



SPECIAL INTEREST TAKEOVER



The Bush Administration and the Dismantling of Public Safeguards

Produced by
The Center for American Progress & OMB Watch for
The Citizens for Sensible Safeguards Coalition

Special Interest Takeover

Special interests have launched a sweeping assault on protections for public health, safety, the environment, and corporate responsibility – and unfortunately the Bush administration has given way. Crucial safeguards have been swept aside or watered down; emerging problems are being ignored; and enforcement efforts have been curtailed, threatening to render existing standards meaningless.

This agenda puts special interests above the public interest, sacrificing a safer, healthier, more just America at the behest of industry lobbyists, corporate campaign contributors, and professional ideologues – many of whom the president has appointed to “regulate” the very interests they used to represent.

Over the last 30 years, we have made significant progress through strong public safeguards. Our air and water are cleaner, our food, workplaces, and roads are safer, and corporations and government are more open and accountable to the public. These protections have saved thousands upon thousands of lives and improved the quality of life for all Americans – without hobbling industry or the economy.

Nonetheless, significant problems remain. Every year, more than 40,000 people die on our nation’s highways. Foodborne illnesses kill an estimated 7,000 and sicken 76 million. Nearly 6,000 workers die as a result of injury on the job, with an additional 50,000 to 60,000 killed by occupational disease. And asthma – linked to air pollution – is rising dramatically, afflicting 17 million, including six million children.

We should address these problems by building on past successes. Instead, as summarized in the following pages, the Bush administration has reversed course.

For more details, see the full report at
www.sensible safeguards.org

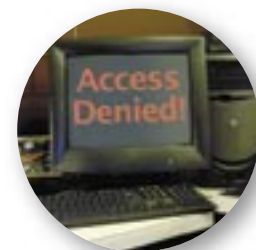


A Record of Rollbacks

Within months of taking office, the Bush administration moved to kill or weaken a host of Clinton-era safeguards, including medical privacy protections, new energy efficiency standards, and ergonomics rules to protect workers, just to name a few. More than three years later, the rollbacks continue, showing no signs of letting up. What special interests want, they get – leaving the public to pay the price.

Sworn to Secrecy

The Bush administration has broadly restricted information that could be used to hold government and corporate interests accountable for their actions. For instance, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission has made it more difficult for the public to evaluate deficiencies in the electrical grid, while the administration has sought to muzzle government whistleblowers seeking to alert the public of imminent danger.





White House Roadblock

Where legal requirements have demanded government action, White House regulatory czar John Graham has stepped in and made sure standards were developed to industry's liking. For example, Graham gutted agency proposals to alert drivers of under-inflated tires, limit construction runoff, and cut diesel emissions from large ships and tankers. At the same time, he has erected new blockades that tilt the entire standard-setting process to favor special interests.



The Toll of Neglect

The Bush administration has halted progress on health, safety and the environment, turning a blind eye to some of the nation's most pressing problems. For example, nothing has been done to improve safety at chemical plants; workers continue to die from an array of preventable hazards; and more than 90 percent of nursing homes are understaffed, leading to overworked employees and inadequate care for residents.



Cop Off the Beat

For standards that remain on the books, the administration is scaling back enforcement efforts. For instance, the average penalty for willful worker safety violations has fallen by 25 percent; actions against misleading drug promotions have plummeted by almost 80 percent; and administration officials ignored repeated food safety violations at a Wampler Foods plant, which produced Listeria-contaminated turkey that killed eight and sickened more than 50, prompting the largest recall in U.S. history.

Politics Over Science

When science finds a serious health or environmental problem, there is frequently public pressure to respond through regulatory action, which the administration is loath to pursue. The White House has sought to protect itself politically by keeping the public in the dark or even manufacturing "evidence" for its case. In other words, the agenda drives the information, not the other way around.

Irresponsible Contracting

Upon taking office, the Bush administration immediately moved to repeal contractor responsibility standards — meant to stop taxpayer dollars from going to chronic lawbreakers — and later adopted new rules to privatize the federal workforce and steer social-service grants to religious institutions, threatening to create a modern-day spoils system. At the same time, grantees that disagree with the president's policies have faced continuous harassment, including retaliatory audits.

Whose Government is This?

