

'Toxic to Democracy': New Project Reveals Corrupting Web of Trump Empire

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Global Research, September 07, 2017

[Common Dreams](#) 5 September 2017

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [History](#)

Public Citizen on Tuesday [launched a new project](#) aimed at documenting President Donald Trump's [vast entanglement](#) of business interests and highlighting "the urgent need for the president to disclose his tax returns so Americans can determine the extent of his business holdings and how they may be affecting his policy decisions."

"Our current president has two jobs: leader of the free world and owner of hundreds of business entities worldwide. That combination is toxic for democracy," Michael Tanglis, a senior researcher for Public Citizen's Congress Watch division who coordinated the project, said in a [statement](#).

In a [report](#) accompanying the launch of the project—titled "President Trump Inc."—Tanglis notes that despite Trump's persistent [refusal to release his tax returns](#), there is abundant evidence of "a massive conflict problem based on what we *already* know from his 278e financial disclosures."

Public Citizen's analysis of available documents found that "Trump has created at least 49 business entities since he announced his bid for the Republican nomination on June 16, 2015."

"Roughly half of the entities were related to projects in foreign countries, including Argentina, India, Saudi Arabia, and Indonesia," the report notes.

Furthermore, just "[s]even days after he announced his candidacy for president, Trump formed more businesses than he had on any previous day. The businesses were related to projects in Indonesia."

The report goes on to argue that Trump's moves to distance himself from his business empire following the presidential election were "cosmetic at best." Public Citizen explained in a video:

"The risk of self-dealing, conflicts, and corruption is just as great as if there were no separation at all," Tanglis notes.

An [interactive map](#) and [a downloadable dataset](#), both released alongside the new report, show the complexity of Trump's business ties, revealing the vast number of potential conflicts of interest.

"The knowledge that [Trump] is still ultimately in control of his businesses alone is enough to invite corruption," Tanglis adds. "It's a recipe for disaster."

In refusing to distance himself from this sprawling business empire,

"Trump has made a mockery of the public trust," [said](#) Lisa Gilbert, vice president of legislative affairs at Public Citizen. "The information in this report should provide a clarion call to Congress to require him to disclose his taxes and to establish prohibitions on Trump using his office to enrich himself."

As *Common Dreams* has [reported](#), Trump is currently facing [several lawsuits](#) that allege he has used the office of the presidency to turn a profit.

"Trump has created at least 49 business entities since he announced his bid for the Republican nomination on June 16, 2015," Public Citizen found in a new analysis of President Donald Trump's business empire. (Photo: [Public Citizen](#)/Twitter)

Tanglis observes at the close of his report that while Trump may be an "unprecedented" case as the first president with "a global business empire," he is nonetheless a "natural culmination of the decades-long stranglehold wealthy individuals and corporations have had on public policy."

"For far too long, they have achieved an outsized influence on public policy by filling the coffers of elected officials who in turn craft policy to their benefit," Tanglis concludes.

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