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 **OPENTHEBOOKS OVERSIGHT REPORT**

CONGRESSIONAL THIRD PARTY PAID TRAVEL

**Thousands of Paid-For Congressional Trips, Millions of Dollars in
Federal Grants, And Hundreds of Thousands of Dollars In Campaign
Contributions**

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**Thousands Of Paid-For Congressional Trips,
Millions Of Dollars In Federal Grants, And Hundreds Of
Thousands Of Dollars In Campaign Contributions**

Published: July 2022

Dedicated to Dr. Tom Coburn

OpenTheBooks Honorary Chairman
Rest In Peace - March 28, 2020

By Adam Andrzejewski
Founder/CEO

Thomas W. Smith
Chairman

*"OpenTheBooks is doing the work I envisioned when the Coburn-Obama bill became law.
Their innovative app and other tools are putting sunlight through a magnifying glass."*

U.S. Senator Tom Coburn, MD
Washington, D.C. | March 11, 2014

Our Report Made Possible By:

The "Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006"

Sponsors:

Sen. Tom Coburn (R-OK) & Sen. Barack Obama (D-IL)
(Public Law 109-282, 109th Congress)

*"I know that restoring transparency is not only the surest way to
achieve results, but also to earn back the trust in government..."*

U.S. Sen. Barack Obama

SCOPE & METHODOLOGY

By law, members of Congress must detail the travel-related expenses reimbursed by non-government sources and charitable contributions made in lieu of honoraria (a payment for services that do not have a set fee).



Our auditors at OpenTheBooks.com received copies of these reported travel expenses through the Freedom of Information Act and analyzed them. We paid special attention to trips funded by five influential nonprofits that received a combined \$63 million in federal funds between 2017 and 2021.

We searched grants and contracts in the federal checkbook to see how much taxpayer money each of five nonprofits received between 2017 and 2021.

We also searched on the Federal Election Commission's [online database](#) for the campaign contributions made by the executives, key people, and employees of the nonprofits that funded congressional travel. Our analysis of the campaign donations is included in this report.

WHO WE ARE

American Transparency (OpenTheBooks.com) is a public charity. We do not accept government money. Our oversight reports present hard data so citizens, media, think tanks, politicians, and watchdogs can “follow the money.” Hard facts are non-partisan and enhance the public discourse.

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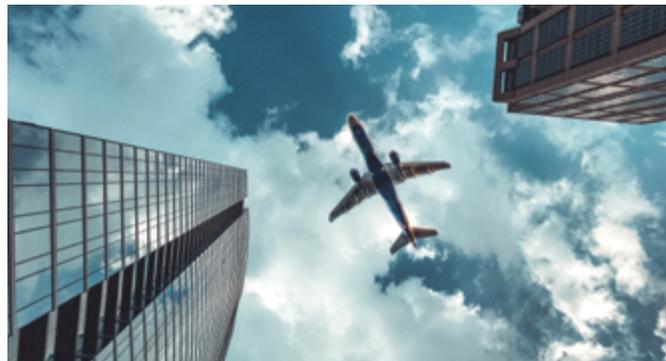
TOP 10 TAKEAWAYS

1 Between 2017 and 2021, more than **500 congressmembers** and their staff reported taking almost 8,200 trips paid for by about 700 third-party organizations.

2 Representatives or their staffers took **2,629 trips** to foreign destinations and 5,563 trips to domestic destinations.

3 Half the foreign trips went to five popular overseas destinations:

	ISRAEL 939 TRIPS
	BERLIN 103 TRIPS
	PARIS 102 TRIPS
	TOKYO 100 TRIPS
	BRUSSELS 76 TRIPS



4 Five nonprofits that provided members or their staffers with 940 paid-for destinations, received \$63 million in federal contracts and grants from 2017 to 2021. These non-profits include The Aspen Institute, United Nations Foundation, Atlantic Council of the United States, German Marshall Fund, and the Woodrow Wilson International Center For Scholars.

5 While this practice isn't illegal, each trip presents lawmakers with a potential conflict of interest because it could be seen as buying influence. Each organization is globalist and tries to influence the world order.

