

# "STILL SWAMPED"

300

300

~~200~~ Ways in ~~200~~ Days

How the Trump Administration Keeps  
Flooding the Swamp in Washington



NOVEMBER 16, 2017

**DEMOCRACY REFORM TASK FORCE**

REP. JOHN SARBANES, CHAIR

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

President Donald J. Trump campaigned on the 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,”<sup>i</sup> and he pledged to aggressively pursue meaningful reforms to improve transparency and accountability in government.<sup>ii</sup> As President Trump marks his 300-hundredth day in office, this report — the third edition in the *Democracy Reform Task Force’s* series of “100 Ways” oversight reports – documents 300 ways in which the Trump Administration has broken with the rhetoric of the Trump campaign.

Specifically, the analysis 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 His Personal Benefit**
- **Raided the Treasury to Pay for Vacation & Private Business Promotion**

Three hundred days in and the Trump Administration continues to test the outer limits of the laws and norms in place to prevent corruption and promote accountability. What’s more, the Trump Administration has made no progress toward 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.”<sup>iii</sup>

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<sup>i</sup> 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>.

<sup>ii</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>iii</sup> 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 two reports at the 100-day and 200-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 flout ethics regulations and conflicts of interest law.

Examples include:

- 201) Neil Gorsuch Speech at Trump Hotel Raised Ethical Questions<sup>201</sup>
- 202) Trump's Electoral Threat Against Sen. McCaskill Raised Legal Questions<sup>202</sup>
- 203) Trump Wore Campaign Hat on Trip to Texas and Then Sold Hat for Campaign<sup>203</sup>
- 204) Trump Bucked Ethics Norm with Book Recommendation<sup>204</sup>
- 205) Trump Used His Campaign and RNC Funds to Pay Legal Bills from Russia Probe<sup>205</sup>
- 206) Billionaire Robert Mercer Helped Pay Donald Trump's Legal Bills<sup>206</sup>
- 207) Interior Secretary Zinke Used Public Resources to Attend Speech with Big Campaign Donor's Golden Knights Hockey Team<sup>207</sup>
- 208) Hedge Fund Billionaire Flew Top Mnuchin Aide on Private Jet<sup>208</sup>
- 209) Jared Kushner and Ivanka Trump Filed Ethics Paperwork Late Again<sup>209</sup>
- 210) Office of Government Ethics Took Unprecedented Step in Reprimanding Trump Administration’s Ethics Behavior<sup>210</sup>
- 211) Trump Administration Failed to Implement His “Drain the Swamp” Campaign Promises<sup>211</sup>
- 212) Big Corporate Donors Financed Posh Hideaway at Republican Convention<sup>212</sup>
- 213) Trump Spent \$430,000 of His Own Money to Finance Legal Costs of Staff Implicated in Russia Probe, Leading to Tampering and Ethical Questions<sup>213</sup>

- 214) Trump Personally Interviewed U.S. Attorneys, Raising Concerns about Conflicts of Interest<sup>214</sup>
- 215) Trump Flew to Texas for His Re-Election Fundraiser and Wrote It Off as a Taxpayer Expense<sup>215</sup>
- 216) Interior Secretary Zinke Helped Fuel So-Called “Scam PACs”<sup>216</sup>
- 217) Lara Trump Blurred the Line Between Campaign Work and Official White House Responsibilities<sup>217</sup>
- 218) Pro-Trump Campaign Organization Promised Access to Trump Cabinet for Donors, Potentially Violating Campaign Finance Law<sup>218</sup>

## 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.”<sup>iv</sup> Ironically, in the first 300 days of his Administration, President Trump and his Administration have moved quickly to institute a culture of secrecy in the Executive Branch and the White House.

Examples include:

- 219) Trump White House Blocked Public Release Visitor Logs<sup>219</sup>
- 220) General Services Administration Deleted Key Trump Hotel Data from Its Website<sup>220</sup>
- 221) EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt Instituted a Culture of Secrecy at Agency<sup>221</sup>
- 222) Trump Voting Panel Was Forced to Apologize by Court After Failing to Disclose Key Documents and Information About Activity<sup>222</sup>
- 223) Trump Administration Withheld Almost All Mar-a-Lago Visitor Logs<sup>223</sup>
- 224) Trump Failed to Donate Remaining Inaugural Funds, Despite Promise<sup>224</sup>

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<sup>iv</sup> 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/>.

- 225) Ivanka Trump's Business Ties Shrouded in Secrecy in China<sup>225</sup>
- 226) Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross Failed to Disclose Full Financial Assets<sup>226</sup>
- 227) EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt Bars Some Scientists from Advising E.P.A.<sup>227</sup>
- 228) Trump Administration Refused to Disclose Trump Hotel Docs, Leading to Lawsuit<sup>228</sup>
- 229) Trump Judicial Nominee Failed to Disclose Marriage to White House Staffer<sup>229</sup>

## Stacked His Cabinet with Big Money Campaign Donors

Candidate Trump regularly decried the influence of big campaign donors and well-connected insiders on the campaign trail. As President, he promised he would dismantle the “rigged” political system that rewards campaign donors with plum cabinet posts and would change the system of the “powerful protecting the powerful.”<sup>v</sup> However, in his first 300 days, President Trump has continued to do 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:

