

April 28, 2023

The Honorable Lael Brainard
Director
National Economic Council
Eisenhower Executive Office Building
1650 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W.
Washington, DC 20502

Dear Ms. Brainard:

White House visitor logs have revealed that top executives at SKDKnickerbocker (SKDK), the Democratic consulting firm employed by companies including TikTok, recently met with White House officials. On December 20, 2022, SKDK chief executive Doug Thornell and firm partner Oren Shur had a meeting with special assistant to the National Economic Council, Caitlin Meloski.¹ This meeting has raised serious concerns about the influence foreign companies like TikTok have on the White House, especially due to the firm's close connections to the Biden administration.

TikTok rose to popularity in 2019. Since its rise, U.S. government officials and members of the intelligence community have warned of its significant national security threats to the United States. TikTok is owned by parent company ByteDance, which is headquartered and operated in Beijing, China. Under Chinese law, ByteDance is legally obligated to share information with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).² Because of its ties to the CCP, TikTok is able to promote CCP propaganda and censor content, expanding the CCP's influence globally.³ Furthermore, the app can be used by the CCP to collect personal and location information, posing risks to individuals' privacy. A report from October of 2022 even found that ByteDance planned to use the TikTok app to monitor the personal location of some specific American citizens.⁴

A few months ago, TikTok entered a contract with SKDK to provide communications support amid various calls and proposals to ban the app because of the aforementioned national security concerns.⁵ However, this relationship has raised questions about the degree of influence TikTok

¹ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/disclosures/visitor-logs/>

² https://www.dni.gov/files/NCSC/documents/news/20190606-NCSC-Remarks-ILTA-Summit_2019.pdf

³ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/emilybaker-white/2022/11/30/tiktok-chinese-state-media-divisive-politics/?sh=17fa35db4bf0>

⁴ <https://www.forbes.com/sites/emilybaker-white/2022/10/20/tiktok-bytedance-surveillance-american-user-data/?sh=52adb9c56c2d>

⁵ <https://www.politico.com/news/2023/03/09/tiktok-biden-firm-dc-skdk-00086408>

has on the White House due to the consulting firm's relationship with the Biden administration. Campaign disclosures reveal that SKDK received \$2,240,743 from the Biden campaign in 2020.⁶

In addition, Anita Dunn, who currently serves as senior advisor to President Biden in the White House, was a cofounder of the consulting firm SKDK. While we understand that TikTok and SKDK have recently ended their partnership, there remains concerns that the consulting firm could have used its political connections to gain access for clients like TikTok.⁷ Evidently, in the time since the partnership began between SKDK and TikTok, it has been reported that Dunn encouraged outside Democratic surrogates to use TikTok to promote President Biden's State of the Union speech, despite being barred from any matters involving the firm.⁸

The potential influence of foreign companies like TikTok on the White House presents a drastic national security threat to the United States. It is currently unknown whether these SKDK executives discussed TikTok during their visit to the White House. It also is unclear whether Anita Dunn was involved in the meeting. Because the safety and security of our nation and its citizens is of the utmost importance, we request answers to the following questions regarding this recent SKDK visit with White House officials:

- What topics were discussed in the SKDK meeting with the White House on December 20, 2022?
- SKDK has received millions from the Biden campaign, and founding member Anita Dunn is now a top White House advisor, giving the impression that companies like TikTok are buying influence. How can the American people be assured that companies like TikTok are not buying influence by hiring SKDK and therefore having a key link to top White House Officials?
- Was founding member of SKDK and current White House advisor Anita Dunn in the White House meeting with SKDK on December 20, 2022?
- Has Anita Dunn continued correspondence with SKDK officials after becoming an advisor at the White House?
 - Furthermore, has Anita Dunn ever discussed TikTok with SKDK employees?

Our constituents deserve transparency regarding foreign influence in the White House. We ask for your full and clear response to these questions by May 12, 2023.

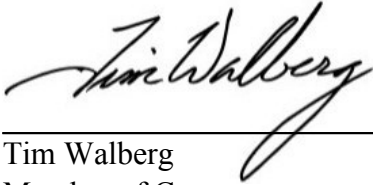
cc: Anita Dunn, Senior Advisor to the President

⁶ <https://www.opensecrets.org/2020-presidential-race/joe-biden/expenditures?id=N00001669>

⁷ <https://www.politico.com/newsletters/politico-influence/2023/04/17/top-tillis-aide-heads-back-to-k-street-00092422>

⁸ <https://www.politico.com/news/2023/03/30/tiktok-bans-government-influence-campaigns-investigation-00089256>

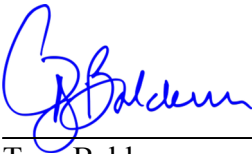
Sincerely,



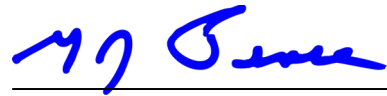
Tim Walberg
Member of Congress



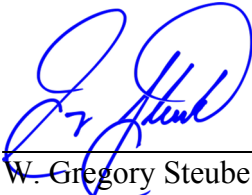
Rick W. Allen
Member of Congress



Troy Balderson
Member of Congress



Greg Pence
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W. Gregory Steube
Member of Congress



Michael Waltz
Member of Congress