



June 8, 2017

To: Senators Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), Elizabeth Warren (D-MA),
Brian Schatz (D-HI), and Edward Markey (D-MA)

From: Joseph L. Bast, president
The Heartland Institute

**Re: Your recent shameful conduct with regard to our communications
with the Trump administration**

A nonprofit organization devoted to discovering, developing, and promoting free-market solutions to social and economic problems.

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I was disappointed but not surprised by your letter dated June 7 sent to Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos in which you demand to know if her department “had contact with individuals associated with the Heartland Institute on climate, science, or science education issues,” and demanding as well copies of said correspondence, any information regarding discussions between Heartland and other White House staff members, and more.

For the record, The Heartland Institute has contacted nearly all members of the Trump cabinet. We have sent extensive information to more than 100 members of the administration explaining who we are, enclosing multiple publications (including books, policy studies, and videos) of most relevance to their positions, and offering to make our extensive network of some 370 policy experts available to provide further assistance. Some have gotten back to us.

We have published scores, possibly more than one hundred, commentaries and news releases and news stories calling attention to the new administration’s policy decisions, congratulating it when it has done what we believe to be the right things, and criticizing it when they have come up short.

Can any of you explain to me how this differs from the relationship the previous administration had with liberal advocacy groups? Can any of you explain why these contacts are illegitimate or against the public interest?

Your letter to Secretary DeVos describes The Heartland Institute as a “notorious industry front group.” This is false and defamatory. Heartland is a 33-year-old national nonprofit research and education organization with a broad funding base, a long history of taking positions at odds with “industry,” and has policies in place that protect its staff from undue influence from donors. All this is explained on our website in a section titled “Reply to Our Critics.” Google it.

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Memorandum from The Heartland Institute

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Your letter cites PBS Frontline as reporting “that the Heartland Institute is distributing factually inaccurate and scientifically illegitimate materials on climate change to upwards of 200,000 public school science teachers.” PBS Frontline is not qualified to make that judgment. And the number of public school science teachers is considerably less than 200,000. Didn’t anyone on your staffs fact-check this letter before it was circulated?

Our work on climate change is produced by a network of more than 200 highly qualified scientists, economists, and policy experts. It has been cited in more than one hundred peer-reviewed articles. The Chinese Academy of Sciences thought so highly of it, it translated two volumes of our work into Mandarin Chinese and published it as a condensed volume in 2013. Surveys and literature reviews show our views are supported by a majority of scientists in the United States.

Your letter goes on to claim that Heartland has “disseminated ‘alternative facts’ and fake science at the behest of its industry funders for decades.” You go on to comment on our funding from Phillip Morris, the Koch family foundations, and ExxonMobil, implying that our work may be “fraudulent.”

It is simply despicable that you would knowingly repeat such lies in an open letter like this.
Shame, shame, shame.

The Heartland Institute’s research has been praised by scores of policymakers and our peers in the public policy research community. (See the document titled “Endorsements” linked in the “About” feature on our Website.) We are ranked one of the top ten conservative think tanks in the world. The Koch family has made exactly one gift to us in the past 20 years, of only \$25,000 earmarked for a health care policy project. ExxonMobil stopped giving in 2007, before Heartland ramped up its work on climate change. Your claims are false, obviously intended to defame us.

But of course you know all this, because I’ve told you this before in response to previous libelous letters you’ve sent.

Frankly, your letter is a monumental misuse of your offices and a betrayal of the trust of your constituents. You should all be ashamed.

Happily, it now appears our work is informing the decisions of the Trump administration, conscientious members of the U.S. House and Senate, and governors and state elected officials from coast to coast. I understand this is bad for you, but it is good for the nation, for the environment, and for us.

I eagerly await your retractions and apologies.