- 230) Trump Dined with Big Donors in Attempt to Build Support for Policy Agenda<sup>230</sup>
- 231) Special Government Adviser and Big Trump Campaign Donor, Carl Icahn, Quit White House Role After Conflict-of-Interest Questions<sup>231</sup>
- 232) Trump Tapped Dues-Paying Trump Club Members for Key Administration Posts<sup>232</sup>

## 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 for the White House, pledging regularly that he would exclude special-interest

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<sup>v</sup> 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](http://www.realclearpolitics.com/video/2016/08/18/watch_live_donald_trump_gives_first_campaign_speech_since_hiring_stephen_bannon.html).

lobbyists from his Administration's staff.<sup>vi</sup> In June 2016, he went so far as to declare he would have "no problem" banning lobbyists from working in his Administration.<sup>vii</sup> 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 unprecedented degree.

Examples include:

- 233) Trump Loyalist Mixed Businesses and Access at 'Advisory' Firm<sup>233</sup>
- 234) Secrecy and Suspicion Surrounded Trump's Deregulation Teams<sup>234</sup>
- 235) Trump's Army Secretary Pick Made Over \$1.5M at Major Defense Contractor Raytheon<sup>235</sup>
- 236) Trump Appointed Numerous Former Industry Executives and Lobbyists to Regulate their Former Industries<sup>236</sup>
- 237) Former Goldman Executive and NEC Head, Gary Cohn, Was Lobbied By Goldman Sachs-Backed Industry Groups<sup>237</sup>
- 238) Former Trump Campaign Manager-Turned-Lobbyist Corey Lewandowski Pressed Trump on Aid to Coal Industry<sup>238</sup>
- 239) Trump Administration Appointed Hundreds of Former Lobbyists, Despite Ethics Pledge<sup>239</sup>
- 240) Trump Administration Tapped Former Official of For-Profit DeVry University to Head Student Aid Enforcement Unit<sup>240</sup>
- 241) Trump Named Former Coal Executive to Top Mining Safety Post<sup>241</sup>
- 242) Trump Named Chemical Industry Ally to Top E.P.A. Post<sup>242</sup>
- 243) Trump Nominated a Coal Lobbyist to Be No. 2 at E.P.A<sup>243</sup>
- 244) Trump Tapped AccuWeather CEO to Head NOAA<sup>244</sup>

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<sup>vi</sup> 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>.

<sup>vii</sup> 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/>.

- 245) Top Republican Donors Pressed EPA to Move Regional Office to Phoenix<sup>245</sup>
- 246) Over 40 Individuals with Ties to the Trump Administration Became Lobbyists to Cash in on Relationships<sup>246</sup>
- 247) Trump Nominated Former Pharma Executive as Health Secretary<sup>247</sup>
- 248) More Than 50% of President Trump’s Nominees Had Ties to the Industries They’re Supposed to Regulate<sup>248</sup>

## 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.”<sup>viii</sup>

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.<sup>ix</sup> Yet, despite this promise and many more like it, President Trump continues to give big campaign donors a big hug.

Examples include:

- 249) Secret Big Money Donations Boosted Trump’s Agenda<sup>249</sup>
- 250) In Trump era, Lobbyists Boldly Took Credit for Writing a Bill to Protect Health Industry<sup>250</sup>
- 251) Trump Administration Blocked Health Study on Mountaintop Coal Mining<sup>251</sup>
- 252) For-Profit Colleges Saw Little Reason to Lobby Friendly Trump Education Dept.<sup>252</sup>

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<sup>viii</sup> 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/>.

<sup>ix</sup> *Ibid* 5

- 253) Wall Street, Trump and Congressional Republicans Sought to Neuter the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau<sup>253</sup>
- 254) Trump and Congressional Republicans Looked to Roll-Back 'Too Big to Fail' Protections<sup>254</sup>
- 255) Trump's Federal Election Commission Nominee Opposed to Disclosure of Political Donors<sup>255</sup>
- 256) Lobbying Money Spiked Under President Trump<sup>256</sup>
- 257) Right After Trump Linked High Drug Prices to Campaign Cash, Drugmakers Gave More<sup>257</sup>
- 258) G.O.P. Donors Threatened to Withhold Campaign Cash Over Failed ACA Repeal<sup>258</sup>
- 259) Big Money PACs Threaten Congressional Republicans Ahead of Tax Effort<sup>259</sup>
- 260) EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt's Calendar Showed Stream of Industry Meetings and Trips Home<sup>260</sup>
- 261) Mnuchin Said Estate Tax Repeal Would Help 'Rich People' Most<sup>261</sup>
- 262) Private Prison Giant's Profits Surged Under Trump, Held Retreat at Trump-Owned Property<sup>262</sup>
- 263) Trump-Backed GOP Tax Bill Would Allow Politics from the Pulpit<sup>263</sup>
- 264) Trump Big Donor and Coal Industry Investor Won Big Under Perry's Power Plan<sup>264</sup>
- 265) Pesticide Lobbyists Swarmed the U.S.D.A. to Deregulate Pesticides<sup>265</sup>
- 266) Corporate Tax Lobbyists Worked Overtime to Influence Trump/Republican Tax Bill<sup>266</sup>
- 267) Trump's Chinese Gas Deal Raised Ethics Issues for Wilbur Ross<sup>267</sup>