Our government should work for the broader public interest. Instead, ex-industry lobbyists have assumed key agency positions, and used this power to reward their former employers, who trade in large-scale campaign contributions. We must work together to reclaim our government from the special interests.





A Record of Rollbacks

Scores of crucial safeguards have been put on the chopping block over the last three and a half years. From giveaways to the oil and gas industry to the slashing of overtime pay to the repeal of food labeling requirements, the Bush administration has consistently put narrow corporate interests over the broader public good.

The Bush Rollbacks

Clean Air

- Backed out of Kyoto Protocol on global warming
- Guttled air standards for aging power plants
- Weakened energy efficiency standards
- Revoked phaseout of snowmobiles in Yellowstone

Mining

- Relaxed dumping standards for mountaintop mining
- Guttled environmental protections for hard-rock mining
- Opened public land to mining, including the Florida Everglades and Oregon's Siskiyou National Forest

Drilling Public Land

- Lifted protection for more than 200 million acres of public land
- Allowed extensive drilling on public land, including the Powder River Basin, New Mexico's Otero Mesa, and 46,000 acres of pristine Utah land

Logging

- Limited public challenges to logging projects
- Weakened endangered species protections for logging
- Increased logging in protected areas, including Alaska's Tongass National Forest

Clean Water

- Removed protections for wetlands
- Moved to allow discharges of untreated sewage

Workplace Protections

- Repealed standards against repetitive-motion injuries
- Moved to weaken air quality protections for miners
- Extended driving hours for truckers
- Stripped millions of overtime pay

Patient Protections

- Weakened medical privacy standards
- Relaxed standards for nursing home and emergency room care

Food Labeling

- Relaxed restrictions on health claims
- Moved to overturn country-of-origin labeling

Media Ownership

- Moved to allow greater media consolidation

Making Molehills Out of Mountains

Following President Bush's decision to renege on his campaign pledge to regulate carbon dioxide emissions, the director of the West Virginia Coal Association told industry executives, "You did everything you could to elect a Republican president. You are already seeing in his actions the payback, if you will, his gratitude for what we did." Not surprisingly, the paybacks didn't stop there.

Perhaps most egregious, the administration lifted environmental protections against "mountaintop mining," in which coal is accessed by blasting the tops off mountains. This practice generates huge amounts of dirt and rock waste that is later dumped into nearby valleys, plugging up rivers and streams and killing aquatic life. More than 1,200 miles of Appalachian streams have been buried by these "valley fills," which frequently cause flooding in surrounding communities.

In May 2002, the administration revoked the prohibition against dumping into rivers and streams for the sole purpose of disposing waste. Just months earlier, eight House Republicans wrote to the president warning that this change would be "contrary to the central goal of the Clean Water Act: preserving physical, chemical and biological integrity of the nation's waters." Later, in early 2004, the administration proposed to gut the "buffer zone" rule that bars dumping within 100 feet of streams.

These actions remove a central barrier to mountaintop mining. With nowhere to dump, there can be no mountaintop removal. Thanks to the Bush administration, mining companies don't have to worry about that anymore.



Coming Down on Workers

Shortly after taking office, President Bush met with Republican congressional leaders and urged them to vote down Clinton-era ergonomics standards, which sought to prevent injuries caused by repetitive motion on the job — the most pressing health and safety issue confronting the workplace today.

The president signed the repeal in March 2001, and later revoked a separate rule requiring companies to report ergonomic injuries, preferring instead to ignore the overwhelming evidence of the problem. Nearly one million people took time away from work in 1999 due to repetitive-motion injuries, costing the economy between \$45 billion and \$54 billion, according to the National Academy of Sciences.

The Bush administration subsequently announced a feeble voluntary initiative, termed a "replacement plan," that is nothing more than a political smokescreen. Corporate interests — which have fought tooth and nail against any meaningful action for more than a decade — are still calling the shots.

White House Roadblock

The Bush administration has sometimes been forced to act because of statutory or judicial requirements. In these cases, John Graham, administrator of the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, an obscure but powerful office inside the White House Office of Management and Budget, has stepped in and provided a roadblock. The standards listed on the right are just a few examples.



