

January 4, 2017

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell
317 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington DC 20510

Senate Minority Leader Charles Schumer
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington DC 20510

Dear Senator McConnell and Senator Schumer:

We, the undersigned open government and public accountability organizations, urgently encourage the Senate Leadership to establish disclosure rules for the Committees before which presidential appointees appear.

Maximizing public access to the information provided to Congress about presidential nominees through online disclosure prior to confirmation hearings would demonstrate the commitment of the 115th Congress to conduct public business in full view of the public.

Presidential appointees act to implement the goals of the President, running programs and agencies critical to the health, security, and well-being of the American public. We are asked to entrust ourselves and our futures to these individuals.

It is imperative that the public be able to educate ourselves about the background and qualifications of presidential nominees, including their experience, business relationships and dealings, and responses to written questions.

The Constitution requires Senators to vet the qualifications and ethics of presidential nominees. Public input and open-sourced scrutiny can make that process more thorough and meaningful.

In an era of historic distrust of government in general, and Congress in particular, it is essential to take meaningful steps to improve public trust in the appointment and confirmation process.

We strongly urge that consistent and standardized practices and procedures be immediately established and implemented to provide full, comprehensive public access to the following for each nominee:

- **the questionnaires** that each person is required to fill out, detailing work experience, business holdings, and personal lives
- the **financial disclosures** required by law to be filed, preferably in an open, machine-readable format; and
- the **ethics agreement** discussing divestment or other personnel moves that will be made to avoid conflicts.

We thank you for the commitments to open government that the Senate has shown over the past decade. We hope that transparency and accountability will be embedded in all of the Senate's constitutional duties in the 115th Congress.

Sincerely,

Bill of Rights Defense Committee/Defending Dissent Foundation

Campaign Legal Center

Center for Media and Democracy

Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington (CREW)

Common Cause

Demand Progress

Democracy 21

Essential Information

National Coalition Against Censorship

OpenTheGovernment.org

Project On Government Oversight (POGO)

Public Citizen

Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press (RCFP)

Represent.Us

Revolving Door Project

Sunlight Foundation

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

Zephyr Teachout, Associate Law Professor, Fordham Law School

Anne Weismann

Cc: Chairs and Ranking Members of Senate Committees on Banking, Housing and Urban Affairs; Energy and Natural Resources; Foreign Relations; Environment and Public Works; Judiciary; Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee; Health, Education, Labor & Pensions; Commerce, Science, & Transportation; Armed Services; Budget; Small Business & Entrepreneurship; Agriculture, Nutrition, and Forestry; Veterans' Affairs; Indian Affairs; Finance; and Senate Select Committee on Intelligence