## Turned the Presidency into a Profit-Making Enterprise

In his first 300 days in office, President Trump has still not taken any concrete steps to unwind his business interest 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:

- 268) U.S. Attorney Subpoenaed Kushner Cos. Over Investment-For-Visa Program<sup>268</sup>
- 269) Trump D.C. Hotel Turned \$2 Million Profit in Four Months<sup>269</sup>
- 270) Trump Promoted His Winery in Official Speech<sup>270</sup>
- 271) Trump Broke Promise for No New Foreign Business Deals While in Office<sup>271</sup>
- 272) Lobbyists, Cabinet Members Flocked to Trump Hotel to Spend Big and Curry Favor with Trump<sup>272</sup>
- 273) Team Trump and Republican Allies Spent \$1.7 Million at Trump Properties<sup>273</sup>
- 274) Value of Trump's Brand Increased in Middle East<sup>274</sup>
- 275) Trump Received Millions from CEOs and Lobbyists Who Join His Golf Club<sup>275</sup>
- 276) Sale of Brooklyn Housing Complex Would Benefit Trump<sup>276</sup>
- 277) Donald Trump Jr. Received \$100,000 for University Speech from Major GOP Donor<sup>277</sup>
- 278) Malaysian Prime Minister Got VIP Treatment at White House — and at Trump Hotel<sup>278</sup>
- 279) Trump Profited Off of Irish & Northern Irish Government Spending<sup>279</sup>
- 280) Trumps Set to Launch Two Real Estate Projects in India, Despite Conflict-of-Interest Concerns<sup>280</sup>

## Pursued Public Policy for His Personal Benefit

President Trump's business interests seem to be continuing to color his pursuit of certain policy priorities. In several instances, the Trump Administration has avoided policy

detrimental to the Trump Organization, while in other instances, the Administration has pursued policy that would directly benefit the Trump Organization's bottom line.<sup>x</sup>

Examples include:

- 281) Trump Company Moved to Protect Brand in Chinese Gambling Hub<sup>281</sup>
- 282) Trump Told Guam's Governor That North Korea's Threats Would Boost Tourism<sup>282</sup>
- 283) While Running for President, Trump's Business Sought Deal on a Trump Tower in Moscow<sup>283</sup>
- 284) During Campaign, Kushners' Company Sought Cash from Foreign Entities for New York Real Estate Property<sup>284</sup>
- 285) Trump/Republican Tax Plan Could Save Trump More Than \$1 Billion<sup>285</sup>
- 286) Trump Advisor Michael Flynn Leveraged Access to Trump Transition Team to Push for Private-Sector Nuclear Scheme in Middle East<sup>286</sup>
- 287) Trump's Company Made Repeated Contact with Russian During Campaign<sup>287</sup>
- 288) Trump Interrupted Trip in Hawaii to Promote Trump Hotel in Waikiki<sup>288</sup>
- 289) Investigators Probed Trump Advisor Michael Flynn on Lobbying Payments that Could Have Influenced Official Actions<sup>289</sup>
- 290) Trump Mixed Official Duties with His Personal Business Interests During Asia Trip<sup>290</sup>
- 291) Trump's Richest Appointees Would Benefit Handsomely from Trump/Republican Tax Plan<sup>291</sup>

## **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

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<sup>x</sup> The full extent to which is unknown given his aforementioned refusal to disclose his tax returns and return information.

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.

Examples include:

- 292) Secret Service Could Not Pay Agents Due to the Financial Strain of Protecting Trump and His Family During Their Regular Travel<sup>292</sup>
- 293) Taxpayers Paid \$100K on Car Rentals for Tiffany Trump's Vacation in Italy<sup>293</sup>
- 294) Vice President Mike Pence's NFL Game Walkout Was Unethical and Cost Local Police \$14,000, Watchdog Says<sup>294</sup>
- 295) Taxpayers Billed \$1,092 for an Official's Two-Night Stay at Mar-a-Lago<sup>295</sup>
- 296) Treasury Secretary Mnuchin Inquired About Using Government Plane for His Honeymoon<sup>296</sup>
- 297) HHS Secretary Price's Private-Jet Travel Broke Precedent<sup>297</sup>
- 298) Trump Kids' Ski Vacation Incurred Over \$300,000 in Security Costs<sup>298</sup>
- 299) Treasury Secretary Mnuchin's Seven Flights on Military Jets Cost Taxpayers \$800,000<sup>299</sup>
- 300) Secret Service Paid Mar-A-Lago at Least \$63,000<sup>300</sup>



## 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.<sup>xi</sup>

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 American 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, with these facts in-hand, “Whose side is the President on?” 300-days in and the answer seems more and more clear.

