

Conflict of Interest, Corporations and the Environment: More than 160 Groups Urge Senate to Reject David Bernhardt for Top Interior Post

By [Center For Biological Diversity](#)

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More than 160 conservation groups sent a [letter](#) to U.S. senators today urging them to oppose the nomination of fossil fuel lobbyist David Bernhardt as Interior secretary, citing his efforts to enrich corporations at the expense of the environment.

Bernhardt's confirmation hearing is set for Thursday before the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources.

"He consistently puts private profit above the public interest, crafting policies to benefit past clients and rolling back longstanding rules to protect habitat, imperiled species and public health," the letter says. "David Bernhardt's conflicts of interest, industry ties and questionable judgment make him ill-suited to lead the Department, and his confirmation would place our most cherished natural and cultural resources at even greater risk."

"Bernhardt has already shown us that he's the most dangerous person to be in charge of our public lands and endangered species," said Randi Spivak, public lands director at the Center for Biological Diversity. "He puts industry profits before public interest and the environment every single time. If Bernhardt is confirmed, his contempt for our natural world will become even more entrenched in the Interior Department. Any senator who votes to confirm him will be culpable."

Bernhardt's list of former clients includes Eni Petroleum, Noble Energy, National Ocean Industries Association, Cadiz, Inc. and Haliburton Energy Services — the same industries he's charged with regulating. Bernhardt has played a key role in rolling back protections for endangered species, migratory birds and sage grouse. He's working to open the nation's coasts to oil drilling and is greatly expanding fracking on public lands.

"The Trump administration's dirty industry favor factory is working harder than ever with the nomination of David Bernhardt," said Martin Hayden, vice president of policy and legislation at Earthjustice. "As a lobbyist, Bernhardt's client roster reads like a who's who of the worst corporate polluters in the United States, from Taylor Energy to Halliburton. The Senate should reject this industry-sponsored hack and send him out through the revolving door of Washington for the last time."

"To confirm Bernhardt is to hand over the future of our public lands, wildlife,

waters and everything they support to a man who made his living for decades attacking all of that to benefit the biggest industrial polluters on the planet. His sorry record in protecting America's natural resources, wildlife and waters makes Bernhardt uniquely unfit for the job, and lawmakers should reject his nomination," said John Bowman, managing director of government affairs at the Natural Resources Defense Council.

"David Bernhardt is a prime example of the culture of special-interest, big-money, influence peddling surrounding this administration," said Leda Huta, executive director of the Endangered Species Coalition. "If we are serious about protecting and stewarding our nation's wildlife and public lands, then the Senate needs to reject Bernhardt."

"David Bernhardt is a fossil fuel industry hack who spent his career protecting corporate polluters," said Nicole Ghio, fossil fuels program manager for Friends of the Earth. "His industry conflicts of interest make him absolutely unfit to lead the Department of the Interior. The Senate must reject Bernhardt's nomination to protect our public health and public lands."

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