

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

October 21, 2009

Mr. Gregory Dole
Director, Commercial Trade Policy
The Boeing Company

Joseph Mayer, Esq.
Special Counsel for International Trade
Copper & Brass Fabricators Council, Inc.

Mr. Brian Petty
Senior Vice President, Government Affairs
International Association of Drilling
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Mr. J. Robert Vastine, Jr.
President
U.S. Coalition of Service Industries

Mr. V.M. (Jim) DeLisi
President
Fanwood Chemical, Inc.

Mr. George Keller
President
Customs Advisory Services, Inc.

Mr. Timothy Hoelter
Vice President, Government Affairs
Harley-Davidson Motor Company

Mr. William Pendleton
Director, Trade Policy
Specialty Steel Industry of North America

Mr. Richard Holwill
Vice President, Public Policy
Alticor, Inc.

Mr. Stephen Lamar
Executive Vice President
American Apparel & Footwear Association

Mr. John Easton, Jr.
Vice President, International Programs
Edison Electric Institute

Mr. James Clawson
President and Chief Executive Officer
JBC International

Ms. Ann Barbara Wroblewski
Vice President
International Paper Company

Mr. Eric Smith
President
International Intellectual Property Alliance

Mr. Steven Stewart
Director, Public Affairs
IBM Corporation

Mr. Wayne Morris
Vice President, Division Services
Association of Home Appliance
Manufacturers

Dear Sirs and Madam:

I am writing to respond to your letter protesting the Administration's September 23 decision to bar registered lobbyists from federal boards and commissions, and the implications for you and other members of the Industry Trade Advisory Committees.

I assure you that our action was not provoked, as you suggest, by the "criminal and unethical behavior of a few individuals." Indeed there have been some egregious abuses, but this decision was not meant to besmirch everyone who is a registered federal lobbyist.

It's the system as a whole that concerns us.

It's an indisputable fact that in recent years, lobbyists for major special interests have wielded extraordinary power in this town. The result has been a national agenda too often skewed in favor of the interests that can afford their services.

Today, for example, major banks are spending tens of millions of dollars on lobbyists whose mission it is to gut meaningful financial reforms, despite the blatant industry abuses that have led to the worst economic crisis in generations. The insurance industry has unleashed its army of lobbyists to try and frustrate health reform and keep in place a system that works better for them than the American people. And the oil and gas companies are lobbying furiously to frustrate reforms that will put America on the path of leadership in clean, home-grown, renewable energy.

Lobbyists traffic in relationships, working both the Congress and federal agencies to bend legislation and policies on behalf of their clients. And their clients deserve to be heard. But industry representatives shouldn't be given government positions from which to make their case.

That is why the President took steps almost immediately upon taking office to implement historic lobbying reforms. He closed the revolving door through which federal lobbyists have shuttled between their private practices and the government. He restricted the hiring of those who had lobbied the federal government within the previous two years, and insisted that those who serve agree to forego lobbying his Administration in the future.

To the same end, the President has also barred gifts from federal lobbyists to Administration officials, imposed tough restrictions regulating lobbying for ARRA and EESA funds, and announced historic transparency rules for all White House visitors that will result for the first time ever in the public disclosure of every lobbyist (registered or otherwise) who visits the White House.

The President's overarching goal is to reduce special interest influences that threaten the public interest and undermine public confidence. And his concerns extend to the appointment or retention of those who lobby the government and simultaneously serve on federal boards and commissions.

I have no doubt that many of the 130 lobbyists on the federal Industry Trade Advisory Committees bring great knowledge to those panels, which are an integral part of trade negotiations. But your participation also puts you in a unique position to influence trade policy on behalf of your individual clients.

Your arguments that only lobbyists can bring the requisite experience to provide wise counsel, or that reaching beyond the roster of industry lobbyists for appointees will result in a "lack of diversity," are unconvincing on their face. We believe the committees will benefit from an influx of businesspeople, consumers and other concerned Americans who can bring fresh perspectives and new insights to the work of government.

Finally, your suggestion that some would de-register as lobbyists in order to remain on these panels is disturbing. I would hope that industry representatives would not seek to circumvent the rules in order to retain their preferred positions on these bodies.

I am happy to meet with you to discuss this matter. But please know that the President remains determined to limit the inordinate influence of lobbyists to ensure that government is devoted to serving the public interest on behalf of the American people.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Norman L. Eisen".

Norman L. Eisen
Special Counsel to the President