

Letter to Potential Clients of David Bernhardt:

To Whom It May Concern —

As principles, partners, shareholders, and clients of former Interior Secretary David Bernhardt's former firm, Brownstein Hyatt Farber Schreck, you likely will be among his first phone calls as he seeks new employment after the Trump administration. If he does reach out, you should consider whether you can trust him with your business given the baggage he now carries. Whatever his reputation was before his service to the Trump administration, it is unquestionably problematic now.

Former President Trump's efforts to undermine democracy and promulgate the big lie that there was widespread fraud in the 2020 presidential election to the American people posed one of the gravest threats to our country in recent history, culminating in a violent insurrection last month. But President Trump wasn't the only one misinforming the public. Many senior-level officials tried to cover-up the administration's most shocking abuses of power, including David Bernhardt.

In June 2020, the U.S. Park Police, which Bernhardt oversaw, violently cleared Lafayette Square Park by tear-gassing nonviolent protestors and attacking journalists — all so President Trump could stage a photo opportunity. After this brutal and undemocratic display, a park police spokesperson admitted to using smoke and irritating agents against peaceful protestors. Despite these well-documented facts, Bernhardt continued to misinform by denying that tear gas was used — directly contradicting the agency spokesperson's response.

Bernhardt's deceit fit a pattern. Even before the big lie, the Department of the Interior's internal watchdog revealed that department officials under Bernhardt's leadership deliberately withheld "sensitive" and potentially damaging records about him that were to be released as part of a lawsuit prior to his confirmation process. In response to questions from Congress, he stated that he was not aware of any cases in which the Interior "purposely withheld or improperly delayed the sharing of scientific information with the public where disclosure was appropriate," despite having personally blocked the release of a scientific report on the effects of pesticides on wildlife.

Bernhardt's continued refusal to acknowledge basic facts and his penchant for dishonesty underscores his willingness to cover up and deflect the truth in blind support of Trump. You and your colleagues should think carefully about whether you want to associate with—to entrust your brand to—someone with that reputation. You should further consider whether hiring Bernhardt would reward his lies with your business and whether you want to send the signal to the public (and your clients or customers) that the abuses of power he enabled and the lies he told were not only acceptable but laudable. You can do better.

There are some lines that simply cannot be crossed. Bernhardt's cover-ups and lies put our democracy in grave danger. His actions are diametrically opposed to our democratic values and the values espoused by your company. When Bernhardt tries to wield his experience in order to be paid by your organization, please consider rejecting him. Undermining our democracy and peddling lies is unacceptable — and it is the responsibility of all Americans, especially corporations, to stand on the side of America, democracy, and truth.

Sincerely,

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