



PROJECT ON  
GOVERNMENT OVERSIGHT

Exposing Corruption. Exploring Solutions.

---

April 18, 2018

The Honorable Mitch McConnell  
Majority Leader  
United States Senate  
The Capitol, S-230  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer  
Minority Leader  
United States Senate  
The Capitol, S-221  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader McConnell and Minority Leader Schumer:

I write you today to express my deep concerns about the nominee to lead the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), Representative Jim Bridenstine (R-OK). I urge you to vote against his confirmation.

Others have raised concerns about Representative Bridenstine's qualifications to lead the agency.<sup>1</sup> Criticisms include that he is too partisan for the position and has virtually no management experience involving a large organization and is therefore unfit to lead NASA with its budget of \$18.5 billion, over 18,000 federal workers, and over 60,000 contractor employees.

Our concerns however, stem from an investigation and review of public records that we conducted. Those records show that, prior to his time in Congress, Representative Bridenstine led a nonprofit he directed into massive financial losses.<sup>2</sup> Some of the losses involved the use of the nonprofit's resources to benefit a company that he simultaneously co-owned, a questionable arrangement that raises concerns about his commitment to responsible and ethical spending—a quality that is essential to government service at this level.

Founded in 1981, the Project On Government Oversight (POGO) is a nonpartisan independent watchdog that champions good government reforms. POGO's investigations into corruption, misconduct, and conflicts of interest achieve a more effective, accountable, open, and ethical federal government. We are growing increasingly concerned that executive branch officials are flouting the ethics laws meant to protect the interests of the American taxpayers.<sup>3</sup> It is through this lens that we urge you to vote against Representative Bridenstine's confirmation.

---

<sup>1</sup> Ledyard King, "Marco Rubio's reservations put Trump's NASA nominee in jeopardy," *USA Today*, November 18, 2017. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2017/11/18/marco-rubios-reservations-put-trumps-nasa-nominee-jeopardy/87740001/> (Downloaded April 17, 2018)

<sup>2</sup> Nick Schwellenbach and Adam Zagorin, "How Trump's NASA Nominee Used a Nonprofit He Ran to Benefit Himself," *The Daily Beast*, April 18, 2018. <https://www.thedailybeast.com/how-trumps-nasa-nominee-used-a-nonprofit-he-ran-to-benefit-himself?ref=wrap> (Downloaded April 18, 2018)

<sup>3</sup> POGO letter to U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission's Office of Enforcement requesting an investigation into possible insider trading by Carl Icahn, March 5, 2018. <http://www.pogo.org/our-work/letters/2018/pogo-asks-sec-to-investigate-carl-icahn-for-insider-trading.html>; POGO letter to the Office of Special Counsel calling for an investigation into

If you or your staff would like to discuss our concerns further, please contact POGO's Director of Public Policy, Liz Hempowicz, at [ehempowicz@pogo.org](mailto:ehempowicz@pogo.org) or (202) 347-1122.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Danielle Brian".

Danielle Brian  
Executive Director

cc: Members of the U.S. Senate

---

a potential violation of the Hatch Act by Federal Communications Commission Commissioner Michael O'Rielly, February 27, 2018. <http://www.pogo.org/our-work/letters/2018/pogo-submits-hatch-act-complaint-to-osc-alleging-violation-by-fcc-commissioner.html>