



The Hon. Jeff Bingaman  
The Hon. Diane Feinstein  
The Hon. Barbara Boxer  
The Hon. Tom Carper  
The Hon. Mark Warner  
The Hon. Jeff Merkley  
The Hon. Mark Begich

Nov. 11, 2009

Dear Senators,

We are writing to warn you of a conflict of interest created by the deceptively named “National Innovation Conference,” sponsored by the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee (DSCC) scheduled for this Friday, Nov. 13, at Google headquarters in Mountain View, California. We urge you not to attend.

A closed, donor-funded event is an inappropriate place for Senators to discuss matters affecting public policy. You will only hear the perspective of those who can afford the steep price of admission.

The Senate will soon be deliberating a myriad of issues concerning Google, Microsoft, Comcast and other technology giants. These issues include antitrust concerns, online privacy rules, patent reform and Internet regulation. Included with this letter is a list of public policy questions being discussed in Washington involving Google and other panelists.

Holding this fundraising event on Google’s campus supposedly to discuss technological innovation gives the company and other Silicon Valley high-rollers a private audience with Senators that will define the terms of the policy debate in a vacuum. This fundraising forum raises the specter of pay-to-play politics when so many issues of concern to Google and the rest of the Silicon Valley technology community are on the table.

Please consider the composition of the three panels to see how one-sided the discussion is likely to be:

**Innovation and Technology:** Sen. Merkley; Sen. Warner; David Cohen, Comcast; Adam Grosse, Foundation Capital; Daniel Lewin, Microsoft; Mike Nevens, Permira and Moderator: John Doerr.

**Health Care and Technology:** Sen. Bingaman; Sen. Begich; Ross Jaffe, Versant Ventures; Bob Klein, California Institute for Regenerative Medicine; Nate McLemore, Microsoft; and Moderator: Javeed Siddiqui, University of California.

**Energy and Environment:** Sen. Bingaman; Sen. Boxer; Sen. Begich; Eric Dresselhuys, SilverSpring Networks; Vinod Khosla, Khosla Ventures; Stephan Dolezalek, Vantage Point; Eric Schmidt, Google; and Moderator: David Yarnold, Environmental Defense Fund.

Where are the privacy advocates? Who represents the consumer's interest?

Senators should discuss public policy issues in open forums accessible to anyone who is interested. The public must not be locked out of a policy discussion that is taking place behind closed doors of a donor-funded forum because average Americans cannot afford the price of admission. This is a private hearing, bought and paid for only by those with a vested interest in the outcome.

This not a public policy education event, because it comes with a price tag of \$5,000 to \$34,400 per attendee to fund the DSCC. This is about money and access for Google, Microsoft, Comcast and venture capital. Each of you would complain bitterly if the GOP held a fundraiser called the "National Conference on the Future of Energy" at Exxon headquarters in Houston, aimed at donors across the oil patch. How is this event different?

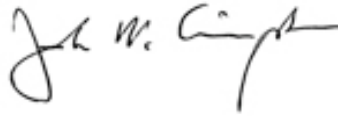
Public policy matters should be decided in a hearing room with sunlight and transparency not in a \$5,000-per-seat-minimum venue on the Googleplex Campus,

This event puts policy and campaign cash in the same breath and needs to be cancelled before anyone's ethics are tarnished. Lending your names to this event as currently planned will serve neither you nor the Democratic Party. We call upon you not to attend fundraisers posing as public policy forums.

Sincerely,



Jamie Court  
President



John M. Simpson  
Consumer advocate

Cc: Sen. Bob Menendez, Chairman Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee  
J.B. Poersch, Executive Director Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee