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Onetime lobbyist for foreign governments helped plan a Pruitt trip to Australia

<https://www.myajc.com/news/onetime-lobbyist-for-foreign-governments-helped-plan-pruitt-trip-australia/LvEFSMvUZVYBdTksmXiqfO/>

A Washington consultant who was removed from President Donald Trump's transition team for using his business email address for government work played a central role last year in planning a trip to Australia for Scott Pruitt, the head of the Environmental Protection Agency, and then took steps to disguise his role, new documents show.

The consultant, Matthew C. Freedman, who is also a former lobbyist for foreign governments, runs his own corporate advisory firm and is treasurer of the American Australian Council, a group that helps promote business for U.S.-based companies in Australia. Two prominent members include Chevron and ConocoPhillips.

Though the Australia trip never happened — it was canceled after Hurricane Harvey devastated much of the Texas Gulf Coast — it shows a pattern in which Pruitt has repeatedly relied on people with clear business interests to shape the agenda of his foreign travel. Separately last year, a trip to Morocco was organized by a lobbyist who later was hired by Morocco as a \$40,000-a-month foreign agent to represent its interests abroad.

Freedman has spent decades as an international political consultant and lobbyist, starting in the 1980s as an employee of Paul Manafort when the two men worked together to help the embattled Philippine dictator Ferdinand Marcos.

Manafort later became Trump's campaign chairman, and many of his former lobbying associates entered Trump's orbit, with some remaining in influential positions well after Manafort resigned from the campaign amid scrutiny of his work for Russia-aligned Ukrainian politicians. Manafort has since been indicted on charges related to that work by the special counsel investigating Russian interference in the 2016 election.

Freedman worked on Trump's transition team in late 2016 on national security-related issues. He was removed after conducting government business using an email address associated with his consulting firm, Global Impact Inc., which fed the impression that he was using his position with the transition team to drum up business, according to an adviser to the transition.

More recently, Freedman has been working with Trump's new national security adviser, John R. Bolton, as an outside adviser, according to two people familiar with the arrangement. They said that Freedman is under consideration to become a special government employee for the National Security Council under Bolton's leadership, a position that would allow him to maintain his outside consulting business while working for the federal government.

Freedman declined to comment. A statement he provided to The New York Times from the American Australian Council said that the group had authorized him to have discussions with the EPA about the possible trip to Australia, "to further the mission" of the organization.

Pruitt still has the support of Trump, a top White House official said Tuesday, despite the fact that Pruitt faces 11 investigations into his spending and management practices at the EPA.

Jahan Wilcox, a spokesman for Pruitt, said the agency's staff was in charge of planning the Australia trip and Freedman's involvement began in mid-2017.

However, emails released recently under the Freedom of Information Act to the Sierra Club, which sued to obtain the documents, appear to contradict that. The emails indicate Freedman was involved in early March, just weeks after Pruitt was confirmed as the EPA chief, in coming up with reasons to justify a trip by Pruitt to Australia.

Rep. Don Beyer, D-Va., who has been critical of Pruitt's spending, said the emails help to document allegations raised by Pruitt's former chief of staff, Kevin Chmielewski, who had questioned Pruitt's travel spending before being pushed out of the agency earlier this year.

"Pruitt's trips began with Pruitt ordering staff to 'find me something to do' to justify his expensive travel," Beyer said, quoting Chmielewski. Beyer said that the emails "also reveal that lobbyists for energy companies and foreign governments acted as travel agents."

The Australian embassy said in a statement that it was unaware that Freedman had been working to arrange the trip, and that neither Freedman nor his company "has been engaged to represent Australia." The embassy added that the American Australian Council, for which Freedman serves as treasurer, "is an independent organization that does not represent the Australian government."

Freedman frequently discussed the possible Australia trip with another lobbyist, Richard Smotkin, who has long-standing ties to Pruitt. Smotkin also helped organize Pruitt's December trip to Morocco, and then four months later signed the \$40,000-a-month contract to represent an arm of the government of that North African country.

