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Daily Beast
October 30, 2017

Mueller Probe Appears to Hit Democratic Powerhouses, Too

<https://www.thedailybeast.com/mueller-probe-appears-to-hit-democratic-powerhouses-too>

The indictment of former Trump campaign boss Paul Manafort is likely causing bipartisan headaches. While it alleges that President Donald Trump’s former campaign chairman was a tax-dodging money-lauderer in cahoots with an authoritarian Ukrainian regime, it also hints at a potential legal mess for one of Washington’s most powerful Democratic dynasties: the Podestas.

The indictment describes a cozy, coordinated relationship between Manafort, Ukraine’s Putinfriendly president Viktor Yanukovich, and two unnamed Washington lobbying firms, beginning in 2012. Lobbying disclosure forms show that the Podesta Group and Mercury LLC, two powerful Washington firms, started working alongside Manafort that year, and with the European Centre for Modern Ukraine — a group the indictment describes as a cut-out for the Yanukovich government.

The AP reported in August that Manafort directed The Podesta Group and Mercury LLC as part of a “covert influence campaign.”

Multiple lobbyists tell The Daily Beast they are confident that the Podesta Group and Mercury LLC are the two firms the indictment refers to. NBC News quotes three sources with knowledge of the investigation who drew similar conclusions.

“I’m 99.9 percent sure that’s who it is,” said one longtime Washington attorney and lobbyist. “Those are the two firms who did this work.”

“Manafort and Tony [Podesta] were inseparable and driving the same train,” added a person familiar with the Mueller probe.

Tony Podesta was a major fundraiser for Hillary Clinton’s presidential campaign. His brother John, one of the most powerful Democrats in Washington, chaired that campaign. Together, they founded the Podesta Group.

As The Daily Beast noted earlier this year, the company connects foreign foreign government clients — including those with miserable human rights records—with D.C. power brokers. The Podesta Group has represented the governments of Vietnam, Azerbaijan and South Sudan.

Neither the Podesta Group nor Mercury LLC responded to multiple requests for comment. The Washington Post and NBC News reported over the summer that Mueller had subpoenaed those two firms regarding work they did with Manafort. And on Monday, Politico reported that Tony Podesta will step down as head of the firm.

The indictment, which was unsealed on Monday, lays out in detail the work that two lobbying firms — presumably the Podesta Group and Mercury LLC — did with Manafort.

It describes the allegedly unlawful lobbying work Manafort and his business partner, Rick Gates, did on behalf of a pro-Putin Ukrainian political party. The indictment says that Manafort and Gates worked for Viktor Yanukovich, his pro-Russia Party of Regions, and the Ukrainian government.

“As part of the scheme, in February 2012, MANAFORT and GATES solicited two Washington, D.C., firms (Company A and Company B) to lobby in the United States on behalf of Yanukovich, the Party of Regions, and the Government of Ukraine.”

The indictment then indicates that Company A and Company B knew what they were doing.

“GATES wrote to Company A that it would be ‘representing the Government of Ukraine in [Washington,] DC’” the indictment continues.

And it says Manafort communicated about the work with Yanukovich, and that Gates shared Yanukovich’s directions with Company A and Company B. It also said Gates told those two companies to write assess their lobbying work that Manafort could then share with the “President” — presumably meaning Yanukovich, who was Ukraine’s president at the time.

The indictment also said that Manafort and Gates arranged for the European Centre for a Modern Ukraine “to be the nominal client” of the two lobbying firms, and adds that it was actually controlled by Yanukovich and his allies.

As The Daily Beast detailed in August, The Podesta Group in 2012 started working for the Centre. The Podesta Group claimed its client was a benign non-governmental organization, not a foreign strongman or his domestic henchmen.

But the indictment says that the two lobbying companies were paid by offshore accounts associated with Manafort and Gates — and not by the Centre.

Then the indictment details the coordination between Manafort, Gates, and the two unnamed companies: They had weekly phone calls and frequent emails; the companies gave them detailed reports on their work; Manafort and Gates kept Yanukovich up to speed on the companies’ lobbying; “both congratulated and reprimanded Company A and Company B on their lobbying work;” and paid them more than \$2 million.

As part of their work for the Centre, the Podesta Group and Mercury LLC defended Ukraine’s 2012 elections and tried to persuade Washington power-brokers that Yanukovich would move the country closer to the U.S. and further away from Putin. To make that case, the Podesta Group distributed literature quoting close Putin allies — but without giving readers that context.

Both the Podesta Group and Mercury LLC neglected to register with the Justice Department when they started working with Manafort for Yanukovich. This indictment suggests they should have known better.

“It certainly means they need to be lawyering up,” said the lobbyist, “because they are material witnesses.”

The indictment also suggests that Manafort secretly paid the high-powered law firm Skadden Arps \$4 million for a report that whitewashed a politically charged prosecution.

“Manafort and Gates also lobbied in connection with the roll out of a report concerning the Tymoshenko trial commissioned by the Government of Ukraine. Manafort and Gates used one of their offshore accounts to funnel \$4 million to pay secretly for the report,” the indictment says.

Though the indictment doesn’t name the firm, it appears to be Skadden Arps. Manafort had enlisted Skadden back then to look into the Yanukovich government’s prosecution of political rival, the ex-Ukrainian prime minister Yulia Tymoshenko.