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<sup>xi</sup> 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 public interests 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 the 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

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- 201) **Neil Gorsuch Speech at Trump Hotel Raises Ethical Questions:** President Trump's Supreme Court appointee rankled his colleagues and broke with longstanding ethical norms by giving a speech to a conservative organization at the President's hotel in Washington, D.C. ([Source](#))
- 202) **Trump's Electoral Threat Against Sen. McCaskill Raises Legal Questions:** President Trump took aim at Senator McCaskill during an official speech on tax reform, urging her electoral defeat, which raises questions of whether White House staff violated the Hatch Act in preparing for the speech. ([Source](#))
- 203) **Ethics Group: Trump Is Wrong to Wear Campaign Hat on Trip to Texas:** In an apparent breach of ethical norms, President Trump wore a campaign hat on an official trip to Texas following Hurricane Harvey. Simultaneously, the Trump Campaign promoted the sale of said hat to campaign supporters. ([Source](#))
- 204) **Trump Bucks Ethics Norm with Book Recommendation:** In an apparent breach of ethical norms, President Trump promoted the purchase of a book using his official twitter account. ([Source](#))
- 205) **Trump Using Campaign, RNC Funds to Pay Legal Bills from Russia Probe:** After launching his reelection bid *on his inauguration day*, President Trump is now using his 2020 reelection funds to finance his legal defense in the Russia investigation, straining past precedent of when and how such funds are used. ([Source](#))
- 206) **Billionaire Robert Mercer Is Helping Pay Donald Trump's Legal Bills:** Billionaire benefactor and major Republican backer, Robert Mercer, donated \$200,000 to Republican legal defense fund on the same day President Trump fired FBI Director James Comey. Mercer has ties to Cambridge Analytica, which is being investigated as part of the Russia probe, leading some to question the motivation and timing of the donation. ([Source](#))
- 207) **Investigations opened into Zinke's meeting with Golden Knights hockey team:** Interior Secretary Zinke is under government investigation for potential violation of the Hatch Act, after using official resources to attend campaign-related event. ([Source](#))
- 208) **Hedge Fund Billionaire Flew Top Mnuchin Aide on Private Jet:** A senior aide to Secretary Mnuchin flew on a private plane with hedge fund manager Nelson Peltz, raising ethical concerns. ([Source](#))
- 209) **Jared Kushner fined again for late ethics form, Ivanka Trump fined too:** In another rebuke of ethics law and norms, White House Senior Advisers Jared Kushner and Ivanka Trump failed to file the required ethics documents, resulting in a modest fine. ([Source](#))

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- 210) **Watchdog Agency Urges Senior Officials to Focus On Ethical Behavior:** After months of flagrant violations of ethics law and norms by the Trump Administration, the Office of Government Ethics issued a simple request to agency heads asking that they work to improve the culture of ethical compliance. ([Source](#))
- 211) **Has Trump drained the swamp in Washington?** A status check on the Trump Administration's self-imposed "Ethics Pledge" and broad commitment to "drain the swamp" showed that the Administration has largely failed to follow through on Trump's campaign promises. ([Source](#))
- 212) **Republican lawmakers' posh hideaway bankrolled by secret corporate cash:** New reporting on the 2016 Republican Convention showed that candidate Trump's rhetoric on corporate special interests did not match his actions during his party's convention, where numerous corporations financed lavish accommodations for Republican officials and relied on a shady LLC front organization to hide the true source of the funds. ([Source](#))
- 213) **Trump pledges at least \$430,000 of his own money to help cover aides' legal costs related to Russia probes:** President Trump allegedly pledged to finance the legal defense of several White House aides caught up in the Russia probe. The offer is fraught with ethical concerns, leading many to question the propriety of a potential target of an investigation paying for the legal defense of likely witnesses in the investigation. ([Source](#))
- 214) **Trump is going through an 'extremely unusual' process of picking US attorneys — and it has ethics experts bewildered:** In a break from past precedent and ethical norms, President Trump personally interviewed individuals for open US attorney positions. These individuals, if given the job, may be in the position of investigating – or *not* investigating – the Trump Organization or Administration. ([Source](#))
- 215) **Trump Flies to Texas for His Re-Election Fundraiser and Writes It Off As Taxpayer Expense:** President Trump flew on Air Force One to attend a fundraiser in Texas for his reelection bid, and briefly attended an official briefing on hurricane relief efforts to justify the use of taxpayer-funded travel. ([Source](#))
- 216) **Zinke funneled millions to questionable PACs:** Interior Secretary Zinke directed millions of dollars in campaign contributions to a network of questionable political organizations that have been accused of misleading donors with regards to how their contributions would be used. ([Source](#))
- 217) **Lara Trump Taking on White House Duties in Troubling and Unprecedented Move, Officials Say:** Lara Trump –a senior aide to President Trump's reelection campaign –reportedly held meetings at the White House on variety of domestic issues, a potential violation of the strict campaign-official division. ([Source](#))
- 218) **Pro-Trump group courts donors with Cabinet access:** An outside campaign organization that supports President Trump solicited donations from big donors with the promise of access to senior Trump cabinet officials. ([Source](#))