Michael Brune, executive director of the Sierra Club, said in a statement, "It's no wonder these emails had to be forced out by a court: They expose the fact that corporate lobbyists are orchestrating Pruitt's taxpayer-funded trips to push their dangerous agendas."

The emails with Freedman were among a collection of 6,337 pages of correspondence between corporate representatives and top political appointees at the EPA. Most were sent to Millan Hupp, a top political aide to Pruitt. Hupp also worked with Pruitt as a political assistant when he was Oklahoma's attorney general.

Hupp served as a gatekeeper for Pruitt with companies and organizations interested in getting on his calendar or inviting him to an event, the emails indicate. Those companies have included the coal producer Peabody Energy and Koch Industries, the conglomerate controlled by the billionaire brothers David and Charles Koch, as well as dozens of others, with a particular emphasis on fossil-fuel-related firms and chemical industry and agriculture groups such as the American Farm Bureau.

Freedman is not registered as a lobbyist for the government of Australia, nor is he currently registered to lobby on behalf of any foreign or domestic clients in the United States, according to records on file with Congress and the Department of Justice. They show that a now-inactive firm he had formed with Manafort was last registered to lobby in the late 1990s, when it represented the government of Nigeria and the Argentine politician Alberto Pierrri.

Freedman's associates say he continues to advise international clients in various capacities that do not trigger lobbying disclosure requirements.

In the emails, Freedman offered Hupp a series of suggestions as to whom Pruitt could meet with on the trip to Australia. Freedman said he had already been talking to top government officials there to get the planning started.

"I've been in direct contact with the Minister in Aus, and we will be speaking with his senior staffer (Cosi) who is the lead from their side on Monday night," Freedman wrote to Hupp in late June, as the planning for the trip got underway. "Also, Jim Carouso, the Charge at the US Emb in Canberra is a close personal friend and would likely have good inputs, but I want to wait a bit before i contact him."

In a separate email, he suggested Pruitt meet with top Australian officials including Foreign Minister Julie Bishop and Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull. And he went on to suggest topics that could be discussed at the meeting, including "the current US Australian environmental agreements that are currently in place and whether they should be changed or updated or canceled or replaced."

Freedman placed a condition on the assistance he was providing: His involvement should not be disclosed. "Rick and I will be present but not listed as members of the delegation," Freedman wrote, referring to Smotkin.

Hupp's input in these email exchanges was short, with notes back to Freedman like "Sounds good. We will plan for Monday morning," in response to a request in July from Freedman to discuss the Australia trip.

The exchanges showed an awareness that traveling to Australia would have its complexities, given that Pruitt is a climate change skeptic.

"There are challenges to a visit," Freedman wrote in one March 2017 memo, as the debate over the trip first started. "It would highlight the Australian Government aggressive support for policies that may not be in sync with the Trump Administration, and the strong financial role played by the Australian Government in protecting the environment."

Later, on July 18, Freedman wrote to Hupp to say that Pruitt should be prepared for a "confused and angry group of Aussies" who were likely to disagree with Trump's policies.

On climate change specifically, Freedman wrote that he had been in touch with the executive director of the Institute of Public Affairs, an Australian think tank that he described as being “aligned with the Trump vision on various issues” including coal and deregulation. Freedman said he planned to suggest more people Pruitt should meet through that organization.

The emails released to the Sierra Club also provide further documentation of the role that Smotkin played in setting up Pruitt’s December visit to Morocco. Hupp turned to Smotkin in September to set up a meeting with the Moroccan ambassador to the United States.

“Would you be so kind as to pass along these three dates as potential for a meeting with the Moroccan Minister?” Hupp wrote to Smotkin. He agreed to do so, and wrote back to correct the title: “Will do. It is the ambassador.”

Though the trip to Australia was ultimately canceled, vouchers previously released by the EPA show that two aides and three security officials spent about \$45,000 traveling there to set up meetings and prepare for Pruitt’s arrival.