According to a subsequent and since-dismissed lawsuit Tymoshenko filed in the U.S., as well as documents recovered in Ukraine after Yanukovich fled to Russia in 2014, Skadden only received declared payments of \$13,000.

Tymoshenko’s legal team found that figure suspect, since Skadden Arps had multiple lawyers engaged in international travel for work that took over a month. They estimated that the Tymoshenko report ought to have been billed at \$2 million.

“Based on the indictment, if it is referring to payments made to Skadden Arps, and if those payments are described as being circuitously made, then I am astonished such a major reputable law firm would have received payments in that manner,” said Kenneth McCallion, one of Tymoshenko’s lawyers.

One of the Skadden attorneys involved, according to documents recovered in 2014, was Greg Craig, Barack Obama’s first White House counsel. Craig enlisted Manafort’s “help” in receiving access to a relevant Ukrainian government office. Another Skadden attorney enlisted, per the Tymoshenko lawsuit, was Cliff Sloan, Obama’s State Department envoy for closing the Guantanamo Bay detention center.

Neither Craig, Sloan, nor another Skadden representative immediately replied to a request for comment on the alleged \$4 million payment.

ETHNews
October 30, 2017

Kansas Governmental Ethics Commission Recommends Against Bitcoin Campaign Contributions

<https://www.ethnews.com/kansas-governmental-ethics-commission-recommends-against-bitcoin-campaign-contributions>

On October 25, 2017, the Kansas Governmental Ethics Commission (GEC) assessed that bitcoin is too secretive and too untraceable to allow campaign contributions using the digital currency. The guidance was issued in response to a request by a political candidate, who sought clarification on the legality of

accepting campaign contributions made in bitcoin. On Friday, ETHNews spoke with Mark Skoglund, executive director of the Kansas GEC.

The Kansas GEC is telling candidates to “not accept bitcoin at this time until further study can be conducted,” said Skoglund, who declined to identify the crypto-curious candidate. Guidance does not carry the “enforcement weight” of a formal advisory opinion, he noted. By following a formal advisory opinion, a person would be “deemed to have followed the law.”

For members of the GEC, the greatest concern was that bitcoin is “not auditable.” Blockchain explorers and investigative services offered by firms like Chainalysis were not part of the GEC’s discussion.

Another discussion point was the risk of malicious actors impacting elections. “The greatest problem would be the strong probability of influencing local elections by totally unidentifiable lobbyists,” said Commissioner Jerome Hellmer. “If you think the Russians affected the presidential election, just wait. This is what’s going to happen.”

In 2014, the Federal Election Commission (FEC) opined that bitcoin could be accepted under limited conditions. Per the FEC’s bitcoin Q&A, contributions should be calculated “based on the market value of bitcoins at the time the contribution is received.”

But what is the “market value of bitcoins?” Which exchange or group of exchanges should be referenced? The price of bitcoin varies between exchanges, so should candidates just pick the most advantageous rate? The answer isn’t clear.

As far as reporting contributions received in bitcoin, the FEC advised that the initial receipt of bitcoin should be reported like in-kind contributions. That is, bitcoin should be treated like goods or services offered either for free or at less than the usual charge. The FEC also provided guidance on liquidating bitcoin through sales to known and unknown purchasers.

“If the committee sells the bitcoins directly to a purchaser, and therefore knows the identity of the purchaser, the purchaser is considered to have made a contribution to the committee,” wrote the FEC. Unknown purchasers are not considered to have made a contribution to the committee.

Another complication for bitcoin-based campaign contributions is the digital currency’s tremendous volatility. Imagine if you made the maximum allowable contribution in bitcoin, and the value of the digital currency doubled before the candidate converted it into dollars. How would a candidate report the gain? Is this fair to other voters? For states with low contribution limits, the problem could be even more pronounced.

In the Sunflower state, campaign contribution limits have not risen for nearly 30 years. In February 2017, a measure to raise contributions was struck down, keeping in place the limit of \$2,000 to gubernatorial candidates and \$500 to candidates for the state House.

Fortunately, the opacity of bitcoin should not prove too dangerous in politics, at least in Kansas. This is because the state caps anonymous contributions at 50 percent of the amount a candidate can receive from an individual in an election cycle. In state-wide races, that means that the \$2,000 individual cap equates to a \$1,000 cap on cumulative anonymous contributions. For state Senate races, these amounts are \$1,000 and \$500 respectively, and for local or state representative races, these amounts are \$500 and \$250 respectively.

Although candidates like Brian Forde in California and Patrick Nelson in New York have accepted campaign contributions in bitcoin, the dearth of reporting standards remains worrisome. In December 2017, Skoglund plans to raise the issue of bitcoin campaign contributions at the Council on Government Ethics Laws.

Chicago Tribune
October 27, 2017

Emanuel's ethics board walks back \$2,500 fines against 3 who illegally lobbied him

<http://www.chicagotribune.com/news/local/politics/ct-met-chicago-board-of-ethics-fines-20171026-story.html>

Mayor Rahm Emanuel's handpicked Board of Ethics announced Thursday that it has vacated \$2,500 fines it issued against two of the mayor's friends and an alderman's husband after the panel found they illegally lobbied him on his personal email account.