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- 219) **Trump White House is still holding back visitor information, watchdog group says:** The Trump Administration refused to disclose information about visitors to the White House complex, violating its own self-imposed disclosure standards outlined earlier this year. ([Source](#))
- 220) **The General Services Administration removed Trump hotel data from its website:** Previously publically-available documents detailing the financial information of the Trump International Hotel in Washington, DC were removed from the GSA website. ([Source](#))
- 221) **Scott Pruitt Is Carrying Out His E.P.A. Agenda in Secret, Critics Say:** EPA Administrator Pruitt has established an unprecedented level of secrecy at the agency by installing round the clock security, shutting down responses to routine oversight requests from Congress and shuttering transparency protocols designed to promote public awareness of the EPA's work. ([Source](#))
- 222) **Trump Voting Panel Apologizes After Failure to Disclose Information:** A federal judge forced the farcical Trump voting commission to apologize for its failure to disclose documents and commission reports to the public. ([Source](#))
- 223) **Trump Administration Withholds Almost All Mar-a-Lago Visitor Logs:** In a potential breach of the Freedom of Information Act, the Trump Administration withheld visitor logs at Trump-owned properties where the Administration regularly conducts official business. ([Source](#))
- 224) **Still No Charity Money from Leftover Trump Inaugural Funds:** After promising to donate reserve funds from his inauguration fund to charity, neither the Trump campaign nor the Trump Administration disclosed or demonstrated if the donations were made. ([Source](#))
- 225) **Ivanka Trump's Business Ties Shrouded in Secrecy in China:** Ivanka Trump's business slowed the release of its financial and business information, leading to some question what business deals it might be pursuing while its namesake is serving as a Senior Aide to the President. ([Source](#))
- 226) **The Mystery of Wilbur Ross' Missing Billions:** Secretary of Commerce Wilber Ross may have violated federal ethics law in failing to disclose certain assets as part of the recusal and divestiture process conducted with the Office of Government Ethics. Newly disclosed assets also raised the specter of conflicts of interest with Russian business interests with ties to the Kremlin. ([Source](#))
- 227) **Pruitt Bars Some Scientists from Advising E.P.A.:** In an unprecedented turn, EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt blocked certain scientists from serving on advisory panels on scientific decisions, further shrouding the agency's decision from expert review. ([Source](#))
- 228) **House Democrats sue Trump Administration over D.C. hotel records:** After routine attempts to secure documentation relating to the Government Services Administration's contract with the Trump Organization were stymied, Congressional Democrats filed suit to compel the generation of said documents. ([Source](#))
- 229) **Trump judicial nominee failed to disclose potential conflict: He's married to White House lawyer:** President Trump's pick for a federal judgeship in Alabama, Brett Talley, failed to disclose that he is married to the Chief of Staff of the White House Counsel. ([Source](#))



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- 230) **Seeking Reset, Trump Dines With Some of His Biggest Donors:** In advance of the Administration's push for tax cuts, President Trump dined with a collection of big name conservative donors to seek support and counsel on the Administration's legislative plan. ([Source](#))
- 231) **Icahn Quits White House Role After Conflict-of-Interest Questions:** Special regulatory adviser and prominent investor Carl Icahn resigned his role in the Trump Administration after questions were raised concerning his improper role regarding changes to the renewable fuel standard that would have benefited his private investments. ([Source](#))
- 232) **Trump nominates some club members to plum government jobs:** President Trump installed dues-paying members of his private clubs to senior positions across the government. ([Source](#))
- 233) **Trump Loyalist Mixes Businesses and Access at 'Advisory' Firm:** Former Trump campaign manager Corey Lewandowski built a mini-empire of consulting and lobbying businesses capitalizing on his unique access to the Trump White House. ([Source](#))
- 234) **Secrecy and Suspicion Surround Trump's Deregulation Teams:** The Trump Administration's "deregulation teams" at various federal agencies are laden with former lobbyists and industry insiders. ([Source](#))
- 235) **Trump's Army secretary pick made over \$1.5M at Raytheon:** President Trump's pick to be Secretary of the Army was previously a high-paid lobbyist for defense contractors, earning somewhere between \$1.5 million and \$6 million over the last 12 months. ([Source](#))
- 236) **In Trump's Government, The 'Regulated Have Become The Regulators':** Across the Executive Branch, the Trump Administration has installed former industry lobbyists and insiders in senior roles overseeing their former industries. ([Source](#))
- 237) **Gary Cohn's NEC Has Been Lobbied By Goldman Sachs-Backed Industry Groups:** Former Goldman Sachs Executive turned National Economic Council head Gary Cohn has been lobbied by a group closely tied to his former employer, demonstrating the limits of Cohn's ethics recusals. ([Source](#))
- 238) **Lewandowski Pressed Trump on Aid to Coal Industry:** Leveraging his relationship with the President, former campaign manager Corey Lewandowski lobbied the Administration to give aid to the coal industry. ([Source](#))
- 239) **Lifting the Veil on Another Batch of Shadowy Trump Appointees:** Numerous lobbyists entered the Trump Administration, regulating the industries they once represented, leading one lobbyists-turned-Administration-official to say, "The Swamp continues." ([Source](#))
- 240) **Trump administration picks former official at for-profit DeVry University to head student aid enforcement unit:** The Trump Department of Education hired a former for-profit college lobbyist to head its student aid division. The lobbyist previously worked for DeVry University, which has been fined over \$100 million for student fraud settlements. ([Source](#))