Daily Beast
May 2, 2018

Trump’s Turbulent Tariff Policy Has Been Nirvana for K Street

<https://www.thedailybeast.com/trumps-turbulent-tariff-policy-has-been-nirvana-for-k-street>

This past winter, a subsidiary of a Chinese state-owned chemical company needed help fending off the possibility of new sanctions from the Trump administration on their solar industry. So they did what any smart company would do: They hired the firm reportedly comprised of D.C.’s best-connected lobbyists.

The company, REC Americas LLC, is a subsidiary of a subsidiary of a subsidiary of ChemChina, the Chinese pesticide behemoth that made a whopping \$45 billion in revenue in 2015, per The Wall Street Journal. And the firm is Ballard Partners, helmed by two Trump World insiders: Brian Ballard, a key member of Trump’s 2016 fundraising team, and Susie Wiles.

In the first three months of 2018, according to disclosures forms, REC Americas LLC dolled out \$50,000 to Ballard Partners to lobby the White House and the office of the U.S. Trade Representatives over solar panel policy and trade tariffs. And that wasn’t the only company turning to the firm for help on that specific matter. In the preceding months, Ballard signed two other solar clients to help on trade policy issues and the Trump administration trade actions in particular. Utah-based Vivint Solar and San Francisco’s Sunrun both inked deals with Ballard on Nov. 15, 2017, a day after the U.S. International Trade Commission unveiled recommendations for solar tariffs.

The boomlet for Ballard, which didn’t respond to questions about its work, represents a growing trend in the influence-peddling industry. Across the board, some of the world’s largest companies and trade associations are scrambling to comply with, be exempted from, or otherwise help shape the Trump administration’s ad hoc tariff policies on various foreign imports.

The result has been an explosion in the amounts of money spent to influence the U.S. government—including Congress, the White House, and various federal agencies—on trade policy issues. A Daily Beast analysis of lobbying disclosure records indicates that money spent to influence trade policy skyrocketed from the fourth quarter of 2017 to the first quarter of 2018, when the Trump administration imposed tariffs on imported steel, aluminum, washing machines, solar panels, and various Chinese goods.

In 2017, all federal lobbyists that reported working on “tariffs” brought in a total of \$10.2 million per quarter, on average. In the first quarter of 2018, they were collectively paid more than \$90 million. Those that reported working on a singular “tariff” reported bringing in \$70.3 million in Q1 2018, compared to a quarterly average of just \$32.6 million in 2017.

Chinese firms are far from the only ones looking to shape U.S. trade policy. The top lobbying clients engaging on the issue this year include some of the largest U.S. companies and trade associations, including tech companies Amazon and Google, oil giants Chevron and Exxon Mobil, and the leading American business lobby, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

The massive increase in lobbying expenditures reflects an odd side effect of Trump’s impetuous governing style. A man who pledged to drain the swamp is dramatically contributing to it by having little in the way of straightforward policy strategy. Instead of a singular announcement of a new tariff policy, the administration has teased it out for weeks. Instead of a declared objective, they’ve offered several. By imposing blanket U.S. import restrictions and then exempting certain countries on an ad hoc basis, the Trump administration has dramatically increased financial incentives to try to sway U.S. policymakers on specific trade questions.

Just this week, the administration announced that it would delay the implementation of steel and aluminum tariffs on goods imported from Canada, Mexico, and the European Union. But those U.S. trading partners said the delay hardly granted a reprieve, and instead simply fueled policy uncertainty for companies shipping billions of dollars worth of goods to American markets.

For companies operating in that political limbo, the ability to sway U.S. policymakers—or at least be apprised of their thinking—isn’t just valuable, it’s essential. That’s the sort of expertise that politically connected K Street firms, especially ones close to administration power brokers, offer at considerable rates.

The Richmond Register
May 2, 2018

Lobbyist spending tops \$8.4 million in Kentucky legislature

http://www.richmondregister.com/news/lobbyist-spending-tops-million-in-kentucky-legislature/article_3774f89a-4da2-11e8-ae5e-6bc2be1cf948.html

In just three months, companies and special interest groups spent more than \$8.4 million trying to influence Kentucky lawmakers, the third straight year lobbying spending has broken records in the Bluegrass State.