Nothing Spared

In one highly dubious case that drew a stinging rebuke from a federal appeals court, Graham forced the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) to adopt an inadequate standard — favored by automobile manufacturers — for warning drivers of under-inflated tires.

The rule — required by Congress as a response to the Firestone tire debacle that resulted in 271 deaths and many more injuries — allowed manufacturers to choose between installing a “direct” system or a less reliable yet cheaper “indirect” system. A direct system relies on a pressure sensor in each tire that can alert the driver of an under-inflated tire through a dashboard monitor. An indirect system works with anti-lock brakes to measure the rotational difference between the tires.



NHTSA originally wanted to require direct systems for all new vehicles by 2007, which the agency estimated would avert 141 fatalities and 10,271 injuries a year. Yet in rejecting this approach, Graham incredibly argued that allowing indirect systems would actually produce greater safety benefits overall because it would serve as an incentive for manufacturers to install anti-lock brakes.

Pointing to a study by Charles Farmer of the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety, Graham incorrectly extrapolated that the resulting increase in anti-lock brakes would save 118 to 266 lives a year, on top of the estimated 70 fatalities averted from indirect systems. Farmer subsequently met with NHTSA, and according to the agency’s meeting log, “Mr. Farmer thought that Dr. Graham of OMB was being optimistic in assuming that antilock brakes would produce fatality benefits.” That’s any fatality benefits at all.

Not surprisingly, a federal appeals court found that the resulting decision violated the law, and ordered NHTSA to adopt a stronger standard, noting that direct systems “would prevent more injuries, save more lives, and be more cost-effective.”

Pricing the Priceless

Graham is not just making changes one standard at a time. He has initiated a series of sweeping reforms that tilt the entire standard-setting process to favor industry, making strong health, safety and environmental protections nearly impossible. In particular, this includes new emphasis on monetizing the benefits of prospective regulation, frequently an impossible task.

For example, Graham’s office gutted an EPA proposal to control runoff from construction and development because the agency was unable to monetize what it considered substantial benefits, including effects on natural habitat, benefits to human health, and impacts of many storm water pollutants, such as lead, zinc, herbicides and pesticides, as well as oils and grease.

Standards Weakened

Auto Safety

- Undermined tire pressure monitoring

Bioterrorism

- Watered down requirements for food importers to provide advance notice of U.S. shipments

Water Protections

- Weakened standards to prevent runoff from factory farms
- Gutted proposal to limit runoff from construction and development sites, the largest source of pollution in coastal waters
- Gutted proposal to protect the trillions of fish that are sucked up and killed each year by power-plant cooling systems
- Blocked effort to protect soil and drinking water from excessive levels of manganese, an industrial byproduct

Clean Air

- Weakened standard to cut emissions from snowmobiles and other off-road vehicles
- Gutted proposal to limit diesel emissions from large ships and tankers
- Pushed to exempt certain industrial facilities from several new clean air standards

New Blockades

- Centralized control over the standard-setting process
- Pushed federal agencies to monetize benefits of prospective regulation, frequently an impossible task
- Issued “data quality” guidelines that allow industry to potentially block information that supports public safeguards
- Developed plan for industry-dominated “peer review” of new standards, which could grind federal agencies to a halt
- Solicited industry hit list to begin the next generation of regulatory rollbacks





The Toll of Neglect

There have been almost no new significant safeguards over the last three and a half years. Instead, the Bush administration has halted progress on health, safety and the environment, and turned a blind eye to some of the nation's most pressing problems. The list on the left provides just a few examples.

Problems Ignored

Security

- Rebuffed legislation to require greater chemical-plant safety
- Issued inadequate standards on nuclear-plant security

Clean Air & Water

- Opposed legislation requiring greater fuel efficiency for passenger cars
- Failed to adequately protect national parks and wilderness area from industrial air pollution
- Failed to complete Clinton-era proposal to prevent sewer overflows
- Failed to curtail widespread use of the weed killer atrazine, despite growing evidence that it is contaminating drinking water

Worker Health & Safety

- Ignored recommendation of Chemical Safety Board to address reactive chemical accidents in the workplace
- Abandoned Clinton-initiated rulemaking to protect workers from tuberculosis
- Ignored NIOSH recommendation to toughen limits on silica dust, which has killed thousands of miners and construction workers
- Ignored advisory committee recommendation to protect workers who handle metalworking fluids