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- 241) **Trump names former coal executive to top mining safety post:** President Trump tapped David Zatezalo, the former chairman of Rhino Resources, to be an assistant secretary of Labor overseeing the Mine Safety and Health Administration (MSHA). During Zatezalo's tenure with Rhino Resources, the firm was hit with two letters from MSHA citing a pattern of mine safety violations. ([Source](#))
- 242) **Chemical Industry Ally Faces Critics in Bid for Top E.P.A. Post:** President Trump tapped a former chemical industry lobbyist to head EPA's division in charge of testing toxic chemicals in the stream of commerce. ([Source](#))
- 243) **Trump Nominates a Coal Lobbyist to Be No. 2 at E.P.A.:** President Trump tapped Andrew Wheeler, a former coal lobbyist, to fill a top level position at the EPA. ([Source](#))
- 244) **Trump Taps AccuWeather CEO to Head NOAA:** President Trump tapped Barry Myers, owner and CEO AccuWeather, to head the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration – an agency Myer has argued should be partially privatized, raising obvious questions of conflicts of interest. ([Source](#))
- 245) **Top Republican Donors Press EPA to Move Regional Office to Phoenix:** EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt invited in several Republican mega donors to solicit input on plans to restructure the agency. ([Source](#))
- 246) **There is a feeding frenzy going down in Trump's swamp:** New reporting has found that more than 40 individuals with close ties to the White House lobbied the Administration in 2017, with over \$40,000,000 in reported affiliated lobbying expenditures. ([Source](#))
- 247) **Former Eli Lilly Executive Is Trump's Choice for Health Secretary:** President Trump tapped former pharmaceutical executive Alex Azar to be his next head of the Department for Health and Human Services. ([Source](#))
- 248) **Swamp Things: More Than 50% of President Trump's Nominees Have Ties to the Industries They're Supposed to Regulate:** An analysis of Trump Administration nominees to senior positions throughout the Administration showed that over 50% of Trump nominees have direct ties to the industries they are charged with overseeing in their official role. ([Source](#))
- 249) **Secret Donations Are Boosting Trump's Agenda, Fights with Investigators:** A network of big money political organizations – including several super PACs and dark-money 501(c)(4) organizations – have spent millions supporting the special interest agenda of the Trump Administration. ([Source](#))
- 250) **In Trump era, lobbyists boldly take credit for writing a bill to protect their industry:** Lobbyists for doctors and insurance companies drafted legislation to upend our nation's malpractice laws, dramatically weakening certain consumer protections. ([Source](#))
- 251) **Trump Administration Halts Mountaintop Coal Mining Health Study:** Bowing to pressure from the coal industry, the Trump Administration ended a safety study of coal mining – a study supported by the impacted communities in Appalachia. ([Source](#))

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- 252) **For-Profit Colleges Find Few Reasons to Lobby Friendly Education Dept.:** Citing a favorable regulatory environment, for-profit colleges pulled back on lobbying the Department of Education. ([Source](#))
- 253) **Republicans Want to Sideline This Regulator. But It May Be Too Popular:** The Trump Administration and the Republican-controlled Congress attempted to undermine – if not completely unravel – the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau. ([Source](#))
- 254) **‘Too Big to Fail’ Label May Shrink for Some Firms Under Trump:** The Trump Administration is considering measures to remove the “systemically important financial institution” label from certain non-bank institutions and/or limit its applications to currently non-designated institutions – a long standing policy goal of the financial services lobby since the passage of Dodd-Frank. ([Source](#))
- 255) **Trump’s FEC Nominee Questioned Value of Disclosing Political Donors:** Defying his own campaign pledge to champion campaign finance disclosure laws, President Trump tapped a lawyer hostile to stronger campaign finance law to serve as a commissioner of the Federal Election Commission. ([Source](#))
- 256) **Lobbying Money Spikes Under President Trump:** With big business looking to capitalize on the Trump Administration’s deregulatory disposition, lobbying expenditures surged in 2017. ([Source](#))
- 257) **Right After Trump Linked High Drug Prices To Campaign Cash, Drugmakers Gave More:** Mere hours after the President argued that pharmaceuticals should negotiate lower drug prices, the pharmaceutical industry gave out hundreds of thousands of dollars to seemingly stymie the plan – a tactic that seemed to have worked, as the President later backed away from the proposal. ([Source](#))
- 258) **Behind New Obamacare Repeal Vote: ‘Furious’ G.O.P. Donors:** The Trump Administration and the Republican-controlled Congress advanced an ACA repeal plan favored by their big dollar donors, even in the face of exceedingly low national approval ratings for the plan. ([Source](#))
- 259) **Some Conservatives See PAC’s Tax Reform Ads As Warning Shot:** Big money conservative political organizations are spending serious dollars to pressure Congress to advance major tax cuts. What’s more, Speaker Paul Ryan invited these same groups to address Congressional Republicans, in an apparent scare tactic to quell dissension ahead of the Trump Administration’s tax reform push. ([Source](#))
- 260) **E.P.A. Chief’s Calendar: A Stream of Industry Meetings and Trips Home:** A release of EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt’s calendar revealed his regular interaction with industry associations and executives advocating for greater environmental deregulation. ([Source](#))
- 261) **Mnuchin Says Estate Tax Repeal Will Help ‘Rich People’ Most:** In a surprising level of candor, Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin admitted a core provision of the Administration’s tax plan – the repeal of the estate tax – would benefit exclusively the wealthiest households in America. ([Source](#))
- 262) **Private-prison giant, resurgent in Trump era, gathers at president’s resort:** The GEO Group – a private prison contractor recently rejuvenated by Trump Administration changes to detention policies – held its annual conference at a Trump-owned Miami area golf resort. ([Source](#))