But some of the biggest spenders had little to show for their efforts as lawmakers either passed laws they opposed or did not act on legislation they supported.

Spending totals were released this week by the Legislative Ethics Commission covering the first three months of 2018. Of the 60 days lawmakers were in session, just two days were in April.

The top three spenders were all focused on one issue: cigarette taxes. At 60 cents per pack, Kentucky had one of the lowest cigarette taxes in the country.

That coupled with both the highest smoking rate and the highest cancer rate in the country. Groups like the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce and the Foundation for a Healthy Kentucky asked lawmakers to raise the tax by \$1 per pack. Together, those two groups spent \$270,293 on lobbying. They argued the tax increase would save lives by discouraging smoking.

But Altria, the parent company of tobacco giant Phillip Morris USA, spent a whopping \$332,000. That's more than double the amount spent by any other group. The company had history on its side. For decades, Kentucky was one of the top tobacco producing states, and lawmakers were hesitant to raise taxes on one of the state's key economic drivers.

Lawmakers eventually agreed to raise taxes by 50 cents per pack. Republican Gov. Matt Bevin vetoed the increase, but lawmakers voted to override him.

"We didn't know until the end that we would be successful. And so it was certainly not a slam dunk," said Kentucky Chamber of Commerce President and CEO Dave Adkisson, whose parents grew up on tobacco farms. "Kentucky has severe health problems, and this is one step toward doing something about it."

The campaign got a boost from the Foundation for a Healthy Kentucky, which spent most of its money on an advertising campaign targeting lawmakers and their constituents. It included billboards in Frankfort for lawmakers to see every day, plus ads in their districts urging people to call and ask them to raise the cigarette tax.

"We are the cancer capital of the nation. I think that message really rang through," said Bonnie Hackbarth, spokeswoman for the Foundation for a Healthy Kentucky.

Altria spokesman Brian May said the company engaged lawmakers on a number of cigarette tax proposals on behalf of retailers, growers and "adult tobacco consumers." He said the company "transparently reported" its spending.

Other big spenders included utility companies LG&E and KU Energy who spent \$116,858 urging lawmakers to pass legislation including House Bill 227. That bill would have let utility companies pay less for excess energy generated from customers who have solar panels installed at their homes. Solar companies opposed the bill, and lawmakers ultimately did not pass it.

Lawmakers also passed House Bill 191 over the objection of 1-800-Contacts, which spent \$70,906 trying to block it. The bill established new rules for companies that offer eye exams on mobile phones. The company argued it would make it difficult to do business in Kentucky. The bill passed the legislature with zero "no" votes and Bevin signed it into law in March

The Herald
May 2, 2018

Bills target corrupt SC lawmakers, lobbyists who use their posts for profit

<http://www.heraldonline.com/news/state/south-carolina/article210277854.html>

Anti-racketeering proposals before the S.C. General Assembly would target corrupt lawmakers and lobbyists who illegally buy and sell influence, supporters said Wednesday.

"This building is rampant with corruption," Lt. Gov. Kevin Bryant, R-Anderson, said at the State House, joined by the anti-racketeering bill's sponsors.

One floor up, in the great lobby that separates the S.C. House and state Senate, dozens of lobbyists, and current and former lawmakers milled about talking shop.

However, Bryant said the S.C. Anti-Racketeering Act would target that business as usual, giving prosecutors a law to use to target conspiracies to buy and sell influence.

The proposed law, introduced as separate House and Senate bills last week, has no chance of passing this year.

If the proposal becomes law, it will need to be accompanied by substantial funding to pay for racketeering investigations, which are expensive — costing hundreds of thousands of dollars, Bryant and state Sen. Tom Davis, R-Beaufort, acknowledged.

Bryant, who is running for governor as a Republican, specifically cited the ongoing State House corruption investigation, being conducted by state special prosecutor David Pascoe, as the reason he is supporting the anti-racketeering bill.