In July, the board fined Medline Industries executive Jim Abrams, Linden Capital Partners President Tony Davis and attorney Alan King for failing to register as lobbyists after seeking City Hall action from Emanuel through his non-government email account.

The ethics board had found Abrams illegally lobbied the mayor on the city's minimum wage ordinance on behalf of a company. Davis broke the rules by seeking a city zoning change on behalf of a neighborhood business, and King sought the mayor's influence to have the Park District remove a fence on behalf of a for-profit house music festival. Abrams and Davis are longtime friends of the mayor, while King is a disc jockey and husband of 4th Ward Ald. Sophia King.

On Thursday, however, the ethics board quietly announced it would walk away from its determination that the three violated the city's lobbying laws and lift the fines. The decisions were posted on the board's website shortly before its leadership was to face questioning from aldermen as part of the city's annual budget hearings.

The board's announcements state that its decision to vacate the violations in all three cases would stand as long as the individuals don't commit any lobbying violations within a year. Records show Davis had threatened to sue the ethics board, arguing the ordinance was unconstitutional and improperly applied to his case.

Ethics board Chairman William F. Conlon did not respond to requests for comment.

The ethics board considered 28 cases tied to Emanuel's personal emails and now has only found violations and issued fines in five of those cases — or less than 18 percent. The sharp increase in cases the board considered came after a Chicago Tribune report in March that found Emanuel's personal email accounts have served as a private avenue of influence for lobbyists, corporate executives and campaign donors who sought action from — or access to — the mayor.

The Tribune found 26 possible instances in which individuals contacted the mayor or city officials but did not register as a lobbyist or report that contact to the ethics board, as required by law. The instances included airline lobbyists and executives seeking Emanuel's support on a merger, Airbnb pushing Emanuel to pass watered-down regulations, and Cubs Chairman Tom Ricketts seeking access to the mayor on ballpark security and development. Ricketts was not found in violation but later registered as a lobbyist.

The Emanuel-appointed ethics board found violations in just three of the 26 instances in the Tribune report. In another case, the ethics board did not identify a violator who was fined \$1,000.

Under the law, a lobbyist is defined as someone who "undertakes to influence any legislative or administrative action" by city officials, employees and the City Council or its committees. A person does not have to be paid by a company or a party to be considered a lobbyist, they just have to try to

influence city officials on behalf of another individual or entity. Exempt from having to register as a lobbyist are individuals acting on their own behalf, acting on behalf of a company that is a sole proprietorship or representing a nonprofit organization that does not have any for-profit members.

Lobbyists are required to register with the city and report each contact with government officials. Those who fail to register within five days of contacting a city official face a fine of up to \$1,000 per day.

The ethics board, which is responsible for enforcing the city's lobbying rules, long has been viewed as toothless because it has no investigative power.

But in December, Emanuel's emails became public after the mayor released them under pressure from a pair of open records lawsuits from the Better Government Association and Chicago Tribune that alleged he had conducted government business on personal email accounts. Subsequent news reports on the emails followed, giving the ethics board access to records it typically would not have the wherewithal to uncover itself.

That led the board to hand out a record \$90,000 fine in February to former Uber executive David Plouffe for illegally lobbying Emanuel on the city's ride-sharing ordinance. Uber and Plouffe, who managed former President Barack Obama's 2008 campaign, argued the size of the fine was "absurd," but the board stood by its \$1,000-per-day fine.

About a month later, the Tribune report was published, and as the number of cases the board reviewed grew, Conlon expressed his hesitancy to issue any more heavy fines. The penalties, Conlon said, should not be "unreasonable or vindictive."

The board's decision to issue smaller fines and vacate cases came after Emanuel weighed in publicly in June. As the board he appoints reviewed many of the cases, Emanuel slammed the city's ethics ordinance as too broad and suggested the city's definition of a lobbyist should be redefined.

"We cannot collapse a lobbyist and a citizen, and that's what's happened," Emanuel said. "What has happened here, in the interest of reform, we have lost our perspective."

The city's ethics ordinance — and definition of a lobbyist — was updated by Emanuel's own handpicked ethics task force after he took office in 2011.

The Hill **November 1, 2017**

Top Lobbyists 2017: Associations

<http://thehill.com/business-a-lobbying/top-lobbyists/358132-top-lobbyists-2017-associations>

Dana Atkins, Military Officers Association of America

A retired Air Force lieutenant general and command pilot, Atkins took charge of the association in 2016, stepping into the fight to protect the pay and benefits of U.S. troops.

Mitch Bainwol, Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers

Bainwol was a key player behind legislation that would pave the way for self-driving cars; that bill could become the first federal law to govern autonomous vehicles.

Mark Baker, Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association

Baker has put general aviation at the center of the debate over privatizing air traffic control, persuading a number of wavering lawmakers to oppose the plan.

Meredith Attwell Baker, CTIA-The Wireless Association

The one-time Texas lawyer rose to prominence in the Bush years and is now using her experience at the Federal Communications Commission to help the telecom industry fend off net neutrality rules.

Michael Beckerman, Internet Association Beckerman

is helping internet companies navigate the charged political fights that increasingly touch the industry from privacy battles to patent issues.