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- 263) **GOP Tax Bill Would Allow Politics from the Pulpit:** The weakening of the so-called “Johnson Amendment” in the Trump/Republican tax plan would enable tax-deductible contributions for political activity, further empowering the wealthy and well-connected donor class. ([Source](#))
- 264) **Trump coal backer wins big under Perry's power plan:** Bob Murray, energy-magnate and big money donor to candidate Trump, would win big under a proposed Department of Energy plan to reshape the nation's electricity markets. ([Source](#))
- 265) **An Open Door for Pesticide Lobbyists at the U.S.D.A.:** Trump-appointed officials at the USDA have relied heavily on industry input as they considered new rules and regulations governing the pesticide industry. In some instances, the contact may have violated the Administration's own self-imposed ethics pledge. ([Source](#))
- 266) **Tax lobbyists sprint to win changes to House bill:** Well-heeled, well-connected lobbyists are fighting hard to influence the final Trump-Republican tax plan. ([Source](#))
- 267) **Trump's Chinese Gas Deal Raises Ethics Issues for Wilbur Ross:** New reporting indicates that Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross may benefit from a recent trade initiative with China that the Commerce Department led, raising questions regarding the Secretary's recusal policies and ethics agreement. ([Source](#))
- 268) **U.S. Attorney Subpoenas Kushner Cos. Over Investment-For-Visa Program:** The U.S. attorney's office is looking into the Kushner Companies' promotion of EB-5 visas, which allow foreign investors to earn U.S. visas provided they invest in the U.S. This comes after reports of the Kushner Companies using Jared Kushner's role in the White House to spur investment in their properties. ([Source](#))
- 269) **Trump D.C. hotel turns \$2 million profit in four months:** Dramatically outpacing initial profit estimates, the Trump International Hotel in Washington, D.C. earned \$1.97 million in profit in its first four months of operation. ([Source](#))
- 270) **Trump boasts he owns one of the largest wineries in the U.S. — but here are the facts:** In a press conference on the events in Charlottesville, President Trump promoted his winery in the nearby area. ([Source](#))
- 271) **Trump: No New Deals. Trump Organization: No, New Deals!** Despite pledging the Trump Organization would engage in no new foreign deals while Trump was in office, the Trump Organization stated in their own promotional materials that Trump Hotels is “actively expanding its portfolio of award-winning luxury hotels and resorts and seeking global opportunities.” ([Source](#))
- 272) **Trump Hotel at Night: Lobbyists, Cabinet Members, \$60 Steaks:** The Trump International Hotel in Washington, DC has become a go-to meeting spot for well-connected conservatives, top industry lobbyists and political fans of the new Administration, juicing hotel profits. ([Source](#))
- 273) **Team Trump and GOP Pals Pass Go, Spend \$1.7 Million at Trump Properties:** In little over half a year, Republicans and Republican-affiliated campaign committees have spent more than \$1.7 million at Trump-owned entities. ([Source](#))

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- 274) **Value of Trump's brand up in Middle East, his Gulf partner says:** The brand value of the Trump Organization has increased in the Middle East since the President's visit to the Middle East in early 2017, helping to fuel sales in Trump-affiliated investments. ([Source](#))
- 275) **Trump Gets Millions from CEOs and Lobbyists Who Join His Golf Club:** Several lobbyists and corporate executives are using their memberships at Trump-owned properties to increase their access to the Administration and the President directly. ([Source](#))
- 276) **Sale of Brooklyn Housing Complex Would Benefit Trump:** The potential sale of Starrett City housing complex would net the Trump Organization significant profit. Prior attempts to sell the affordable housing complex were blocked by HUD due to concerns about how the sale might impact low-income households. ([Source](#))
- 277) **Donald Trump Jr. Receiving \$100,000 for University Speech:** In July 2017, the President's son, Donald Jr., received payment for a speech that doubled his previous typical speech fees. The speech was organized by a top GOP donor. ([Source](#))
- 278) **Malaysian Prime Minister Gets VIP Treatment at White House — and at Trump Hotel:** The Malaysian Prime Minister lodged at the Trump International Hotel in Washington, DC during his recent visit to the White House, leading some watchdogs to question if the decision to stay at the property was designed to ingratiate himself to President Trump. ([Source](#))
- 279) **Trump Profits Off of Irish & Northern Irish Government Spending:** For the first time ever, the Ireland Golf Tour Operator Association – a pseudo government tourism arm of the Ireland Department of the Economy – held its annual gala at the Trump-owned Trump International Golf Links & Hotel Doonbeg in Ireland, leading ethics watchdogs to question whether the decision was meant to ingratiate Ireland in the eyes of the U.S. President. ([Source](#))
- 280) **Trumps set to launch two real estate projects in India, despite conflict-of-interest concerns:** Despite promises to engage in “no new foreign deals” while President Trump is in office, the Trump Organization is proceeding with foreign deals previously mothballed, raising concerns of conflicts of interest. ([Source](#))
- 281) **Trump Company Moves to Protect Brand in Chinese Gambling Hub:** The Trump Organization filed for trademark rights in Macau, China, leading to speculation by industry watchers that the Trump business has future development plans in the Chinese gambling hub. ([Source](#))
- 282) **Trump to Guam Governor: North Korea Threats Will Boost Tourism ‘Tenfold’:** Defying conventional wisdom or logic, Trump told Guam Governor Eddie Calvo his recent saber rattling towards North Korea would fuel greater tourism to the small U.S. territory. ([Source](#))
- 283) **Trump's business sought deal on a Trump Tower in Moscow while he ran for president:** It was revealed the Trump Organization was working during the campaign to open a Trump-branded tower in Moscow. ([Source](#))