6

An unholy alliance:

THE ASPEN INSTITUTE

PAID-FOR 388 CONGRESSIONAL TRIPS AND RECEIVED FEDERAL GRANTS FOR \$40.2 MILLION

THE UNITED NATIONS FOUNDATION

PAID-FOR 247 TRIPS AND RECEIVED \$11.3 MILLION

THE ATLANTIC COUNCIL

PAID-FOR 52 TRIPS AND RECEIVED \$5.9 MILLION

THE GERMAN MARSHALL FUND

PAID-FOR 131 TRIPS AND RECEIVED \$3 MILLION

THE WOODROW WILSON INTERNATIONAL CENTER

PAID-FOR 122 TRIPS AND RECEIVED \$2.6 MILLION

7

Furthermore, employees of these non-profit organizations also gave large political contributions - including 5,716 individual gifts totaling \$541,000 during the period.

8

Political contributions:

THE ASPEN INSTITUTE

3,195 CONTRIBUTIONS FOR \$279,000

THE UNITED NATIONS FOUNDATION

1,510 CONTRIBUTIONS FOR \$71,000

THE ATLANTIC COUNCIL

630 CONTRIBUTIONS FOR \$79,000

THE GERMAN MARSHALL FUND

291 CONTRIBUTIONS FOR \$95,000

THE WOODROW WILSON INTERNATIONAL CENTER

90 CONTRIBUTIONS FOR \$17,000

9

Many board members, chairpersons, directors, CEOs, CFOs, executive vice-presidents, key executives and many other employees of these five organizations contributed five-figure gifts to politicians or political action committees (PACs). Nearly all the gifts were to Democrats.

10

All of the transactions listed in our report - at arm's length - are legal, but that does not mean it is ethical. There is at least an appearance of a conflict-of-interest - on every transaction. Therefore, a simple reform cures the problem: If an entity is receiving federal funds or subsidies, then there is a bar on paying for congressional travel.



PART 1 TRAVEL PAID FOR BY THIRD PARTIES

Members of Congress frequently travel on the dime of third parties, which are non-governmental organizations. In theory, the trips are paid for with non-taxpayer dollars and serve an educational purpose. However, many of the top organizations paying for the congressional travel are themselves receiving millions of dollars in federal grants.

Lawmakers also [use direct U.S. taxpayer money to fund their trips](#). On trips arranged by the State Department and funded by the Treasury Department, lawmakers confer with foreign officials, visit U.S. military operations and oversee American-funded projects.

Also [foreign governments pay-for](#) members and their staff to visit their countries, and these trips are deemed cultural exchanges.

ORGANIZATION	TOTAL TRIPS SPONSORED	TOTAL FEDERAL FUNDS RECEIVED
ASPEN INSTITUTE	388	\$40.2 MILLION
UNITED NATIONS FOUNDATION	247	\$11.3 MILLION
ATLANTIC COUNCIL OF THE UNITED STATES	52	\$5.9 MILLION
GERMAN MARSHALL FUND OF THE UNITED STATES	131	\$3 MILLION
WOODROW WILSON INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR SCHOLARS	122	\$2.6 MILLION



CASE STUDY

The Washington, D.C.-based think tank describes itself as a “nonpartisan forum for values-based leadership and the exchange of ideas” and paid-for 388 member/staffer trips and received federal aid of \$40.2 million.

The Institute sent members and their staff all over the world, including:

	INDIA 36 TRIPS		CZECH REPUBLIC 16 TRIPS
	ESTONIA 30 TRIPS		JAPAN 15 TRIPS
	NORWAY 19 TRIPS		CHINA 11 TRIPS
	CANADA 18 TRIPS		RWANDA 8 TRIPS
	SOUTH KOREA 16 TRIPS		& MANY U.S. STATES

The Institute paid for trips for staffers of:

