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Trump's Trade Moves Spark Lobbying Blitz

<https://finance.yahoo.com/news/trump-trade-moves-spark-lobbying-080000214.html>

U.S. President Donald Trump speaks during an event to mark the sixth-month anniversary of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act passage in the East Room of the White House in Washington, D.C.

The tough U.S. trade stance has fueled a lobbying blitz, yet seasoned Washington hands are finding that their old playbooks are of little use in talking the Trump administration out of imposing a broad range of tariffs.

Registrations to lobby on trade issues have surged since President Donald Trump took office. But conventional influence tactics employed by K Street veterans, such as cajoling congressional leaders to pressure the White House, have proven less effective under Trump, according to more than a dozen lobbyists.

That's due in part to the president's impulsive, go-it-alone style, which often cuts out lawmakers and leaves few paths to his decision makers. Lobbyists said they're frustrated and searching for other ways to reach the decider-in-chief.

"No one knows the answer, to be honest," said Gary Horlick, a Washington trade lawyer. "I've been in meetings that normally would have been, 'You take chairman so-and-so, I'll work on ranking member such-and-such,' and now the meetings are, 'What do we think Trump might be interested in' -- not intellectually, but like, 'What will he see?'"

Trump entered the White House vowing to renegotiate the North American Free Trade Agreement and has pursued a series of shifts and changes on trade, bringing more work for lobbyists.

Concern on K Street

Lobbying registrations on trade issues during the first quarter were the second-highest since 2010, behind only the first quarter of 2017, according to a Bloomberg Government analysis. There also were 257 activity filings in the first three months of 2018 from 220 companies and associations that identified tariff cases as a lobbying issue.

Trump imposed tariffs on steel and aluminum imports in March on grounds of protecting national security, even though the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and industry groups urged him not to pursue them because of the threat of a trade war.

The president also is moving ahead with duties on \$34 billion in Chinese goods that will take effect July 6, in response to allegations of intellectual property theft, with the threat of tariffs on billions more if China retaliates as promised. That's despite overwhelming opposition to duties from the business community, including a coordinated effort by a coalition of more than 100 trade groups, and jitters in the U.S. stock market whenever the tariff saber is rattled.

Ferris Bueller & Friends

The key administration players on trade are Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross, U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer and White House trade adviser Peter Navarro, said Trent Lott, the former Senate majority leader. He lobbies for Squire Patton Boggs LP on behalf of clients including the Solar Energy Industries Association and NLMK USA, which is seeking an exclusion from steel import tariffs.

But while lobbyists are still pursuing meetings with the usual targets, reaching Trump's inner circle doesn't always work, because he's been willing to overrule aides -- as when the White House announced on May 29 the duties on Chinese goods were proceeding, only days after Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said they were "on hold."

"There's no question that the president has his hand on all these trade moves and activities," Lott said, adding that trade is something that Trump "has strong feelings" about.

Some lobbyists have turned to the media to convey their message.

The president is known to regularly watch the morning news show "Fox & Friends," and the National Retail Federation ran a commercial on the program in May, hoping that he'd see it, said David French, the group's senior vice president for government relations. The ad featured actor and economist Ben Stein, reprising his role as the economics teacher from the 1986 comedy "Ferris Bueller's Day Off," arguing that duties are "B-A-D Economics."

Consumer Technology Association President and Chief Executive Officer Gary Shapiro went on Fox Business Network to try to influence the White House, and the group has tried approaches that include a digital campaign, which generated more than 1,300 comments to the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative and 6,700 emails to state and federal elected officials.

"The best thing we can all do is just try every avenue and eventually something, hopefully, will stick," said Sage Chandler, the group's vice president for international trade.

Customized Tweets

Some lobbyists said they even craft tweets on trade-related issues in Trump's Twitter style, in hopes they'll reach the president.

One of the biggest adjustments for lobbyists with Trump compared with previous presidents is that while actions by other administrations were taken at face value, what Trump says and does may just be meant as leverage, said Frank Samolis, partner and co-chairman of the International Trade Group at

Squire Patton Boggs. That's made it a challenge to interpret Trump for clients making long-term investment decisions, he said.

"It certainly is a new world with Trump," Samolis said. "People that are used to traditional trade lobbying are forced to recalibrate."

Lobbyists also fear that political considerations -- like the desire to appear tough on trading partners -- might drive decisions more than economics, one lobbyist said. And Trump is seen as a wild card who's as likely to send policy makers back to the drawing board if he doesn't like their advice as he is to double or triple down on measures he approves.

We're Listening

The administration has listened as companies and business groups sought exclusions from the metal tariffs and to have products added to or removed from the list of Chinese imports targeted for duties, said Ron Sorini, a trade lobbyist and former chief textile negotiator at the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative. His clients include Vista Outdoor Inc. and Newell Brands Inc., which had goods removed from the duty list.

But Sorini said he tells his clients to assume tariffs will be imposed and hope for a "pleasant surprise," and he also doesn't "promise anyone we're going to get directly in front of President Trump."

Nobody's quite figured how to best influence an unpredictable president, said Lee Drutman, a senior fellow at New America, a Washington think tank, who's written about lobbying.

"A lot of companies are struggling to figure out, how do you convince this guy?" Drutman said. "He seems to be -- 'whimsical' would be a generous word, 'capricious,' 'mercurial' would probably be more appropriate -- and there's really no playbook."

Providence Journal July 1, 2018

Raimondo says Brown has ties to oil-industry lobbyist

<http://www.providencejournal.com/news/20180701/raimondo-says-brown-has-ties-to-oil-industry-lobbyist>

Alleged Russian ties have surfaced in the Rhode Island campaign for governor.

Gov. Gina Raimondo's campaign is calling on primary opponent Matt Brown to disclose donors to the Washington-based nonprofit Global Zero, which he co-founded, after tracing the group's ties to an oil-industry lobbyist who advised candidate Donald Trump on foreign policy.

Global Zero is focused, according to its website, on "a world without nuclear weapons." Brown, a former Rhode Island secretary of state, co-founded the group after dropping out of the 2006 U.S. Senate race and leaving the Rhode Island political stage for more than a decade.

Raimondo's questions surround Richard Burt, the U.S. chairman of Global Zero who is described on the organization's website as "an accomplished U.S. diplomat with special expertise in the area of nuclear weapons" and more recently, managing director at the consulting firm McLarty Associates.

Relying on news articles about Burt's political and consulting activities published by Politico, The Guardian and the Washington Post, Raimondo's Deputy Campaign Manager David Ortiz wrote: "Burt, who received \$365,000 in 2016 to lobby for a Russian-controlled natural gas pipeline while also advising Donald Trump's campaign, worked closely with Brown on Global Zero's leadership team for at least nine years."

"The fact that oil and gas lobbyist and Trump adviser Richard Burt represents Global Zero on the world stage raises serious questions about the organization, its donors and who exactly paid Matt Brown's \$300,000 a year salary in Washington, D.C.

"Brown has pledged not to take oil money in his campaign; the voters deserve to know if he held himself to the same standard in his last job. Matt Brown needs to make public the names of Global Zero's donors."

Ron Knox, a spokesman for Matt Brown's campaign, responded to Raimondo's allegations Sunday evening.

"This is another false attack by the increasingly desperate campaign of Governor Raimondo, whose repeated scandals, corruption and devastating mismanagement that left tens of thousands hungry and without healthcare have left her unelectable," he said in an email to The Journal. "Governor Raimondo is desperately flinging false attacks in order to rescue her sinking campaign. It won't work. Rhode Island voters know what she's done — and they know they can't afford four more years of it.

"Governor Raimondo continues to refuse to give back the more than \$11,000 she has pocketed from General Dynamics, which is actively helping the Trump Administration's agenda of interning migrants and asylum seekers at the US-Mexico border.

"She has also refused to answer questions about the reported \$200,000 she collected at a fundraiser put on by board members of Partners HealthCare, even though her administration has ultimate oversight of Partners' takeover of Care New England and with it, our local health care system," he said in the email to The Journal.

Brown has renewed his call for Raimondo to disclose the donors at the recent "\$1,000-a-plate fundraiser in Boston co-hosted by Jack Connors, the chairman emeritus of Partners HealthCare, and Anne Finucane, another board member of the out-of-state mega hospital group whose takeover of Care New England will ultimately come before state regulators for approval."