Food Safety

- Declined to promote legislation that would restore enforcement authority, stripped by a federal court, to control Salmonella
- Declined to enhance E. coli testing

Auto Safety

- Failed to finalize Clinton-era proposal to upgrade head-restraint standards
- Refused to take action to stop SUV rollovers despite increasing severity of the problem

Consumer Product Safety

- Failed to pursue Clinton-era commitment to develop standards on baby bath seats, which have caused the deaths of 10 babies since the administration took office
- Took no action to ban sales of ATVs to children after a public hearing called attention to tens of thousands of injuries
- Opposed product registration cards in children's products, meant to improve the effectiveness of recalls

Terrorists & Chemical Plants

Perhaps nothing better illustrates the Bush administration's fealty to special interests than its refusal to address accidents or the possibility of a terrorist attack at U.S. chemical plants.

One hundred twenty-five facilities have a "vulnerability zone" encompassing more than one million people who could be killed or injured in the event of a chemical accident or terrorist attack; about 700 facilities put more than 100,000 people at risk; and roughly 3,000 facilities put at least 10,000 people at risk. All told, one in six Americans lives in a vulnerable zone.

Yet disturbingly, no federal law regulates these vulnerability zones in terms of size, chemical intensity, or population at risk. Companies are not even required to assess and consider inherently safer methods of operation.

In early 2002, Sen. John Corzine (D-NJ) introduced legislation to solve this problem. However, the Bush administration fiercely resisted and, as urged by the chemical industry, instead backed a legislative smokescreen put forth by Sen. James Inhofe (R-OK) — which most egregiously, would exempt facilities that participate in voluntary industry-sponsored security programs from the bill's very mild requirements.

In early 2003, Inhofe's industry-backed bill was voted out of committee on a party-line vote. Yet, fearful of potential embarrassment, the Senate's Republican leadership has not brought it up for a floor vote, and the Bush administration, which already has necessary legal authority to act through regulation has sat silently by. The administration unfortunately seems more concerned with protecting the chemical industry than the American public.



Nursing Home Negligence

More than 90 percent of nursing homes are understaffed, leading to overworked employees and inadequate care for residents, according to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). Residents in the nation's lowest staffed nursing homes are more likely to lose weight, become dehydrated, develop bedsores, and experience other problems.

The National Academy of Sciences has called for the establishment of minimum staffing standards at nursing homes, yet the Bush administration has failed to act, citing cost concerns.

Rep. Henry Waxman (D-CA) has introduced legislation that would mandate staffing levels recommended by HHS and require that all nursing home residents receive at least 4.1 hours of nursing care each day. Unfortunately, the administration continues to bow to the nursing home industry.

Cop Off the Beat

For standards that remain on the books, the administration is scaling back enforcement efforts and ignoring lessons from the recent wave of corporate accounting scandals, which were aided by an absentee SEC. With no cop on the beat, corporate abuses are bound to increase.



Food Contamination Overlooked

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) ignored repeated food safety violations at a Pennsylvania Wampler Foods plant, and in 2002, Listeria-contaminated turkey meat from the plant killed eight, sickened more than 50, and caused miscarriages and stillbirths, prompting the recall of 27.4 million pounds of ready-to-eat poultry products, the largest recall in U.S. history.

The lead USDA inspector for the plant knew about Listeria contamination and other filthy conditions prior to the outbreak, but the agency declined to take action, according to individuals who worked inside the plant. On the contrary, USDA gave advance notice of Listeria testing, which is supposed to be unannounced, allowing the plant time to perform special cleanups.

Vincent Erthal, a USDA inspector who worked the night shift at Wampler, requested enforcement action in August 2002 and provided two years of documentation of widespread sanitary problems at the facility. Unfortunately, agency higher-ups looked the other way.

When the Wampler story received media attention, Elsa Murano, USDA's undersecretary for food safety, attempted to discredit Erthal, claiming "he has not produced any proof, any evidence" of USDA negligence (leaving aside the fact that inspectors are prohibited from removing government documents from inspected establishments), and seemed to imply that he was responsible for the outbreak because he didn't push "harder to blow the whistle."