"There's a godfather running this government, and his name is Richard Quinn," Bryant told reporters, mentioning the GOP political godfather who has been a focal point of Pascoe's investigation. Had the Anti-Racketeering Act been in place, Pascoe's investigation, now in its fourth year, would have gone faster or "would not have taken place," Bryant said.

Quinn, a longtime, Columbia public relations consultant and political strategist, has denied any wrongdoing. However, last year, his public relations firm, Richard Quinn & Associates, entered a guilty plea to failing to register as a lobbyist and paid a \$3,000 fine.

Quinn also reportedly testified before the state grand jury recently. His testimony, made in secret, is not publicly known.

At one time, Quinn's firm represented a host of South Carolina's most powerful institutions and GOP politicians — from SCANA to BlueCross to the University of South Carolina to Gov. Henry McMaster to S.C. Attorney General Alan Wilson to U.S. Sen. Lindsey Graham.

Quinn's son, former state Rep. Rick Quinn, R-Lexington, pleaded guilty to misdemeanor misconduct in office, resigned his office, paid a \$1,000 fine and agreed to do 500 hours of community service. Rick Quinn has said he committed only a technical violation — failing to report income.

In courtroom statements and filings, Pascoe has said the Quinns were at the center of a wideranging, hidden, moneymaking scheme to peddle influence at the State House.

Rick Quinn on Wednesday criticized both Bryant and Pascoe.

Bryant, a pharmacist, has voted on issues where he had financial conflicts of interest, said Quinn, adding, "I recused myself 49 times" where he would have had a conflict of interest.

Quinn also noted Circuit Court Judge Carmen Mullen rejected Pascoe's broad allegations against the Quinns, noting the prosecutor had not proved them at trial.

On June 4, longtime RQ&A client state Sen. John Courson, R-Richland, is scheduled to go on trial on charges of receiving kickbacks from Richard Quinn's firm. Two other former GOP lawmakers, state Reps. Jim Harrison of Columbia and Tracy Edge of Myrtle Beach, also face charges of secretly being on Richard Quinn's payroll while they were lawmakers.

Lincoln Journal Star
May 2, 2018

Lobbying efforts top \$17.4 million in Nebraska last year, watchdog group says

http://journalstar.com/news/state-and-regional/nebraska/lobbying-efforts-top-million-in-nebraska-last-year-watchdog-group/article_5f54bae8-9fdd-50e1-9114-e7e52d8562d8.html

Special-interest groups spent a record \$17.4 million on lobbyists and lobbying activity at the Nebraska Legislature in 2017, according to a new report from Common Cause Nebraska.

The government watchdog group said the number of organizations and government entities deploying lobbyists to the Capitol each year also reached an all-time high last year.

There were 377 compensated lobbyists in 2017, up from 364 the year before, working for 550 principals, or groups that hire them, according to reports filed with the state.

"Some would argue, 'Sure, that number of lobbyists would represent every public concern,'" wrote Jack Gould, issues chair for Common Cause. "But that is not necessarily the case. Most professional lobbying firms work for those who can pay. It is the nature of the business."

For the second year in a row, the Nebraska Chamber of Commerce, which represents 1,500 dues-paying member businesses across the state, was the biggest spender on lobbyists and lobbying activity, up from \$218,000 in 2016 to \$242,000 in 2017, Common Cause reported.

Barry Kennedy, president of the state chamber, said the organization's top priority is advocacy for small business, as well as different sectors of the economy such as manufacturing and the service economy.

"We survey our members on a regular basis and they continue to tell us that they are satisfied with the service that they get," Kennedy said. "That advocacy is exactly what they hire us to do."

The Nebraska Chamber of Commerce employs four in-house registered lobbyists to advocate for both the group's member businesses, as well as for local chamber affiliates with state senators and members of the executive branch, Kennedy said.

While the state chamber was the biggest spender in both 2016 and 2017, the League of Nebraska Municipalities has accrued the largest five-year total, Common Cause said, spending more than \$925,000 on lobbying.