	MAJORITY LEADER STENY HOYER N. CAROLINA, MARYLAND & OHIO (4 TRIPS)
	MAJORITY WHIP JAMES CLYBURN VIRGINIA, 2021 (1 STAFFER)
	REPUBLICAN LEADER KEVIN MCCARTHY MARYLAND, 2021 (1 STAFFER)
	REP. GREGORY MEEKS CHAIRMAN OF THE HOUSE OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS COMMITTEE VISITED SOUTH KOREA & JAPAN IN APRIL 2017

Several Democratic members of the House Foreign Affairs Committee traveled on The Aspen Institute’s dime:

	REP. DINA TITUS CALIFORNIA & PENNSYLVANIA
	REP. GERALD CONNOLLY SOUTH KOREA, JAPAN & PENNSYLVANIA
	REP. AMI BERA GERMANY
	REP. THEODORE DEUTCH CZECH REPUBLIC, CALIFORNIA, PENNSYLVANIA & MASSACHUSETTS

A staffer of Rep. Tom Malinowski, vice chair of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, traveled to **Maryland** in January 2020, while staffers of other committee members traveled to **Estonia** and **NYC**.

Aspen Institute Logo: By Aspen Words - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=42647153>



THE UNITED NATIONS FOUNDATION

CASE STUDY

The Washington, D.C.-based charity supports the United Nations and its activities, and gave out 247 member/staffer trips and received federal aid amounting to \$11.3 million.

The U.N. Foundation sent members and staffers mainly to **African, Middle Eastern and Asian countries**, as well as many trips to the U.N.'s headquarters in New York City.



TANZANIA
15 TRIPS



CYPRUS
11 TRIPS



NIGER
8 TRIPS



HAITI
6 TRIPS



DOMINICAN REPUBLIC
6 TRIPS



THAILAND
6 TRIPS



BANGLADESH
6 TRIPS



LIBERIA
4 TRIPS



IVORY COAST
4 TRIPS



USA
NEW YORK CITY



JAMES CLYBURN
Democratic Majority Whip



REP. GREGORY MEEKS
Democratic Chairman of the
House Foreign Affairs Committee

Clyburn and Meeks took trips to **New York City** in April 2018. Meeks' staffer also visited **Cyprus** in September 2021, paid-for by the organization.

A staffer of Democratic Caucus Chairman Hakeem Jeffries also took a May 2019 trip to NYC paid-for by the foundation.

Democratic members of the House Foreign Affairs Committee traveled on the U.N. Foundation's dime:



REP. DAVID CICILLINE
CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC, 2017

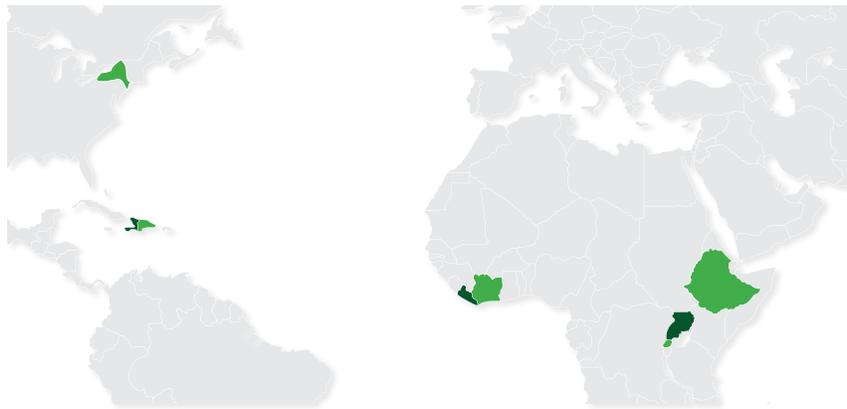


REP. VINCENTE GONZALEZ
JORDAN AND LEBANON, 2019



REP. KAREN BASS
NYC, 2018 AND 2019

Staffers of several Democratic members of the House Foreign Affairs Committee took trips to **Haiti, Dominican Republic, Ivory Coast, Liberia, Ethiopia, Uganda, Rwanda and NYC**, all paid for by the U.N. Foundation.