Photo Courtesy of United Poultry Concerns

Backing Off Drug Companies

Enforcement actions against improper drug advertising have dropped dramatically during the Bush administration, coinciding with a policy issued at the end of 2001 that positioned the agency's office of chief counsel as a clearinghouse for all notices of violations.

From December 2001 to September 2002, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) issued just 19 "notice of violation" or "warning" letters (an average of just two per month). In the three previous years, FDA sent 253 of these letters to manufacturers, or almost 85 per year.

This decline came at the same time drug advertising skyrocketed. Ads aimed at doctors increased by nearly 20 percent in 2002, yet FDA actions directed at such promotions decreased by almost 80 percent.² Likewise, direct-to-consumer advertisements submitted for FDA review increased by 75 percent in 2002, yet FDA enforcement actions in this area decreased by nearly 50 percent.

Daniel Troy, FDA's chief counsel, explained this discrepancy by claiming the agency's oversight is focused on fewer, more complicated cases; however, when pressed by a Boston Globe reporter, he could not offer a specific example. The drug industry, which gave \$5.7 million to 2000 Bush campaign efforts, faces virtually no deterrent to misleading consumers.

Enforcement Undermined

Financial Fraud

- Failed to act on tips of wide-ranging mutual fund abuses

Environment

- Pushed to slash EPA's already inadequate enforcement budget
- Reduced EPA enforcement personnel by 12 percent
- Reduced enforcement actions in 13 of 17 major categories
- Issued 58 percent fewer violation notices than the Clinton administration
- Reduced inspections, penalties for violations, and prosecution of environmental crime
- Pumped up enforcement statistics by counting counterterrorism-related investigations
- Halted investigations into power-plant pollution
- Took enforcement action against only 24 percent of those in significant noncompliance with clean water standards
- Significantly slowed cleanup of hazardous waste sites

Worker Health & Safety

- Eliminated 57 OSHA positions over the administration's first two years
- Proposed to cut OSHA's 2004 budget by \$3.2 million and eliminate an additional 77 positions, including 64 enforcement positions.
- Reduced penalties for willful violations by 25 percent
- Spent fewer hours on OSHA inspections
- Proposed to cut MSHA's core enforcement activities by more than \$6 million

Food Safety

- Mised the public about the Washington mad cow case and the likely effectiveness of USDA's weak testing program
- Proposed to cut direct funding for meat inspection by \$90 million and instead rely on industry "user fees" to pay inspectors, raising conflict-of-interest concerns
- Routinely allowed negligent companies to sell meat and poultry to American consumers
- Proposed to cut \$14 million cut from FDA's food safety efforts

Drug Ads

- Reduced action against improper drug advertising by 80 percent



Sworn to Secrecy

The Bush administration has moved to broadly restrict information that might interfere with its political agenda and point to stronger health, safety and environmental protections. In particular, the administration has cracked down on government whistleblowers, repeatedly refused congressional requests for information, and regularly invoked 9/11 to advance the cause of secrecy.

Information Withheld

FOIA

- Issued directive that grants federal agencies greater discretion to deny requests under the Freedom of Information Act
- Denied FOIA request for records on gun purchases, which the city of Chicago wanted for a civil suit against unscrupulous gun dealers

Stonewalling Congress

- Refused to turn over information on the Cheney task force
- Withheld analysis that undermined President Bush's "Clear Skies Initiative"
- Prevented EPA staff from speaking about contamination of drinking water caused by perchlorate from rocket fuel
- Refused to release calculations that suggested flaws in the administration's plan to introduce private managed care into Medicare
- Issued directive to tighten control over communication between Justice Department employees and Congress

Muzzling Whistleblowers

- Attempted to discredit USDA inspector who faulted agency for not acting on Listeria contamination
- Punished EPA ombudsman for opposing nuclear-waste cleanup settlements that appeared to be industry giveaways
- Silenced two potential whistleblowers from testifying on politicized scientific reports and rampant mismanagement at the Yucca Mountain nuclear-waste dump
- Imposed gag order on Yellowstone Park ranger who voiced concern over lax enforcement of wilderness rules
- Punished security expert who faulted FAA for rigging security tests

Invoking 9/11 for Secrecy

- Allowed companies to shield "critical infrastructure information" from public disclosure by handing it over to the Department of Homeland Security
- Broadly exempted energy information from FOIA
- Removed a slew of information from government web sites
- Created new catchall category — "Sensitive Homeland Security Information" — for hiding information
- Withdrew public information on chemical plant dangers, which was previously used to hold facilities accountable for safety improvements

Left in the Dark

The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), led by Bush appointees, has made it more difficult for the public to evaluate deficiencies in the electrical grid, which is especially troubling given the massive power outage in August 2003 that swept through New York, parts of New Jersey, Ohio and Michigan.

