

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

November 10, 2020

The Hon. Joseph R. Biden, Jr.  
President-Elect  
United States of America  
Washington, D.C.

Dear President-Elect Biden:

Congratulations on being elected the 46<sup>th</sup> President of the United States of America. We eagerly await the return of compassion and decency to the White House, and look forward to the fulfillment of your nomination acceptance pledge: “Here and now, I give you my word: If you entrust me with the presidency, I will draw on the best of us, not the worst. I will be an ally of the light, not of the darkness.” We know that this guiding principle will direct your actions while president, particularly when selecting senior officials to serve in your Administration. Respectfully, and in full agreement with your past statements, we write to request that the next Secretary of Defense have no prior employment history with a defense contractor.

The most recent Secretary of Defense, Mark Esper, who was fired by Donald Trump yesterday, was employed as a lobbyist for Raytheon prior to being appointed Secretary of Defense. His predecessor, Patrick Shanahan, was a 30-year Boeing executive before President Trump nominated him to become Secretary of Defense. And Jim Mattis, President Trump’s first Secretary of Defense, served on the board of General Dynamics for four years before being noticed by the president. Additionally, nearly half of all senior Defense Department officials are connected to military contractors.<sup>1</sup> Despite President Trump’s boast that he would “drain the swamp” and hire only “the best people”, he has continuously failed to do so. We strongly encourage you to reject the mistaken nominations of the Trump era; and, again, commit to appointing Secretaries of Defense with no previous ties to defense contractors.

As Mandy Smithberger at the Project on Government Oversight states in her report *Brass Parachutes: The Problem of the Pentagon Revolving Door*, “Pentagon officials captured by the contractors they oversee are skewing our spending policies and foreign policy.” It is unsurprising that the largest defense budgets in our nation’s history have come at a time during which senior defense personnel are intimately connected – through past, and future, employment – to the corporations profiting the most from those very same budgets. We are mindful of President Dwight D. Eisenhower’s warning in his farewell address delivered on January 17, 1961, that, “In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist.” Sixty years later, President Eisenhower’s words remain true.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.politico.com/news/2020/09/08/trump-military-defense-industry-booster-410396>

The transition from President Trump's Administration to yours promises to be the end of what you have called "the dark era". The legacy of Trump's presidency will undoubtedly linger, but one way we can quickly distance the nation from the stain of his tenure is to immediately remove the profiteering ethos Donald Trump fostered throughout government. We thank you for your consideration of our request and look forward to standing beside you as we help America "Build Back Better".

Sincerely,



Mark Pocan  
Member of Congress



Barbara Lee  
Member of Congress