

## Trump undermines our republic: Barbara Boxer

U.S.A. Today - Barbara Boxer – December 21, 2016

*President-elect's cabinet picks, attitudes and business conflicts are a threat to American values.*

Whether you voted for Donald Trump or not, there are certain American values that transcend politics.

As Americans, we value science. We value civil rights. We value human rights. We value women's rights. We value worker's rights. We value voting rights. We value clean air, clean water and a healthy environment. We value immigrants, who come to our country seeking better opportunities, and at times, refuge. We value free speech and a free press. And we expect our elected leaders to put our country's interest ahead of their own self-interest.

These values are ingrained in the fabric of America because generations risked their lives to ensure them.

Judging from the recent actions and appointments of our new president-elect, every single one of these values is at great risk. Just look at the selections he has made for his Cabinet:

His nominee to run the Environmental Protection Agency is a [climate change skeptic](#) who has [led lawsuits](#) against the very agency he hopes to lead.

His nominee for Energy secretary couldn't even remember the [name of the agency](#) he hopes to run — and when he did, he said he wanted to eliminate it.

His nominee for [Education secretary](#) wants to drain funding away from our public schools, which [95% of our children](#) attend, and she and her family have donated [hundreds of thousands of dollars](#) to groups that oppose lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender rights.

His nominee for Labor secretary, a fast food chain CEO, has been accused of [labor violations](#) by the very department he has been tapped to lead.

His nominee for attorney general not only opposed the [Voting Rights Act](#), but said he liked the KKK until he found out they [smoked marijuana](#).

His nominee for Housing and Urban Development secretary opposes the [Fair Housing Act](#).

His nominee for Treasury secretary, who recommends economic policy, profited from the financial crisis by repossessing tens of thousands of homes in an operation that was dubbed a "[foreclosure machine](#)."

His nominee for Health and Human Services secretary led dozens of [repeal efforts in Congress](#) to take health care away from the American people.

And his nominee for secretary of State is the CEO of the largest oil company in the world, has no official diplomatic experience and has cozied up to repressive leaders, including former KGB operative Vladimir Putin, who awarded him Russia's "[Order of Friendship](#)."

His picks for his White House staff are also alarming, starting with a [chief strategist](#) who is associated with white supremacist hate groups. His national security adviser is someone who has shown [vitriol toward Muslims](#) and a military investigation found that he "[inappropriately shared](#)" classified information with foreign military officers.

Trump's contempt for the free press is on display every day. He hasn't held a press conference since July 27, breaking with a longstanding tradition for incoming presidents. Instead he uses Twitter to personally attack reporters and news outlets — a tactic continued from his campaign, which he spent bullying the media and [threatening them with lawsuits](#) if they wrote negative pieces about him.

And look at his complex web of business interests, which pose enormous potential for conflicts of interest. Presidents should never make decisions in the White House that could enrich themselves or their family members, yet Trump refuses to listen to the clear [advice from ethics experts](#) to completely divest or place his assets in a blind trust.

Trump has been elected president, and he is now profiting from the results. Right now, foreign leaders are staying in Trump hotels in Washington, D.C. and all over the world. Once he takes the oath of office, it will be a clear violation of the [Emoluments Clause](#) of the Constitution, which states that that no American officeholder shall, "without the consent of the Congress, accept of any present,

emolument, office, or title, of any kind whatever, from any king, prince, or foreign state.”

Experts say if Trump continues to ignore their advice, the only course is impeachment — an extreme measure that could be avoided if he took simple action now.

People ask me why the Emoluments Clause hasn't come up before. It is because no president has ever done what Trump has done: put his assets and personal interests before the interests of the country.

Trump says he is a “[smart person](#)” and uses that as an excuse for avoiding daily intelligence briefings. Americans deserve a commander in chief who makes his decisions based on facts — not guesses — because the safety of our country will be in his hands.

Now our new president-elect is refusing to acknowledge what everyone from the CIA to GOP leaders know to be true: Russia deliberately interfered with our elections to help Trump win. Instead of getting the facts, which will allow him to defend our nation, he continues to cozy up to Putin, who is now suspected of having directed this unprecedented [cyber attack on our nation](#).

I am heartened that a few Republicans are standing up and fighting back against some of the outrages I have described. We need many more Republicans and Democrats to come together, to put partisanship aside and to defend the American values that both parties have embraced over time.

We cannot stay silent. We cannot turn away. We must unite against this unprecedented assault on our ethics and ideals.

Upon leaving the Constitutional Convention, Benjamin Franklin was asked what sort of government had been created. He answered, “A Republic, if you can keep it.”

We are being challenged now to protect our republic from those who would undermine its very foundations.

Barbara Boxer, a Democratic senator from California, is retiring next month. This is her last op-ed as a sitting member of Congress after 24 years in the Senate and 10 years in the House of Representatives. Follow her on Twitter: [@BarbaraBoxer](#)

You can read diverse opinions from our [Board of Contributors](#) and other writers on the [Opinion front page](#), on Twitter [@USATOpinion](#) and in our daily [Opinion newsletter](#). To submit a letter, comment or column, check our [submission guidelines](#).