Shortly before the blackout, FERC issued a rule claiming that "critical energy infrastructure information" is exempt from the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). This covers anything deemed potentially useful to a terrorist attack on "production, generation, transportation, transmission or distribution of energy."

Needless to say, this is incredibly broad. For example, FERC no longer discloses "historical transmission planning reports," in which utilities describe their power flow, transmission plans and reliability, and present a detailed evaluation of system performance. In a provision of the rule urged by the power industry, utilities amazingly no longer have to even disclose plans for building a new plant — leaving no opportunity for public questioning at any point. Likewise, FERC is withholding maps on proposed pipelines, which carry high-pressure explosive gas, including one that would run through 12 New York counties.

While the usefulness of this information to terrorists is questionable — the administration has never specifically said why it thinks the information is dangerous — the broader usefulness is crystal clear, enabling the public to hold FERC and power companies accountable. Such public pressure and potential for embarrassment can provide important incentives for preventive action. As it stands now, the public could be left unaware of a potential problem until the next blackout happens.



Permanently Grounded

The Bush administration has punished government whistleblowers for speaking out on festering problems. In one case, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) transferred Bogdan Dzakovic, who formerly led mock raids on airports, to bureaucratic Siberia after he publicly faulted the agency for suppressing warnings and rigging security tests. "The more serious problems in aviation security we identified, the more the FAA tied our hands behind our backs and restricted our activities," Dzakovic told the 9/11 commission. "All we were doing in their eyes was identifying and causing problems that they preferred not to know about."

Describing his reassignment, Dzakovic said, "During most of 2002, my primary job was punching holes in paper and putting orientation binders together... My current job is even further removed from keeping bombs, weapons, and terrorists off planes."

Politics Over Science

From clean air to worker safety to healthy food, science is at odds with the Bush agenda. In response, the administration has suppressed and censored government reports, misrepresented scientific information, and stacked scientific advisory committees with its corporate and ideological allies.



Air Quality at Ground Zero

Following the collapse of the World Trade Center (WTC) towers, the surrounding area was blanketed by debris containing asbestos, lead, glass fibers, and concrete dust, among other dangerous ingredients, potentially putting clean-up workers and area residents at significant health risk.

Nonetheless, White House officials pressured the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to declare the air around Ground Zero "safe" even though it "did not have sufficient data and analyses to make such a blanket statement," according to EPA's inspector general. At the time, EPA had not tested for a number of pollutants — including particulate matter, dioxin, and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) — and had no adequate benchmarks to evaluate the health effects of airborne asbestos and the "cumulative or synergistic impacts of being exposed to several pollutants at once."

The White House Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), which was appointed to oversee public communications about WTC environmental conditions, forced EPA to add reassuring statements to its press releases and delete cautionary notes. Among other things, this meant withholding guidance for cleaning indoor spaces, as well as information about the potential health effects of WTC debris. EPA's inspector general compared two EPA releases with their original drafts, concluding, "Every change that was suggested by the CEQ contact was made."



Industry in Charge of Child Lead Poisoning

In the summer of 2002, a CDC advisory committee was set to reexamine federal standards for lead — which has recently been detected in drinking water at schools across the country — and the health risks posed to children.

Knowledgeable observers believed that the committee would advise more stringent controls based on new scientific evidence of lead's damaging effects even at low levels. However, Health and Human Services Secretary Tommy Thompson stepped in and stacked the committee with four new members friendly to the lead industry and predisposed against new regulation. This includes, for instance, Sergio Piomelli, a professor at Columbia Presbyterian Medical Center, who once said, "There is no epidemic of lead poisoning in the United States today, but some people are trying to create an epidemic by decree."