Kenneth Bentsen Jr. and Andy Blocker, Securities Industry and Financial Markets Association

Bentsen and Blocker are out front for the financial industry as it fights against the Obama-era fiduciary rule on investment advisers.

B. Dan Berger and Brad Thaler, National Association of Federally-Insured Credit Unions

Berger and Thaler manned NAFCU's lobbying operation during a critical time, leading a successful effort to keep the industry's federal regulator away from tighter congressional control.

Joshua Bolten, Business Roundtable

The former chief of staff to President George W. Bush took over from John Engler as leader of the Roundtable this year as its corporate CEO members looked to capitalize on a unified government.

John Bozzella, Global Automakers

Bozzella and his group have been intensely focused on technological advances in the auto space and the Trump administration's trade policy agenda.

Kevin Burke, Airports Council International — North America

After just three years on the job, Burke secured a long-sought victory for his industry when a Senate panel supported lifting the cap on a passenger fee that helps pay for airport upgrades.

Nicholas Calio, Airlines for America

Calio steered the industry through a major patch of turbulence after a string of airline controversies this year, fending off a number of bills intended to crack down on the industry.

Kateri Callahan, Alliance to Save Energy

The long-time president of the Alliance to Save Energy has led the charge against Trump administration proposals to end the Energy Star program, a popular public-private energy efficiency effort.

Robert Cresanti, International Franchise Association

Cresanti has led the charge for repealing an Obama-era National Labor Relations Board ruling that could make franchisors liable for labor law violations committed by subcontractors or franchisees.

Richard Deem, American Medical Association

A former Reagan official, Deem directs federal and state advocacy for the nation's largest association of physicians. This year, they opposed the GOP effort to repeal the Affordable Care Act and worked to combat the opioid epidemic.

Bob Dinneen, Renewable Fuels Association

Dinneen has been in the trenches of numerous policy fights involving biofuels. He successfully pushed back when fuel refiners sought a significant change to the ethanol mandate.

Thomas Donohue, U.S. Chamber of Commerce

The dean of the business community is ringing out a clear message in the Chamber's campaign for tax reform: "Failure is not an option."

Cal Dooley and Bryan Zumwalt, American Chemistry Council

The council is the voice of top chemical manufacturers in Washington, holding sway across a wide range of regulatory and legislative debates.

Roger Dow and Jonathan Grella, U.S. Travel Association

This powerhouse team has worked to promote U.S. tourism at a time when federal policy has threatened to put a damper on travel.

Juanita Duggan, National Federation of Independent Business

Small businesses recently scored a big win with a health-care executive order from President Trump; now the group wants an even bigger prize, a tax-reform overhaul that levels the playing field for its members.

Martin Edwards, Interstate Natural Gas Association of America

Trump's energy policy has been a boon to Edwards and the natural gas pipeline industry, particularly with the repeal of former President Obama's policy to consider climate change in the federal environmental review process.

Camden Fine, Independent Community Bankers of America

Fine, who announced he would be stepping down next year, has huddled with Trump and lawmakers about dialing back Dodd-Frank regulations on small local banks — a mission with bipartisan support and good odds of success.

Geoff Freeman, American Gaming Association

The gaming group is on the cusp of a major breakthrough as the Supreme Court considers whether to lift the federal ban on sports betting.

David French, National Retail Federation

French is chief lobbyist for the world's largest retail trade association, pushing for cuts to corporate tax rates as part of the Republican plan to rewrite the tax code.

Neil Fried, The Motion Picture Association of America

Fried, a former House Energy and Commerce Committee lawyer, brings nearly a decade of Capitol Hill experience to an industry that is being transformed by the proliferation of digital streaming services.

Lee Fuller, Independent Petroleum Association of America

Fuller, who has been with the industry group since 1998, has seen it all. Its membership has a lot to celebrate this year, including rollbacks to former President Obama's drilling regulations.

Michael Gallagher and Erik Huey, Entertainment Software Association

It's not all fun and games for the video game industry; the organization has been focused on tax and trade issues as the Trump administration charts a new course for the economy.

Dean Garfield, Information Technology Industry Council

Garfield is thinking globally, expanding the group's advocacy in Europe, where regulators are making life difficult for major American tech companies.

Jack Gerard, American Petroleum Institute

Gerard and the oil and natural gas industry keep racking up wins, from the proposed repeal of the Clean Power Plan to rollbacks of regulations that limit methane emissions from oil and gas drilling.

Jerry Giovaniello, National Association of Realtors

Showing strength in numbers, the realtors have mobilized against Republican proposals to repeal the state and local tax deduction and limit the mortgage-interest deduction.

James Greenwood, Biotechnology Innovation Organization

Greenwood came to the private sector in 2005 with a wealth of knowledge, having spent more than a decade grappling with health and science issues as a Republican leader on the House Energy and Commerce Committee.

Edward Hamberger, Association of American Railroads

Hamberger has been plugging away to ensure that railroad funding and other rail-friendly priorities are included in any infrastructure package that comes out of the White House.

Jerry Howard, National Association of Home Builders

A long-time player in the real estate world, Howard has put his imprint on policies ranging from affordable housing to mortgage regulation.

Richard Hunt, Consumer Bankers Association

For eight years and counting, Hunt has been guiding the retail banking industry through an era of technological upheaval.

