance
Jetpac Resource Center, Inc.
Just Foreign Policy
MADRE
Massachusetts Peace Action
Mijente
National Priorities Project, Institute for Policy Studies
Partnership for Working Families
Peace Action
Peace Action New York State
People’s Action
People’s Parity Project
Project Blueprint
Project on Government Oversight
Public Citizen
RepresentUs New Mexico
Rethinking Foreign Policy
Revolving Door Project
South Asian Americans Leading Together
South Bay Progressive Alliance
The Freedom BLOC
Tunisian United Network
UnKoch My Campus
United for Respect
US Campaign for Palestinian Rights
Veterans for Peace, Chapter 113-Hawai’i
Win Without War
X-Lab
Yemeni Alliance Committee