Topping the list of income received by lobbying firms was Mueller Robak, which received \$1.4 million in 2017 and \$7.1 million over the last five years. Radcliffe and Associates topped \$1.1 million last year, Common Cause said.

The report, published Wednesday, also takes aim at lobbyist activity on behalf of Nebraska's public school system, as well as the University of Nebraska.

Gould said while the state-aid formula for public schools largely remains unintelligible to Nebraska taxpayers, the state's largest school districts have turned to lobbyists to advocate on their behalf to the disadvantage of smaller districts.

Together, school districts have spent \$2.4 million on lobbying activity over the last five years.

"Those school districts that have the funds to invest in lobbying exert greater influence, while those districts lacking in wealth find themselves on the outside looking in," Gould wrote. "The lobby does not work for all the children, only those children in the districts that can pay."

Omaha Public Schools was the largest K-12 public school lobbyist for the fifth straight year, followed by districts in Millard, Bellevue, Ralston and Lincoln.

In addition to John Neal, assistant superintendent for governmental relations, Lincoln Public Schools uses an outside firm to advocate on its behalf at the Legislature and keep senators and their staffs apprised of the work the district is doing, as well as the potential impact of proposed legislation.

Neal said he doesn't think larger school districts have an inherent advantage over smaller districts when it comes to influence among lawmakers.

"I think a wide range of voices, including school boards, teachers, administrators, small schools, large schools, medium-sized schools, different education advocacy groups, ESUs, and others, all work together as much as possible to do what is best for students," Neal said.

"All of those groups are represented at the Capitol, but they also work together on hundreds of different issues throughout the year," he added.

Common Cause said in addition to rising compensation for lobbyists, the amount spent on entertainment has also quickly risen in recent years, up from \$272,000 in 2013 to \$467,000 last year.

"In Nebraska, the lobbyist's tools appear unlimited," Gould said. "Not only can the lobbyist wine, dine, and entertain, but they can donate to political campaigns, host campaign fundraisers, and solicit campaign funds from their clients.

"With that tool kit, the lobbyist can open nearly any door."

One tool Common Cause highlighted in its report was gifts of tickets to athletic contests given from the University of Nebraska to state senators on both sides of the aisle in the officially nonpartisan Legislature.

Because state law requires senators to report gifts greater than \$100, Common Cause found 13 lawmakers who received season tickets to Husker football games in 2017 — a value of \$798 apiece.

Other senators were gifted a pair of tickets valued at \$150 to view Husker games in President Hank Bounds' skybox at Memorial Stadium.

NU spokeswoman Melissa Lee said the university has a "long practice of inviting legislators to campus events as part of our efforts to build relationships," but that it follows state laws related to lobbying activity.

The university also registered six lobbyists in 2017 for a total of \$141,900, as the Legislature mulled over state appropriation cuts, and hired Peetz & Co. as an outside lobbyist firm using funds from the NU Foundation, Lee said.

**The Kansas City Star
May 2, 2018**

Greitens' financial forms detail travel paid for by big donor, show new LLC

<http://www.kansascity.com/news/politics-government/article210251384.html>

A construction company owned by one of Gov. Eric Greitens' biggest financial backers spent nearly \$60,000 in 2017 to pay for the governor to travel across the country, according to disclosure paperwork filed Tuesday with the Missouri Ethics Commission.

The governor's personal financial disclosure forms also reveal that he owns a company called J&J Escape LLC. He used the company to buy a lakeside home in Innsbrook, an eastern Missouri resort community.

Greitens vowed when he took office to stop using the state plane for travel, arguing that it would save taxpayers' money. But critics worried that by relying instead on private and campaign funds to pay for

travel around the country, the governor would be able to avoid disclosing exactly who was picking up the tab.

He also signed an executive order on his first day in office banning himself and any members of his staff from accepting gifts from lobbyists.

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The lion's share of the cost of Greitens' 2017 travel included on his personal financial disclosure was picked up by Herzog Contracting Corp.