Chip Kahn, Federation of American Hospitals

The longtime head of for-profit hospitals was in the thick of the action this year, helping marshal opposition to several ObamaCare repeal proposals.

Dirk Kempthorne, American Council of Life Insurers

Kempthorne's group notched an important victory after the Financial Stability Oversight Council rescinded its "systemically important" designation for the American International Group (AIG).

Maria Korsnick, Nuclear Energy Institute

The institute went with an industry veteran when it named a new president late last year; Korsnick had been NEI's chief operation officer since 2015 and has experience at Exelon Generation and the Constellation Energy Nuclear Group.

Thomas Kuhn and Brian Wolff, Edison Electric Institute

Electric utilities are central to Trump's efforts to dial back major environmental regulations, and Kuhn and Wolff are working constantly to make sure utilities' wishes are heard.

Linda Lipsen, American Association for Justice

Lipsen has spent her career protecting the rights of consumers to settle disputes with companies in court. She is also a fundraising force, having bundled more than \$1 million for Hillary Clinton's White House bid.

Katherine Lugar, American Hotel & Lodging Association

As the head of the hotel industry's flagship trade association, Lugar has been defending the sector's interests while working to promote tourism.

Dave McCurdy and Kyle Rogers, American Gas Association

AGA has lobbied Congress on a host of issues this year, from the tax code to cybersecurity, working to ensure that federal cyber guidelines give industry flexibility.

Nancy McLernon, Organization for International Investment

McLernon's group, which speaks for the U.S. operations of global companies, has been pushing for the repeal of the Obama administration's anti-inversion rules. Trump officials are listening and have pledged to review them.

David Melcher, Aerospace Industries Association

Melcher, who took over as AIA's chief executive in June 2015 and will retire in December, helped guide the country's largest defense industry association into a new political era.

Mark Merritt, Pharmaceutical Care Management Association

Merritt has power in numbers as leader of the industry association for pharmacy benefit managers. The group spent 2017 working to keep drug costs down for consumers.

Kraig Naasz, Mark Gorman and David Culver, Distilled Spirits Council

Lobbyists for the alcohol industry often make their mark at the state level; back in Washington, they are keeping close tabs on tax reform, which could have a major impact on the spirits industry.

Rob Nichols, American Bankers Association

As head of the powerful banking group, Nichols is a player to watch as the GOP seeks to roll back much of the Dodd-Frank Act under President Trump.

Rich Nolan, National Mining Association

President Trump promised during the campaign to revive the coal industry, and the miners are keeping him to his word; their focus is overhauling regulations and laws governing the industry.

Jim Nussle, Credit Union National Association

The former House Budget Committee chairman is a big reason why credit unions exert such influence on financial regulations.

Mark Parkinson, American Health Care Association

Parkinson, the former governor of Kansas, now heads the nursing home trade group as it stands guard against cuts to Medicaid and Medicare.

Tim Pawlenty, Financial Services Roundtable

The former Republican governor of Minnesota has settled in as a financial power player. He fought against the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau's arbitration rule.

Richard Pollack, American Hospital Association

It was a busy year for Pollack as the AHA mobilized against the various iterations of the House and Senate bills to repeal ObamaCare; their advocacy paid dividends, with the effort likely pushed back at least to 2018.

Michael Powell, National Cable & Telecommunications Association

Powell, son of Colin Powell, was once chairman of the Federal Communications Commission, giving him an authoritative voice as the NCTA campaigns for scaled-back FCC regulations.

Craig Purser and Laurie Knight, National Beer Wholesalers Association

At a time when the beer industry faces consolidation and changing consumer habits, lobbyists for beer distributors keep their members ahead of the curve.

Jim Reilly, American Wind Energy Association Defending

wind energy under the Trump administration is no easy task, but AWEA is laserfocused on selling the economic and employment benefits of wind energy to middle America.

John Rother, National Coalition on Health Care

Rother leads a coalition of more than 80 health-care organizations seeking an affordable, highvalue health-care system; this year, it helped sink repeal of the Affordable Care Act.

Bob Rusboldt and Charles Symington, Independent Insurance Agents & Brokers of America

The "Big I" was a force to be reckoned with as it battled for a wide array of flood insurance legislation in 2017, including a long-term extension of the National Flood Insurance Program.

Jennifer Safavian, Retail Industry Leaders Association

The retail industry's clout was on full display as Safavian helped bury a GOP tax provision that would have placed a higher tax on imports.

Stephen Sandherr, The Associated General Contractors of America

The leader of the construction worker trade group since 1997, Sandherr is pressing Congress to review rules and regulations related to infrastructure.

J.C. Scott, AdvaMed

Since joining the medical device group in 2011, Scott has been a chief advocate for repealing ObamaCare's tax on medical devices, a cause backed by members of both parties.

Gary Shapiro, Consumer Technology Association

When Shapiro's CTA isn't organizing the popular Consumer Electronics Show, it's pushing Congress to take action on driverless cars, tax reform and free trade policies.

Cicely Simpson, National Restaurant Association

Simpson is on a mission as the restaurant industry seeks the reversal of a labor ruling that made franchisors potentially liable for labor law violations committed by franchisees.

Emily Skor, Growth Energy

Skor is trying to ensure that President Trump abides by his pro-ethanol promises; already, the Environmental Protection Agency has disavowed a regulatory change that would have reduced the ethanol-blending mandate.

