

January 9, 2017

Dear Senator,

We are writing as a group of organizations and individuals with expertise on governance issues.

We believe that the only way for President-elect Trump to solve the problems he faces is to divest his business enterprises into a blind trust managed by an independent trustee, or the equivalent. As long as President-elect Trump continues to maintain ownership of his business enterprises, no other steps he takes will prevent the serious conflicts of interest, appearance of conflicts and Emoluments Clause problems that will exist throughout his presidency.

Some of us have previously written to President-elect Trump taking this same position.

For the past four decades, previous presidents have taken similar steps to eliminate these kinds of problems to protect the integrity of the presidency and the interests of the American people.

If President-elect Trump maintains his business enterprises, domestic interests and foreign individuals, companies, banks and governments involved in business activities with The Trump Organization will potentially be providing financial benefits and profits that directly inure to the president of the United States. These interests may also have policy issues pending before the Trump administration. President Trump's own business interests also may influence the policy decisions he and his administration make.

To help ensure that President-elect Trump takes the steps essential to eliminating any conflicts of interest, appearances of conflict, and Emoluments Clause problems he will face as President, we urge you to support and co-sponsor legislation sponsored by Senator Elizabeth Warren that would require these steps to be taken.

The bill would require presidents, vice presidents, their spouses, and minor or dependent children to divest all assets that create potential conflicts of interest into a blind trust. The trust would be managed by an independent trustee who would oversee the sale of assets and place the proceeds in conflict-free holdings.

Ethics and conflict of interest rules and norms are not partisan or ideological issues. They are safeguards to protect the integrity of public officials and government actions, and the interests of the American people.

In order to protect the integrity and credibility of the presidency, we urge you to support and cosponsor the Warren bill.

Signers to the letter include:

Ambassador (ret.) Norm Eisen, chief White House ethics lawyer, 2009-2011

Richard Painter, chief White House ethics lawyer, 2005-2007

Center for American Progress

Center for Popular Democracy

Ciara Torres-Spelliscy

Common Cause

CREW

Democracy 21

Demos

Every Voice

Free Speech for People

Friends of the Earth

League of Women Voters

Main Street Alliance

MAYDAY.US

Norman Orenstein

People For the American Way

Public Citizen

Represent.Us

Sunlight Foundation

Zephyr Teachout