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- 284) **Kushners' China Deal Flop Was Part of Much Bigger Hunt for Cash:** Senior White House Adviser Jared Kushner spent the past two years courting potential investors for his family's business, leading some watchers to worry his personal business interests may conflict with his official White House duties. ([Source](#))
- 285) **Trump Could Save More Than \$1 Billion Under His New Tax Plan:** The White House tax outline would yield huge savings for President Trump if enacted into law. ([Source](#))
- 286) **Flynn Backed for-Profit Nuclear Scheme Inside Trump Transition:** Before his ouster, National Security Council Advisor Michael Flynn advanced a plan to build private nuclear facilities in the Middle East without disclosing he had previously been paid by the firm advocating for the plan. ([Source](#))
- 287) **Trump's Company Had More Contact with Russia During Campaign, According to Documents Turned Over to Investigators:** Efforts to expand the Trump Organization's business footprint in Russia during candidate Trump's campaign for President were far more extensive than previously disclosed, leading to some to question potential conflicts of interest. ([Source](#))
- 288) **Trump Interrupts Foreign Trip to Promote Trump-Branded Hotel:** During an address to the South Korean parliament, President Trump paused in the middle of his address to boast about and promote his Bedminster golf resort. ([Source](#))
- 289) **Flynn's lobbying subject of probe:** Former National Security Council Advisor Michael Flynn is being investigated for previously undisclosed illicit payment by foreign interests – payments that may have influenced his actions as an official of the Trump Administration. ([Source](#))
- 290) **Trump's "great relationships" with world leaders make sense for his [business] empire:** President Trump's trip to Asia included several locations where the Trump Organization is invested, leading some to question whether his drive to make nice with world leaders – including several who had recently been at odds with the United States – was motivated by the Trump Organization's business interests, as opposed to the U.S. national interest. ([Source](#))
- 291) **The Tax Plan's Mega Gift To Some of Trump's Richest Appointees:** The Trump-Republican tax plan is a boon to the President, but also several of his senior cabinet officials – each of whom would reap huge savings from the repeal of the estate tax, the lowering of tax rates, and the elimination of the Alternative Minimum Tax. ([Source](#))
- 292) **Secret Service Can't Pay Agents for Trump and His Family, Report Says:** The Secret Service has been unable to pay its agents in full citing the undue financial strain of Trump's regular travel, as well as the cost associated with the protection of his family. ([Source](#))
- 293) **Taxpayers Paid \$100K on Car Rentals for Tiffany Trump's Vacation in Italy:** The Secret Service spent over \$100,000 in car rental payments for President Trump's daughter's vacation in Italy. ([Source](#))
- 294) **Mike Pence NFL Game Walkout Was Unethical and Cost Local Police \$14,000, Watchdog Says:** Vice President Pence's trip to an Indianapolis Colts football game, from which he walked out in protest, cost local law enforcement \$14,000 in additional security costs affiliated with the accommodation of the Vice President's attendance. ([Source](#))



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- 295) **Taxpayers Billed \$1,092 for an Official's Two-Night Stay at Mar-a-Lago:** An official of the Trump Administration was billed over \$1,000 for a two night stay at the Trump Mar-a-Lago resort. The U.S. government paid the bill, leading some to question how much the Trump Organization has profited from Administration officials staying at Trump-owned properties while traveling for official business. ([Source](#))
- 296) **Mnuchin Inquired About Using Government Plane for His Honeymoon:** Treasury Secretary Mnuchin attempted to use a government plane for his recent honeymoon to Europe. ([Source](#))
- 297) **Price's Private-Jet Travel Breaks Precedent:** Former HHS Secretary Tom Price regularly used privately-chartered planes to conduct official business, exhausting over \$1 million in taxpayer funds despite the availability of more affordable means of travel. ([Source](#))
- 298) **Trump Kids' Ski Vacation Incurs Over \$300,000 in Security Costs:** Expenditures associated with Secret Service security costs for the Trump family's ski vacation, previously reported in a Democracy Reform Task Force report, are now thought to total over \$300,000. ([Source](#))
- 299) **Seven Flights for \$800,000: Mnuchin's Travel on Military Jets:** Treasury Secretary Mnuchin spent over \$800,000 on seven separate flights using military aircraft. ([Source](#))
- 300) **Secret Service Paid Mar-A-Lago at Least \$63,000, Documents Show:** Between the months of February and April, the Secret Service paid at least \$63,700 in miscellaneous payments to the Mar-a-Lago resort. ([Source](#))