



President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave.
Washington, DC 20500

June 3, 2009

Dear Mr. President,

According to press reports, Andrew McLaughlin, Google's Director of Global Public Policy, is to be named Deputy Chief Technology Officer in the White House. We respectfully urge you not to make this appointment.

Mr. McLaughlin's appointment, we believe, must be evaluated in the context of the strong ethical rules your administration has implemented to end the revolving door between lobbyists and the executive branch. Given Mr. McLaughlin's role over the years at Google, and most recently his position with its political action committee, any post at the White House would violate the intent of your executive order.

As Google's Director of Global Public Policy, Mr. McLaughlin led a team of corporate policy advocates working to influence a wide range of issues in the United States and globally. Simply put, he has been responsible for Google's worldwide lobbying efforts. Mr. McLaughlin was a registered lobbyist in 2007 working on Google's behalf. The statement of organization for Google's political action committee, Google Inc. NetPAC, filed on March 16, 2009, lists him as the committee's assistant treasurer and its designated agent.

Mr. McLaughlin has played a key role at Google in promoting its interests on a broad range of issues that affect the welfare of all Americans – including privacy, intellectual property, online content and communications policy. Mr. McLaughlin is a successful advocate for corporate policies in the public policy arena.

Google's growing influence is already raising profound concern. The Justice Department is weighing anti-trust issues relating to the proposed Google Books settlement and the Federal Trade Commission is considering the anti-trust implication of the relationship between Apple and Google directors. Recently questions have arisen concerning Google's role in the dissemination of presidential speeches and federal government information on its YouTube subsidiary. As you know, last year the Department of Justice rejected a proposed advertising alliance between Google and Yahoo – something for which Mr. McLaughlin's team aggressively lobbied.

There are an increasing number of emerging issues that will likely pit the commercial interests of Google against the rights of American citizens, including protecting our privacy and consumer rights online. Already

top Google executives have assumed important roles in your administration. Katie Stanton, a former Google project manager, is the White House Director of Citizen Participation. Sonal Shah, former head of global development at Google.org, now heads the White House Office of Social Innovation. Eric Schmidt, Google's chief executive, was a close advisor to your transition team and is now a member of the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology.

But Google's growing influence is not the primary reason we seek to have the appointment withdrawn. We do not object to Mr. McLaughlin's appointment because he is associated with Google per se. The problem is that he has been a lobbyist for the biggest digital marketing company in the world, and we believe no special-interest connected person should assume a position of vital importance to the country's future.

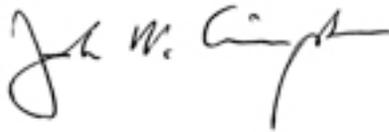
It would be just as inappropriate for a lobbyist from Microsoft, Yahoo! or any similar technology company to be appointed Deputy Chief Technology Officer.

Given these considerations, as well as your commitment to a new standard for ethics in government, it would be a mistake to put Google's top global policy person in a key leadership position with critical technology decisions for the federal government. We applaud your Administration's commitment to help ensure the American public receives all the benefits from digital communications. But such a task requires a truly independent expert – not someone who has directed worldwide lobbying efforts for the leading U.S. corporation in the digital industry.

Sincerely,



Jeffrey A. Chester
Executive Director
Center for Digital Democracy



John M. Simpson
Consumer Advocate
Consumer Watchdog

Cc: John Holdren, Director White House Office of Science and Technology
Aneesh Chopra, Associate Director and Chief Technology Officer