



May 18, 2017

The Honorable Chuck Grassley, Chairman
The Honorable Dianne Feinstein, Ranking Member
United States Senate Committee on the Judiciary
224 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Ron Johnson, Chairman
The Honorable Claire McCaskill, Ranking Member
United States Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs
340 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bob Goodlatte, Chairman
The Honorable John Conyers, Ranking Member
United States House of Representatives Committee on the Judiciary
2138 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jason Chaffetz, Chairman
The Honorable Elijah Cummings, Ranking Member
United States House of Representatives Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
2157 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Honorable Chairmen and Ranking Members:

Yesterday, the Department of Justice appointed a special counsel to conduct an investigation and any appropriate prosecution relating to allegations of Russian interference in the 2016 elections. On behalf of People For the American Way's million-plus activists across the United States, I am writing to urge you to publicly call for the Department of Justice to appoint an additional special counsel dedicated to a different set of issues: how President Trump, his family, and his inner circle are using the presidency for personal self-enrichment.

At any other time in our history, the disturbingly long list of alleged unethical and unlawful conduct by the president and his compatriots would have led to national, bipartisan outrage and demands for an independent investigation. So should it be today.

Among the actions that have raised Americans' concern:

- The then-President-elect's team announced that he was not covered by federal ethics laws, would not be releasing his tax returns, and would not place his substantial business holdings in a blind trust.
- The president has refused to divest his vast real estate holdings and ventures, but instead turned day-to-day operations over to two of his sons. This allows him to make decisions affecting the business as president, then reap the rewards when he returns to that business after his presidency.
- He has already taken financial advantage of the fact that he is president by doubling the membership fees at Mar-a-Lago.
- The president has continued his ownership of the Trump International Hotel in Washington, DC. In so doing, he is apparently violating the terms of the lease (notwithstanding the seriously flawed letter from GSA saying otherwise). To the extent that foreign dignitaries are making sure to use his hotel and not another, he is using his office to gain an unfair competitive advantage. And, of course, all these foreign entities are paying for the hotel's services, arguably violating the Constitution's Emoluments Clause.
- The State Department has promoted the president's Mar-a-Lago luxury vacation resort.
- On the same day Ivanka Trump had dinner with President Trump and the Chinese president at Mar-a-Lago, China approved three trademarks for her fashion lines and spas.
- The president has assigned his son-in-law Jared Kushner to be his lead advisor on Middle Eastern issues. While Kushner apparently has no expertise in the area, he does have financial connections: He is reportedly expanding his real estate business with the financial backing of a controversial Israeli billionaire family whose leading figure is under scrutiny for alleged bribery and money laundering by the United States and three other governments. The potential conflicts of interest are great, both in terms of Kushner's role and the Steinmetz investigation now that the Justice Department is led by Trump appointees.
- The president's estate in Saint-Martin has been put on the market at the highly inflated price of \$28 million. Under the French territory's laws, the identity of the buyer need not

be made public. The sale is an invitation to make a substantial overpayment that will benefit the president personally, by someone whose identity we may never know.

These are just a few of the ways that the presidency is being used as a money-making machine, in ways that may very well violate federal law. There has been absolutely no indication, however, of any action on any of these issues by the Justice Department. Unfortunately, that comes as no surprise. However, when the president and attorney general have a close political or personal relationship, Justice Department regulation 28 CFR 45.2 clearly calls for the attorney general to recuse himself from an investigation of the president and his family.

There is only one way the American people can be sure that the Trump family's financial and ethical misdeeds are being appropriately investigated by a reliably neutral party: appoint a special counsel, just as has been done for the Russia-related investigation.

Your committee positions make your voices particularly important in joining the American people's demand for a real and reliable investigation. We urge you to join our call for a special counsel to investigate any and all potential legal violations arising from the dubious financial and ethical conduct of the president and his family.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'M' followed by a long, horizontal, slightly wavy line that tapers to the right.

Michael Keegan
President & CEO