Gordon Smith, National Association of Broadcasters

Smith served for 11 years in the Senate, so he gives political heft to broadcasters as they do battle with tech firms over spectrum and broadcasting white spaces.

Jonathan Spalter, USTelecom

In his first year as USTelecom's president and CEO, Spalter is notching major deregulatory victories in Congress and at the Federal Communications Commission.

Scott Talbott, Electronic Transactions Association

The way consumers spend their money is evolving rapidly, but the association is keeping pace with the help of Talbott, a Washington veteran.

Marilyn Tavenner, America's Health Insurance Plans

Tavenner, a former Obama administration health official, has her work cut out for her as insurance companies navigate the turbulence surrounding the Affordable Care Act.

Mary Kay Thatcher, American Farm Bureau Federation

The farm policy powerhouse is tracking issues like crop insurance, voluntary labeling requirements for bioengineered foods and disease surveillance response — and that only scratches the surface of its work.

Chet Thompson, American Fuel & Petrochemical Manufacturers

Refiners have celebrated President Trump's moves in support of fossil fuels and manufacturing, giving the industry a jolt of momentum.

Jay Timmons and Aric Newhouse, National Association of Manufacturers

NAM is a soldier in the GOP's march for tax reform. Timmons has been a frequent White House visitor, and Newhouse is using his decade of experience at the group to gain policy wins.

Stephen Ubl and Lori Reilly, Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America

The drug industry's largest trade group has largely fought off congressional action on drug pricing, while launching a campaign to showcase the biopharmaceutical industry's advances in science.

Dirk Van Dongen, National Association of Wholesale-Distributors

Van Dongen, a fixture on the GOP fundraising circuit, led the way for the distributors as they won a permanent ban on an Obama administration rule expanding overtime pay.

Nathaniel Wienecke, Property Casualty Insurers Association of America

The insurance group made its presence felt in the debate over the National Flood Insurance Program, but its influence extends far and wide, even into tax reform.

Molly Wilkinson, Electronic Payments Coalition

Wilkinson — who's led the organization for two and half years — is using her industry bona fides to help the group's members obtain clarity and flexibility from Washington as consumers turn to electronic payments.

J. Stephen Zielezienski, American Insurance Association

Zielezienski has been with the organization for two decades; at the top of his agenda are changes to the Dodd-Frank financial reform law and the renewal of provisions dealing with terrorism risk and federal flood insurance.

The Hill
November 1, 2017

Top Lobbyists 2017: Grass roots

<http://thehill.com/business-a-lobbying/top-lobbyists/358125-top-lobbyists-2017-grass-roots>

Anna Aurilio, Environment America

Aurilio is an active voice against President Trump's environmental policy, harnessing the grassroots organizing power that has been Environment America's calling card.

Matt Bennett, Third Way

Channeling the spirit of President Clinton's centrist politics, Bennett promotes problem solving and a bipartisan approach at the prominent think tank.

Ken Cook, Environmental Working Group

The Environmental Working Group is coordinating with allies to oppose President Trump's policies, keeping its main focus on areas like toxic chemicals, agriculture and human health.

Chris Cox, National Rifle Association Institute for Legislative Action

Cox and the NRA have high hopes for action from Congress on their legislative priorities, including passage of a federal concealed carry law.

Steve Ellis, Taxpayers for Common Sense

With 18 years under his belt at Taxpayers for Common Sense, Ellis is one of the go-to experts when it comes to government waste, spending and debt.

Karen Hobert Flynn and Aaron Scherb, Common Cause

The group has been "holding power accountable" for nearly 50 years and remains a central player in the fight for good governance.

Lily Eskelsen García, National Education Association

The head of the nation's largest labor union has been a blunt force opposing Education Secretary Betsy DeVos's push for alternatives to public education such as charter and private schools.

Leo Gerard, United Steelworkers

Gerard has spent much of the past year pushing for changes to the North American Free Trade Agreement, calling it an opportunity to strengthen workers' rights and create jobs.

Bradley Gordon, American Israel Public Affairs Committee

Gordon is director of policy and government affairs at AIPAC, the guardian of the U.S.-Israel relationship that hosts an annual conference with some of the biggest names in politics.

Vanita Gupta, The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights

Gupta, who formerly led the Justice Department's Civil Rights Division, has had a busy first year defending the rights of immigrants, African-Americans, women and LGBT people, groups she says are under attack from the Trump administration.

Mary Kay Henry, Service Employees International Union

Henry is the first woman to lead SEIU, a powerful union that leverages its grass-roots network in fights over health care, immigration and racial justice.

Craig Holman, Public Citizen

The Trump administration has given Holman and Public Citizen new resolve in its quest for ethics reform; the group was seeking to "drain the swamp" long before it was a catchphrase.

Frederick Isasi and Shannon Attanasio, Families USA

Isasi took over the liberal health-care advocacy group this year, working alongside Attanasio in what became a nationwide campaign to stop ObamaCare repeal.

Fred Krupp, Environmental Defense Fund

Krupp is in his third decade at the helm of EDF, which has staunchly opposed spending cuts to the EPA. Addressing Congress in an op-ed in The Hill this fall, Krupp warned of "a crossroads moment for our country."