The company is owned by Stan Herzog, a St. Joseph businessman who gave Greitens' campaign \$650,000 in 2016. Herzog's company also owns a building in Jefferson City that houses Greitens' political nonprofit, A New Missouri Inc. Herzog is also close with U.S. Rep. Sam Graves and Missouri GOP Chairman Todd Graves.

Herzog's company paid for the governor to travel to Las Vegas for a Republican Jewish Coalition conference in February 2017, to the American Enterprise Institute World forum in Georgia in March 2017, to a Republican Governor's Association event in New Jersey in October 2017 and to Des Moines, Iowa, the same month to attend a campaign kickoff event for Iowa Gov. Kim Reynolds.

The company also spent an undisclosed amount on "in-state travel" in 2017 that was listed as a gift or honorarium.

Greitens' spokesman, Parker Briden, said in an email Tuesday evening that the reliance on donors for travel is part of the governor's commitment to "spending as few taxpayer dollars as possible on travel."

"To that end, the Governor's Office limited travel on state planes to a last resort, typically involving natural disasters, the Department of Public Safety, and funerals for fallen first responders," Briden said. "In a departure from past administrations, Governor Greitens' primary mode of transportation within the state is by car. For out of state travel, the Governor typically flies commercial or on aircrafts not paid for by tax dollars."

St. Louis-based Drury Development Corp. paid \$3,800 for Greitens' trip to Washington, D.C., for President Donald Trump's inauguration.

Also paying for Greitens' travel last year was Raj Mantena, chairman and founder of Integra Connect, a Florida-based health care technology company. He listed the travel as a gift or honorarium, so the value of the travel is not disclosed.

Cequel III, a St. Louis-based investment and management firm, spent nearly \$4,000 to send Greitens to Kansas for "meetings" and \$5,400 for a trip to Arkansas to attend a rally with former Gov. Mike Huckabee.

Nebraska Gov. Pete Ricketts spent \$15,293 to fly the entire Greitens family to Grand Island, Neb., to attend a campaign event.

J&J Escape

The governor's new disclosure form does not list any real estate holdings, but it does list a company called J&J Escape LLC under the governor's business holdings.

The company was incorporated on Jan. 17, 2017 — a week after Greitens was inaugurated — and Greitens' name appears nowhere on the articles of organization that were filed with the Missouri secretary of state's office.

But the governor is listed as the manager of the company for a deed of trust signed a month later after the purchase of a lakefront property in Innsbrook.

Among the reasons people use LLCs to buy real estate are to reduce liability and maintain privacy.

The deed lists the mailing address for Greitens' LLC as the St. Louis home address of Mark Bobak, an influential lawyer and close confidant of Greitens'.

Bobak, a former chief legal officer for Anheuser-Busch, serves on the board of directors of the CBX Corp., which owns Carrollton Bank, the Illinois-based bank that granted J&J Escape a \$675,000 loan for the purchase of the the \$750,000 Innsbrook property, a six-bedroom, fourbathroom resort home near a lake.

Public documents obtained by The Star confirmed that the Warren County tax collector sent the property tax bill for J&J Escape to Bobak's address.

"I served as his lawyer at the closing. I wanted to make sure his taxes were paid. I wanted to make sure they didn't get lost in the mail," Bobak said in a brief phone call.

He said that after receiving the taxes, he forwarded them to the governor and first lady. The bill was paid on time by a personal check drawn on a Carrollton Bank account and signed by Sheena Greitens, the governor's wife.

Bobak and his wife were major donors to the charity Greitens founded, The Mission Continues. Although he was never on the campaign payroll, he was an influential adviser during the governor's successful 2016 campaign.

The lawyer contributed nearly \$27,000 to Greitens and served as co-chair of the 2016 campaign and also of Greitens' inauguration planning committee. He was also one of a handful of "benefactors" that the governor says helped pay for inaugural festivities, although Greitens has refused to disclose how much donors contributed.

Bobak has been seen leaving the St. Louis courtroom with Greitens' attorneys in the run-up to the governor's May 14 criminal trial.