

LETTERS

Donald Trump's Businesses and the Presidency

Dec. 1, 2016

To the Editor:

Re “World of Potential Conflict for a Developer President” (front page, Nov. 27) and “In Scotland, Trump Built a Wall, Then Sent Residents the Bill” (news article, Nov. 27):

Five pages revealing Donald Trump and his family's international business connections were fascinating reading. Thank you for the extensive investigations. Your articles point out the untold amounts of money invested in foreign ventures and, in return, the foreign dollars supporting Trump investments.

These articles prepare us for the coming years. Clearly there will be continued questions regarding conflicts of interest and complications facing Mr. Trump's presidency. How he will separate the interests of our country from the benefits for his companies will be a real challenge that Congress must confront.

The Times could have done voters a real service by running these articles before the election.

NANCY N. MARGOLIS

Ann Arbor, Mich.

To the Editor:

The possibility that Donald Trump might benefit from his investments while he is in office is perhaps the least important of his potential conflicts of interest. Of more concern might be his willingness to make decisions that would benefit his investments and enterprises, even though he might have put them beyond his direct reach or influence.

What is the most troubling is the likelihood that foreign governments will use Mr. Trump's overseas debts, assets and property as hostages for favorable treatment, or that foreign actions against his properties could influence presidential decisions that go against American interests.

It is dismaying that orderly divestiture could take years.

J.K. GORDON

Chevy Chase, Md.

The writer is a former Foreign Service officer.

To the Editor:

Re “How Trump Could Quell His Conflict-of-Interest Woes” (DealBook, Nov. 29): Andrew Ross Sorkin raises a practical way of solving the conflict issues presented by Donald Trump’s manifold international business interests — the appointment of a corporate monitor who would report to the public.

Given Mr. Trump’s contempt for the rule of law and societal norms, I have few expectations that he will capitulate. It is up to congressional Republicans to come off their high perch and force his hand on this one. If they refuse to, we are indeed headed not only for a constitutional crisis, but also toward a foreign policy that has the enrichment of the Trumps as its guiding light.

JUDY WAIT

Wayne, Pa.

To the Editor:

Paul Krugman’s Nov. 28 column, “Why Corruption Matters,” assumes that there is clarity when there is none in the law of the Constitution’s emoluments clause, which prohibits gifts from foreign governments without the consent of Congress.

He states that “foreign governments are already trying to buy influence by adding to Mr. Trump’s personal wealth,” and “yes, this is illegal, in fact unconstitutional, a clear violation of the emoluments clause.” In fact, nothing about the emoluments clause is clear.

There are no cases on it and basic legal principles are uncertain, including 1) whether it covers corporations partly owned by a covered official, 2) whether a corporation owned or partly owned by a foreign government is covered by the act, 3) whether arms-length business transactions are problematic and 4) whether it applies to the president.

There are many issues here worthy of discussion and legislation — but saying that the Constitution is clear is just *clearly* wrong.

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