Nancy LeaMond, AARP

LeaMond leads government affairs and legislative campaigns for AARP. The group stood in the breach when Republicans tried to allow insurers to charge older customers five times as much as younger ones.

Elisa Massimino, Human Rights First

For nearly four decades, Massimino's group has carried the banner for human rights, pressing for U.S. officials to champion freedom around the globe. She has been part of the group's work for 26 years.

Meredith McGehee, Issue One

Issue One is working with former lawmakers and governors on both sides of the aisle to increase voter participation in the political process and create more transparency around political spending.

Bill McKibben and May Boeve, 350.org

350.org and its advocacy affiliate were an organizing force during the presidential campaign. They've been harnessing that same grass-roots energy while resisting President Trump's policies.

Ed Mierzwinski, U.S. Public Interest Research Group

Mierzwinski is a staunch defender of the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau; despite attempts by Congress to weaken the agency, it is as strong as ever.

Eric Mitchell, Bread for the World

Bread for the World trains churchgoers to engage members of Congress in promoting legislation to end world hunger.

Janet Murguia, UnidosUS

The organization formerly known as the National Council of La Raza is the largest and most visible Hispanic civil rights group. One of its top goals is increasing Latino political engagement through voter registration.

Matthew Myers, Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids

Myers has led the charge for enhanced Food and Drug Administration oversight of cigars and electronic cigarettes. He's also sued the agency, seeking a requirement that graphic warnings be used on cigarette packs and in tobacco ads.

Michael Needham, Heritage Action for America

Needham and Heritage Action tilt the scales in conservative politics, forcing members of the Republican Party to stick to their campaign promises.

Grover Norquist, Americans for Tax Reform

Norquist has been in his element championing the tax-reform push from President Trump and congressional Republicans, promoting it at events and on television; his imprimatur will undoubtedly be on the final legislation.

Tim Phillips, Americans for Prosperity

The advocacy group is putting the heat on Republicans and red-state Democrats to support a tax overhaul; it ratcheted up the pressure this summer with more than 1,000 meetings with members of Congress.

Melinda Pierce, Sierra Club

Blessed with the largest membership in the green advocacy space, the Sierra Club is putting all its weight into campaigning against the Trump administration's environmental policies.

Paul Rieckhoff, Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America

Rieckhoff, the founder and CEO of IAVA, has emerged as a leading voice on defense and veterans issues, weighing in on battles such as extending the VA Choice program and expanding the post-9/11 G.I. Bill.

Andrew Roth, Club for Growth

Roth, a former securities trader, has spent 14 years turning Club for Growth into a mainstay of conservative policy and electoral politics as its top lobbyist.

Joshua Saks, National Wildlife Federation

Saks marked his seventh year with NWF in 2017. He's been the group's go-to expert on the National Flood Insurance Program, testifying before a House Financial Services subcommittee on the issue this summer.

Lee Saunders, American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees

Saunders leads the nation's largest and fastest growing public services employees union, which has lobbied hard against the recent congressional attempts to repeal ObamaCare, as well as against the administration's tax package.

Tom Schatz, Citizens Against Government Waste

Known for their successful push to stop earmarks, Schatz and his right-leaning group keep sounding the alarm about wasteful spending in Washington.

Faiz Shakir, American Civil Liberties Union

Tasked with turning the ACLU's post-Trump fundraising surge into political action, Shakir, once a top staffer for former Senate Minority Leader Harry Reid (D-Nev.), has been called the most powerful Muslim in American politics.

Christopher Shelton, Communications Workers of America

Shelton is now in his second year as CWA president, guiding the union's 700,000 members as they square off against the telecom industry and President Trump's tax plan.

Tiernan Sittenfeld, League of Conservation Voters

Sittenfeld makes sure that the campaign-focused LCV is heard in the legislative arena as lawmakers battle over Arctic National Wildlife Refuge drilling and changes to the Antiquities Act.

Richard Trumka and Bill Samuel, AFL-CIO

While Trumka and Samuel have tried to influence President Trump's approach to the North American Free Trade Agreement, they have fought his appointments to the National Labor Relations Board. Now, the labor giant is ready for war against the GOP's tax plan.

Ana Unruh Cohen and Scott Slesinger, Natural Resources Defense Council

Unruh Cohen came to NRDC from Sen. Edward Markey's (D-Mass.) office in June, adding new talent to the environmental heavyweight. Slesinger is the group's legislative mastermind.

Fred Wertheimer, Democracy 21

Wertheimer is a tireless champion for reforming campaign finance laws. He has backed the investigation into Russian interference in the U.S. election, warning of "the corruption of our democracy."

Dennis Williams, United Auto Workers

Williams made sure that autoworkers have a seat at that table in the critical renegotiations over the North American Free Trade Agreement; the outcome of the talks could affect the industry for years to come.

Dylan Williams, J Street

Williams is J Street's vice president of government affairs, putting him at the heart of the group's battles in support of the Iran nuclear deal and more aggressive U.S. action against West Bank settlements.

Daily Record
October 31, 2017

Constitution Revision Commission reviewing proposals

<https://www.jaxdailyrecord.com/article/constitution-revision-commission-reviewing-proposals>

The Florida Constitution Revision Commission is considering about 50 proposals from the 37- member panel.