At the committee's October 2002 meeting, Piomelli admitted that his nomination came at the behest of the lead industry, saying, "Before some reporter detects it, I would like you to know that I was called a few months ago from somebody in the lead industry ... and asked if I don't mind if they nominated me for this committee. I said, 'Yes.'"

Science Thwarted

Clean Air & Environmental Protection

- Forced EPA to drop report findings on the seriousness of global warming
- Instructed USDA scientists to seek approval on all manuscripts pertaining to global warming, pesticides, and factory farms
- Suppressed children's health report that warned of mercury dangers
- Killed EPA plans to warn of that asbestos-contaminated insulation in millions of homes
- Added new members with corporate ties to a CDC committee on environmental health
- Altered scientific information to advance "hydraulic fracturing" for oil and gas development, used most by Halliburton
- Withheld scientific evidence of damaging effects of drilling in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge
- Dismissed scientific recommendations to increase water in Oregon's Klamath River Basin for salmon protection
- Doctored information on ecological problems in Yellowstone National Park
- Rejected study critical of plans to construct a power plant near Kentucky's Mammoth Cave National Park

Food & Drugs

- Mischaracterized study in extolling the benefits of prescription drug advertising to consumers
- Named nine food-industry representatives to an advisory committee on food safety
- Appointed seven members to an advisory committee on dietary guidelines who have significant ties to food and drug industries

Ergonomics

- Set up a new ergonomics advisory committee that would support the administration's position against regulation
- Removed three ergonomics experts from a study section that evaluates research grants on workplace injuries

Stem Cell Research

- Falsely claimed that the ban on stem cell research would not hamper medical progress
- Dismissed two members from the president's Council on Bioethics who had publicly supported stem cell research



Irresponsible Contracting

Under the Bush administration, federal contracting and grantmaking has frequently been done in secret, without accountability, and for apparently political purposes. A principle example is the no-bid Iraq contract awarded to Halliburton. However, the administration has undermined accountability for contracting in numerous other ways as well.

Undermining Sound Contracting

Contractor Responsibility

- Overturned Clinton-era contractor responsibility standards
- Abolished requirement designed to ensure fair labor practices by construction contractors
- Failed to use the Equal Opportunity Survey of federal contractors to target potential civil rights violations

Funding Religious Organizations

- Pushed legislation to allow taxpayer dollars to go to religious congregations for social services
- Issued administrative rules to implement faith-based initiative when legislation failed
- Inappropriately steered funds to religious congregations

Muzzling Grantees

- Launched audits of organizations for opposing administration policies on Head Start and sex education
- Threatened to remove funding from AIDS awareness group for activities that did not involve federal dollars
- Issued "global gag rule" forbidding international grantees from talking about abortion or counseling women on abortion

Privatizing the Federal Workforce

- Issued administrative changes to push privatization of 425,000 federal jobs
- Directed the National Park Service to examine 1,708 full-time positions for privatization, draining valuable resources

Secret Iraq Contracts

- Awarded billions to Halliburton as part of a no-bid, open-ended contract
- Invited a select number of politically well-connected companies to submit bids for reconstruction, ultimately settling on Bechtel, the largest donor to Republicans
- Awarded a \$45 million no-bid contract to scandal-ridden MCI/WorldComm

More Suspect Contracts

- Gave \$17 billion to Boeing Co. for jet refueling tankers despite studies that showed the planes weren't needed
- Awarded a giant \$13.5 million port-security grant to one Citgo refinery outweighing nine grants for Los Angeles, the busiest container port in the country

Money for Scofflaws

Say you are the government. You are considering two contractors, equal in every way except that one has repeatedly violated labor and environmental laws. Common sense says you contract with the law-abiding company. But then, you wouldn't be the Bush administration.

Two days after Christmas 2001, with no one around to object, the administration quietly revoked a rule issued at the end of the Clinton administration that instructed government contracting officers to consider a bidding company's record of compliance with the law — including tax laws, labor laws, employment laws, environmental laws, antitrust laws and consumer protection laws — before awarding taxpayer dollars.