REP. BRAD SHERMAN



REP. AMI BERA



REP. CHRISTINA HOULAHAN



REP. GERALD CONNOLLY



REP. TED LIEU



REP. SARA JACOBS



REP. DAVID CICILLINE



REP. COLIN ALLRED



REP. JUAN VARGAS

THE ATLANTIC COUNCIL

CASE STUDY

The Washington, D.C.-based think tank encourages cooperation between North America and Europe and describes itself as a “nonpartisan organization that galvanizes U.S. leadership and engagement in the world, in partnership with allies and partners, to shape solutions to global challenges.”

The Council provided 52 member/staffer trips and received federal aid and contracts totaling \$5.9 million.

The only member to take a trip paid-for by The Atlantic Council was then-Rep. Will Hurd (R-TX), who went to Las Vegas in July 2017.

The rest of the trips were taken by congressional staffers:

	UKRAINE 32 TRIPS TAKEN BY STAFFERS FROM 14 MEMBER OFFICES		ALBANIA 3 STAFFER TRIPS
	ABU DHABI, UAE 7 STAFFER TRIPS		KOSOVO 3 STAFFER TRIPS
			SERBIA 3 STAFFER TRIPS

A staffer of Rep. Ted Lieu, a Democratic member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, traveled to Ukraine in 2018, paid for by the organization.



THE GERMAN MARSHALL FUND OF THE UNITED STATES

CASE STUDY

The Fund is a nonpartisan American public policy think tank headquartered in Washington, D.C. that promotes the cooperation of the United States and Europe. It describes itself as championing “the principles of democracy, human rights, and international cooperation, which have served as the bedrock of peace and prosperity since the end of World War II, but are under increasing strain.”

It paid for 131 member/staffer trips and reaped \$3 million in federal aid and contracts.

All the trips were to **Brussels, Belgium** and several **German** cities, with the exception of half-a-dozen trips to **Colorado Springs, CO** and one trip to **Paris**.



BELGIUM



FRANCE



GERMANY



USA



REP. GREGORY MEEKS
Chairman of the House
Foreign Affairs Committee

Meeks traveled to Berlin and Elmau, Germany in February 2017, and Colorado Springs, CO in April 2018, paid for by the Fund.



REP. THEODORE DEUTCH,
Democratic member of the
House Foreign Affairs Committee

Deutch went to Brussels, Belgium and Munich, Germany in October 2017, along with a staff member, on the Fund’s dime.

A staffer of Democratic Caucus Chairman Hakeem Jeffries visited **Munich, Germany and Brussels, Belgium** in July 2018.

A staffer of Rep. Tom Malinowski, vice chair of House Foreign Affairs Committee, went to **Paris** in September 2019.



THE WOODROW WILSON INTERNATIONAL CENTER FOR SCHOLARS

CASE STUDY

The center in Washington, D.C. says “our nonpartisan insight and analysis has helped power the decisions of policymakers, civic leaders, and the general public across a wide spectrum of beliefs and backgrounds.”

It paid for 122 trips for members/staffers and received \$2.6 million in federal aid and contracts.



IRELAND
12 TRIPS



MEXICO
8 TRIPS



RUSSIA
11 TRIPS



GERMANY
5 TRIPS



SWEDEN
11 TRIPS



BELGIUM
5 TRIPS



COLOMBIA
10 TRIPS



FRANCE
5 TRIPS



USA
DOZENS OF TRIPS TO MAJOR AMERICAN CITIES, INCLUDING LAS VEGAS, NEW YORK CITY AND SEATTLE.

The Center paid for staffers of Majority Leader Steny Hoyer to travel to Berlin, Brussels and Paris in 2017; Columbia in 2019 and Mexico and Texas in 2020.

Staffers of members of the House Foreign Affairs Committee traveled on the Center's dime:



REP. TED LIEU (D)

One of Lieu's staffers went to Las Vegas in August 2019.



REP. JUAN VARGAS (D)

One of Vargas' staffers went to Dublin in April 2017.