In addition, nearly 800 proposals were submitted by the public.

Ten substantive committees and two procedural committees have until May 10 to review the proposals to determine whether an amendment will be placed on the November 2018 general election ballot.

If an amendment receives at least 60 percent of the popular vote, it will become part of the state's constitution.

Jacksonville attorney Hank Coxe is chair of the Ethics and Elections Committee. It meets today in Tallahassee to hear presentations on proposed amendments related to campaign finance and regulation, ethics requirements for lobbyists and voting/civil rights issues.

One of the items on the committee's agenda today is a proposal by Commissioners Chris Smith, an attorney in Fort Lauderdale, and Tampa attorney Arthenia Joyner, a former state representative and state senator.

The proposal is to amend Section 4 of Article V of the state constitution to allow restoration of voting rights for certain felons upon completion of all terms of sentence, including parole and probation.

Those convicted of murder of a felony sexual offense would not have voting rights restored under the proposed amendment.

Coxe said the issue was brought up by the public at every stop on the commission's statewide "Florida Speaks, We Listen" tour that began in April. More than 2,000 proposed revisions and thousands of comments were received from residents.

"I was impressed by the diversity of the people who brought up this issue," Coxe said.

He said one of the arguments that proponents of restoring voting rights to felons after completion of sentences was that Florida is an "outlier" among states on the issue.

According to a study included in a staff report that will be submitted to the committee, Florida is one of only 12 states that impose voting restrictions on at least some categories of ex-offenders who have completed their sentence.

The commission maintains a website at flrc.gov that includes proposals submitted by the commissioners and by the public, meeting notices, agendas, transcripts and videos.

In addition, revisefl.com provides information about the constitution revision process and links to webpages dedicated to constitution revision maintained by The Florida Bar, Florida Chamber Foundation, Florida Association of Counties, Florida League of Cities and League of Women Voters of Florida.

Constitution Revision Commission committee proceedings are live streamed at thefloridachannel.org, where there also is an extensive video archive dating back to October 2015, when the 2017-18 commission was in the planning stages.

San Francisco Chronicle
October 31, 2017

Private prisons firm to lobby, campaign against recidivism

<http://www.sfchronicle.com/news/crime/article/Private-prisons-firm-to-lobby-campaign-against-12319258.php>

The nation's largest private prison operator is announcing a stepped-up effort to lobby for government programs and policies to keep former inmates from returning behind bars, saying it doesn't want the repeat business burdening prisons nationwide.

CoreCivic also announced Tuesday that its campaign contributions would prioritize political candidates who seek to tackle recidivism, which has taxpayers paying for return tickets to prison. A Brookings Institution study shows it costs about \$80 billion a year to hold more than 2.1 million people in America's prisons and jails.

Critics have scoffed at CoreCivic's previous anti-recidivism promises, saying the private prisons industry relies on incarceration and cost-cutting to make money, so there's no incentive to try to keep inmates from ending up back in jail. Of the 405,000 prisoners released in 30 states in 2005, 77 percent were re-arrested within five years, and more than half returned to prison, a federal study found.

"A lot of folks would assume that we have a view that the status quo is fine, and that's just not our view," said Tony Grande, CoreCivic executive vice president and chief development officer. "We want to be a part of the solution."

The company said it also will lobby to protect employers who hire former inmates from negligent-hiring lawsuits; to support re-entry programs and their funding; and to support private recidivism programs in which governments only have to pay contractors if certain goals are met.

CoreCivic said it has only previously lobbied for its government contracts to run prisons, lease out jail space and hold immigrant detainees. The company says it doesn't lobby for or against policies that determine someone's incarceration. But it says helping inmates avoid follow-up trips to jail is a widely-supported policy area in which they can provide expertise.

CoreCivic is looking to build on efforts to improve its image after changing its name a year ago from Corrections Corporation of America and saying it would spend \$250 million on a network of community corrections centers to help keep people out of prison.

Alex Friedmann, managing editor of the prisoner rights publication Prison Legal News, said the announcement is about a public relations campaign and does nothing to promise to cut into profits or take executive pay cuts to reduce recidivism.

"These companies are first and foremost in the business of making money," Friedmann said. "They are not in the business of putting themselves out of business, which in theory, if they were really successful at reducing recidivism, is what would happen."

The company has an extensive lobbying operation that cost \$2.6 million in 2014 and \$1.5 million in 2015. CoreCivic also spent \$1.1 million in 2014 and \$781,800 in 2015 on political donations, according to company reports.

CoreCivic doesn't have a specific dollar goal to spend on lobbying for its new campaign. CoreCivic also said its lobbyists will note their efforts to gain policy changes in state and federal lobbying reports.

Before CoreCivic signs a campaign check, a political candidate's stances on what the company sees as four major recidivism issues would be taken into account. But Grande said there would no hard-and-fast rule on what's required to support a candidate.

Among concrete steps, CoreCivic said it will advocate for "ban the box" policies to keep employers from asking about a job applicant's criminal history until after an initial interview. "Ban the box" policies have been put in place for state workers in 29 states, while nine states have removed the conviction history question from private employer job applications, according to the National Employment Law Project.

The company said its own job application eliminated a box to check for criminal history in 2016, although some positions require questioning about certain crimes due to state and federal requirements and contractual terms.