Too frequently, federal contractors do not take these laws seriously, as a number of recent reports have documented. Between 1990 and 2002, the nation's top 43 contractors paid about \$3.4 billion in penalties, restitution, settlements, and Superfund cleanup costs, according to the Project on Government Oversight. Sixteen of these contractors were convicted of a total of 28 criminal violations, yet only one was suspended from doing business with the government, and that suspension lasted just five days.

The Clinton contractor responsibility rule would have provided a powerful new incentive for these contractors to clean up their act. However, industry groups, such as the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, mounted an aggressive campaign for repeal, and not surprisingly the Bush administration obliged.



Retaliatory Audits

While the Bush administration has relaxed oversight of faith-based grantees, it has sought to muzzle and intimidate other grantees with which it has policy disagreements. For example, in the summer of 2003, the administration launched an audit of a federal grantee, Advocates for Youth, apparently for the group's public opposition to funding of abstinence-only sex education. (Federal grantees are permitted to engage in such advocacy provided it is done with private funds.)

The audit was the third such review in a year, even though the previous two audits found no problems. "Advocates is concerned that it appears that the selective and political use of these audits is to intimidate organizations such as ours that support comprehensive sex education," said Bill Barker of Advocates for Youth. "They want to impose a kind of censorship."

Whose Government is This?

President Bush has broken all records for campaign fundraising, raking in tens of millions of dollars from special-interest donors. For their generosity, these special interests were able to install friends in key agency positions and dictate health, safety and environmental policy. The public has been left out in the cold.



Foxes In the Henhouse

The Bush administration is littered with ex-industry lobbyists who are now writing the rules to benefit their former employers. For instance:

- Jeffrey Holmstead, EPA's air administrator, previously represented numerous corporate interests seeking to block environmental safeguards. A number of these former clients, including Cinergy, directly benefited from the administration's decision — spearheaded by Holmstead — to relax emissions standards for aging coal-fired power plants.
- Former oil industry lobbyist J. Steven Griles, now deputy secretary of Interior, pushed to open millions of acres of public land to oil and gas development. In one case, Griles sought to suppress environmental concerns over development of Wyoming and Montana's Powder River Basin — a project that stands to benefit a number of his former clients.
- Mark Rey, who spent nearly 20 years at big-timber trade associations, oversees the Forest Service, where he has pushed to open Alaska's Tongass National Forest to logging, triple logging projects in the Sierra Nevada range, and restrict public participation in forest management.
- David Lauriski, head of the Mine Safety and Health Administration, spent more than 30 years in the coal mining industry, and in his new position has moved to weaken standards to protect miners from coal dust and diesel matter.

Unfortunately, these are just a few examples. Special interests have taken over our government from top to bottom, turning back years of progress on health, safety and the environment. That this puts the public and our natural resources at significant risk seems to be of little concern. For the special interests, these giveaways are just reward.



2000 Contributions to President Bush & Republican National Committee

Finance, Insurance & Real Estate	\$75.5 million
Misc. Business	\$40.2 million
Communications/Electronics	\$25.3 million
Energy & Natural Resource Industries	\$20.7 million
Health Care Industry	\$15.1 million
Agribusiness	\$14.6 million
Transportation Industry	\$13.9 million
Lawyers & Lobbyists	\$12.7 million
Construction	\$11.8 million
Ideology/Single-Issue	\$5.4 million

Source: Center for Responsive Politics

What You Can Do

You can help stem the tide of this special interest influence. Visit the Citizens for Sensible Safeguards web site at <http://www.sensible safeguards.org> where you can:

- Sign a statement protesting the dismantling of crucial public safeguards;
- Sign up to receive regular updates on health, safety and the environment;
- Read the full report on the administration's record;
- Write your member of Congress to register your concerns; and
- Let President Bush know you are paying attention.



SPECIAL INTEREST TAKEOVER

About Citizens for Sensible Safeguards

In 1995, more than 200 public interest organizations – representing everything from environmental and consumer concerns to workers and civil rights – came together to form the Citizens for Sensible Safeguards coalition. Through the remainder of the 90s, this coalition successfully beat back a string of regulatory “reform” bills that sought to prevent new public and environmental safeguards. Since then, coalition members have focused their attention on special-interest influence over the executive branch. This brochure presents an overview of the problems that coalition members have confronted.