The June 18 response from Raimondo campaign spokeswoman Emily Samsel: "No one needs a lesson from Matt Brown, who disappeared after his last campaign collapsed when he was playing campaign finance games, and then stiffed his campaign vendors.

"Regarding Care New England, the Governor believes regulators and the Attorney General need to review the proposed merger with an eye on protecting healthcare in Rhode Island."

State law requires all of the candidates to identify every donor who gave \$100 or more. The next round of reports to the state Board of Elections are due at the end of this month, There is no similar requirement for donors to nonprofits such as Global Zero.

Ortiz based his statements, in part, on an October 2016 Politico story headlined: "Lobbyist advised Trump campaign while promoting Russian pipeline." The subhead: "Richard Burt helped shape the candidate's first foreign-policy speech while lobbying on behalf of a Moscow-controlled gas company."

"In the first two quarters of 2016," the story said, "the firm of former Reagan administration official Richard Burt received \$365,000 for work he and a colleague did to lobby for a proposed natural-gas pipeline owned by a firm controlled by the Russian government, according to congressional lobbying disclosures reviewed by POLITICO.

"The pipeline, opposed by the Polish government and the Obama administration, would complement the original Nord Stream, allowing more Russian gas to reach central and western European markets while bypassing Ukraine and Belarus, extending Putin's leverage over Europe."

Ledger-Enquirer
June 29, 2018

Campaign contributions to top candidates raise questions

<https://www.ledger-enquirer.com/news/state/georgia/article214072704.html>

A newspaper's analysis of campaign contributions to the two Republican candidates vying to become Georgia's next governor details donations that critics say raise ethical questions for both state officials.

The Atlanta Journal-Constitution found donations of more than \$325,000 to Secretary of State Brian Kemp's campaign from people tied to licensees and companies regulated by his office.

The newspaper found contributions of more than \$240,000 to Lt. Gov. Casey Cagle's campaign before the beginning of the 2018 legislative session from lobbyists, members of their family or their firms, as well as another \$40,000 donated after the session ended.

Kemp and Cagle are locked in a contentious runoff for the Republican nomination for governor that will be decided July 24. The winner will face Democrat Stacey Abrams in November.

Kemp and his campaign are the subject of an ethics complaint filed by Atlanta-area attorney Simon Bloom, who the newspaper reported is a Cagle supporter, citing examples of contractors, investment advisers and an auctioneering firm that donated to his campaign.

Critics say that donations to Kemp by people with ties to businesses under the oversight of his licensing or securities divisions could undermine the credibility of one of the state's top regulators. Two previous secretaries of state told the newspaper they had returned similar donations.

A legal loophole exists where regulated companies are not permitted to make such donations, but individuals at those companies are allowed to contribute.

Kemp spokesman Ryan Mahoney told the newspaper that Kemp has gone "above and beyond" and has refunded a number of donations by regulated companies.

"Given that Kemp is a man of integrity," Mahoney said, "he decided to not take contributions from regulated businesses. Our legal and compliance team spend a lot of man hours to screen these checks. We've refunded hundreds of thousands of dollars because of Kemp's character."

One donor to Kemp's gubernatorial campaign told the newspaper that he did not expect anything in return.

Cagle's campaign meanwhile has received support among lobbyists in the state.

Cagle, who is known as a political tactician that can get things done in the state legislature, received donations from about 85 lobbyists or people with close ties to lobbyists before the 2018 session, according to the newspaper. His four Republican opponents in last month's primary had about a dozen lobby supporters combined.

Cagle also received at least an additional 20 contributions from lobbyists, worth about \$40,000, after the session.

Sara Henderson, the executive director of Common Cause Georgia, a government watchdog group, told the newspaper the donations show a pattern of Cagle putting "moneyed interests" above voters.

"Anybody is welcome to donate to my campaign. We don't filter. But I have a very long record of standing up for what I believe in and for what is right for the citizens of our state," Cagle told the newspaper.

"I hope that people contribute to me for the sole purpose that they buy into our vision and the fact that we have a proven, consistent conservative record. If they're thinking anything different, then they're going to be disappointed."