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## United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION,  
LABOR, AND PENSIONS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6300

DAVID P. CLEARY, STAFF DIRECTOR  
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<http://help.senate.gov>

November 1, 2017

The Honorable Betsy DeVos  
Secretary of Education  
U.S. Department of Education  
400 Maryland Avenue, SW  
Washington, DC 20202

Dear Secretary DeVos:

It has come to my attention that, despite your assurances during your nomination hearing, your husband has continued to make political contributions and use your vast family wealth to influence Congress and local politics. These political contributions are in direct opposition to the commitment you made to me and the other members of the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee during your hearing, so I am hopeful that you can provide additional clarity now that these facts have come to light.

In response to my question whether you believed it was “appropriate for you and your family to continue to use its wealth to pressure state, local, and federal candidates to support your agenda,” you plainly stated that if you were confirmed, you “will not be involved and engaged in political contributions, and [your] husband will not be either.”<sup>1</sup> Not simply that it wasn’t appropriate, which you seemed to acknowledge—but that you and your husband would not.

And yet, since your confirmation hearing, we have found that your husband has contributed at least \$29,800 to various campaigns and PACs:<sup>2</sup>

- \$2,700 to Luther Strange (AL Senate)<sup>3</sup>
- \$5,400 to Karen Handel (GA House of Representatives);<sup>4</sup>
- \$2,700 to Greg Gianforte (MT House of Representatives);<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Hearing on Nomination of Betsy DeVos to be Education Secretary Before the S. Health, Ed., Lab. and Pensions Comm.*, 115<sup>th</sup> Cong. (2017), <http://www.cq.com/doc/congressionaltranscripts-5023454?l>.

<sup>2</sup> This figure represents an amount that is almost double what someone making the federal minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour, working 40 hours per week for 52 weeks would make on an annual basis.

<sup>3</sup> FollowtheMoney.org, <https://www.followthemoney.org/show-me?d-eid=23175,26310921,43253872,43253872,553118,42806165,41891537,41506084,42712126,42712125,26310921,23175,553118,23375,553118,23375,43072383,553118,41801590&c-t-id=221604#l1|gro=c-t-id,d-eid>.

<sup>4</sup> FEC Individual Contributions, [https://www.fec.gov/data/receipts/individual-contributions/?two\\_year\\_transaction\\_period=2018&contributor\\_name=richard+devos&min\\_date=01%2F01%2F2017&max\\_date=12%2F31%2F2018](https://www.fec.gov/data/receipts/individual-contributions/?two_year_transaction_period=2018&contributor_name=richard+devos&min_date=01%2F01%2F2017&max_date=12%2F31%2F2018).

<sup>5</sup> FEC Individual Contributions, [https://www.fec.gov/data/receipts/individual-contributions/?two\\_year\\_transaction\\_period=2018&contributor\\_name=richard+devos&min\\_date=01%2F01%2F2017&max\\_date=12%2F31%2F2018](https://www.fec.gov/data/receipts/individual-contributions/?two_year_transaction_period=2018&contributor_name=richard+devos&min_date=01%2F01%2F2017&max_date=12%2F31%2F2018).

- \$10,000 to Compete Michigan PAC;<sup>6</sup>
- \$1,000 to Friends of West Michigan Business Grand Rapids Area Chamber of Commerce;<sup>7</sup>
- \$5,000 to the MAC PAC;<sup>8</sup> and
- \$3,000 to the Michigan Chamber PAC.<sup>9</sup>

In the past, you explained that you would no longer take offense at the suggestion your family buys influence, because “[t]hey are right. We do expect something in return . . . We expect a return on our investment.”<sup>10</sup>

Given your theory of political contributions, as well as your direct response to this question during your confirmation hearing, I remain concerned that you, your husband and your extended family continue to utilize your vast wealth to influence and impose your agenda on a political system in which you already wield power as the Secretary of Education.

I thought you provided me with a direct response and commitment at your hearing, but if your response meant something different, please let me know. For example, if you have a different view about what you consider “involved and engaged” when it comes to political contributions from you and your husband, I would be interested in hearing about that.

If that is not the case, I would ask you to please clarify whether you now think it is appropriate for you and your family to continue to use your wealth to pressure state, local, and federal candidates to support your agenda. Please also clarify the extent of the political contributions you have been involved with since your confirmation hearing, including a full accounting of every contribution you or your husband have made at the local, state, and federal levels to political campaigns, PACs, 501(c)(4)s, and 501(c)(6)s.

If you have any questions regarding this letter and related request, please contact Carly Rush or Kendra Isaacson on my HELP Committee Staff at 202-224-0767.

Sincerely,



Patty Murray  
United States Senator  
Ranking Member, Senate Health, Education,  
Labor, and Pensions Committee

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<sup>6</sup> Michigan Department of State Contribution Analysis (searching Michigan Campaign Finance Contribution with campaign statement starting year: 2016, campaign statement ending year: 2017; contributor’s last name: DeVos), [http://miboecfr.nictusa.com/cgi-bin/cfr/contrib\\_anls.cgi](http://miboecfr.nictusa.com/cgi-bin/cfr/contrib_anls.cgi).

<sup>7</sup> *Id.*

<sup>8</sup> *Id.*

<sup>9</sup> *Id.*

<sup>10</sup> Jane Mayer, “Betsy DeVos, Trump’s Big-Donor Education Secretary,” *The New Yorker* (Nov. 23, 2016), <https://www.newyorker.com/news/news-desk/betsy-devos-trumps-big-donor-education-secretary>.