

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 26, 2022

The Honorable Emory A. Rounds III
Director
U.S. Office of Government Ethics
1201 New York Avenue NW, Suite 500
Washington, D.C. 20005

Dear Director Rounds:

Committee on Oversight and Reform, and Committee on Science, Space, and Technology Republicans are investigating mismanagement and unethical conduct at the White House. Specifically, Committee Republicans are concerned about the extent of Big Tech’s influence on the Biden Administration. Information reviewed by Committee Republicans shows that at least one organization affiliated with Big Tech is unduly influencing policy at the White House. This influence contributed to the demotion of the career general counsel at the Office of Science and Technology Policy (OSTP) after she raised questions about a troubling arrangement with former Google CEO, Eric Schmidt’s nonprofit foundation. Since the Office of Government Ethics (OGE) is charged with overseeing “the executive branch ethics program,”¹ we request information about the influence of Big Tech on the Administration, including how many political appointees are currently working throughout the Executive Branch that were employed by Big Tech.

According to information obtained by Committee Republicans and confirmed by recent media reports, the career general counsel at OSTP—the office tasked with advising the President on science and technology²—was demoted from her position after raising questions about the improper influence of Mr. Schmidt’s nonprofit foundation, Schmidt Futures.³ In early 2021, shortly after President Biden’s inauguration, the career general counsel informed OSTP senior leadership that consultants and fellows employed at OSTP were improperly receiving salaries from Schmidt Futures.⁴ These fellows and consultants worked directly on issues of policy impacting the work of Schmidt Futures—presenting a significant conflict of interest. Most troubling is that while at OSTP these officials appear to have worked directly on setting the strategic priorities for policy issues such as 5G technology and Artificial Intelligence, giving Mr. Schmidt significant influence over these issues.⁵

¹ U.S. Office of Government Ethics website, *available at* https://www.oge.gov/web/oge.nsf/about_what-we-do.

² Office of Science and Technology Policy, The White House, *available at* <https://www.whitehouse.gov/ostp/>.

³ Alex Thompson, *A Google billionaire’s fingerprints are all over Biden’s science office*, POLITICO (Mar. 28, 2022).

⁴ Information obtained from whistleblower.

⁵ *Supra*, n. 3.

Schmidt Futures paying White House employees' salaries raises serious ethical issues. Schmidt Futures "indirectly paid the salaries of two science-office employees," including current chief of staff Marc Aidinoff and Tom Kalil, the chief innovation officer at Schmidt Futures.⁶ Mr. Kalil "remained on Schmidt's payroll while working as an unpaid consultant at the science office for four months last year until he left the post following ethics complaints."⁷ In fact, Mr. Kalil's sole purpose at OSTP appears to have been to further the Schmidt Futures funding scheme. While career ethics lawyers raised the issue that Mr. Kalil's actions raised "a significant conflict of interest, given his dual roles[,]"⁸ OSTP leadership and, subsequently, White House Counsel's Office appear to have disregarded the concern. Upon his resignation from OSTP following "ethics complaints," Mr. Kalil admitted that his departure was to allow then-chief of staff Kei Koizumi to "create more ambiguity about his role in finding and arranging funding for OSTP staff."⁹ This conduct raises concerns not only about the extent of influence of Mr. Schmidt, but also if others connected to Big Tech are placing employees in key jobs to influence policy throughout the Administration.

While the Administration directs Americans to "follow the science," it apparently allows Big Tech to unduly influence policy in the office responsible for advising the President on science and technology. The American people deserve to know the relationship between Big Tech and the Administration. Please provide the following documents to Committee Republicans no later than May 10, 2022:

1. All financial disclosures, waivers, and recusal documents for political appointees, detailees, fellows, consultants, or contractors previously employed by Eric Schmidt, Schmidt Futures, Google, Alphabet, Twitter, or Facebook.
2. A list of political appointees, detailees, fellows, consultants, or contractors on file with OGE that have in the past five years been employed by Schmidt Futures, Google, Alphabet, Twitter, or Facebook.

To ask any follow-up questions, please contact Committee on Oversight and Reform Republican staff at (202) 225-5074. The Committee on Oversight and Reform is the principal oversight committee of the U.S. House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate "any matter" at "any time" under House Rule X. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

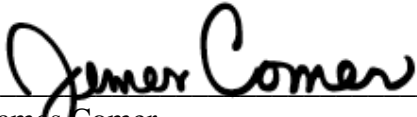
⁶ *Id.*

⁷ *Id.*

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ *Id.*

Sincerely,



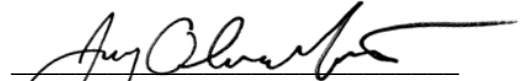
James Comer
Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight and Reform



Frank Lucas
Ranking Member
Committee on Science, Space and
Technology



Ralph Norman
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Environment



Jay Obermole
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Investigations
and Oversight

cc: The Honorable Carolyn Maloney, Chairwoman
Committee on Oversight and Reform

The Honorable Eddie Bernice Johnson, Chairwoman
Committee on Science, Space and Technology

The Honorable Ro Khanna, Chairman
Subcommittee on Environment

The Honorable Bill Foster, Chairman
Subcommittee on Investigations and Oversight