PART 2 CAMPAIGN CONTRIBUTIONS

IT'S ENOUGH OF A CONFLICT OF INTEREST FOR INFLUENTIAL NON-PROFITS TO FUND TRIPS FOR CONGRESSMEMBERS AND THEIR STAFF WHILE RECEIVING GOVERNMENT FUNDING.

However, campaign contributions from key executives and employees blur the line between educating lawmakers and quid-pro-quo.

Each of the five non-profits that send congressmembers on paid-for trips have made generous contributions to the campaigns of Democratic lawmakers, President Joe Biden's campaigns and Democratic political action committees, or PACs.

For example, employees of all five organizations contributed heavily through [ActBlue](#), an online fundraising platform used by Democratic candidates.

ActBlue

THE ASPEN INSTITUTE

Aspen Institute employees made 3,195 contributions to Democratic candidates and PACs, totaling almost \$279,000. Of that, \$59,000 went to three Biden campaign funds and almost \$21,000 went to the Democratic National Committee.

Dana Hyde, co-chair of the Aspen Partnership for an Inclusive Economy, contributed \$28,690 in 2019 and 2020 to three Biden campaign funds and the DNC.

Emily Kaiser, associate director of the Aspen Institute's New Voices Fellowship, contributed \$10,000 in 2020 and 2021 to the DNC, to a PAC for Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer and other congressional and Senate campaigns.

Other employees made 62 contributions of \$1,000 or more to congressional and Senate candidates, the DNC, campaigns for Biden and Kamala Harris, and more.

One employee gave \$650 to The Lincoln Project, which aimed to prevent Donald Trump's re-election in 2020 and defeat Republicans running for re-election in the U.S. Senate.



U.N. FOUNDATION

U.N. Foundation employees made 1,510 contributions to Democratic candidates and PACs for more than \$71,000, almost \$14,000 of which went to two Biden campaign funds and \$4,400 of which went to the DNC.

Former U.S. Sen. Timothy Wirth, president of the U.N. Foundation from its inception in 1998 until 2013 and now on the Foundation's board, donated \$10,350 between 2018 and 2020 to the DNC and congressional and Senate campaigns.

President and CEO Kathryn Calvin Walters contributed \$6,900 between 2017 and 2021. While she donated \$2,650 to Republican Sen. Lindsey Graham in 2017 and 2018, the rest of her donations went to the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, then-Congressman Beto O'Rourke, a Democrat; a Biden PAC and other Democratic campaigns.

Reid Detchon, senior advisor for climate solutions at the Foundation, donated \$3,890 through ActBlue, to Sen. Amy Klobuchar's campaign and to League of Conservation Voters.

Twenty-one of the contributions from U.N. Foundation employees were for \$1,000 or more.

ATLANTIC COUNCIL

Atlantic Council employees made 623 contributions to Democratic candidates and PACs, totaling almost \$79,000, almost \$19,000 of which went to two Biden campaign funds.

Between 2017 and 2020, then-Executive Vice President Damon Wilson made 97 contributions to two dozen Democratic campaign accounts – including Biden campaign and congressional and Senate candidates – totaling \$41,445, more than half the total by all employees.

Cynthia Quarterman, a distinguished fellow with the Global Energy Center at the Atlantic Council, donated a combined \$6,100 to Biden and the campaign of U.S. Sen. Raphael Warnock from Georgia.

Emerson Brooking, a senior fellow in the Council's Digital Forensic Research lab, donated \$3,300 to Biden, Sen. Bernie Sanders and others in 2020 and 2021.

Most of the contributions from other employees – 77 percent – were for \$100 or less.

THE GERMAN MARSHALL FUND

The German Marshall Fund employees made 291 contributions to Democratic candidates and PACs totaling more than \$95,000, more than \$50,000 of which went to two Biden campaign funds and \$6,900 of which went to the DNC.

Senior Fellow Laura Rosenburger, who was foreign policy advisor for Hillary for America before joining the Fund, donated more than \$20,000 to congressional and Senate candidates, including \$8,400 to two Biden campaigns.

Then-Executive Vice President Derek Chollet contributed \$7,800 to congressional campaigns.

Vice President and CFO Tim Childress made 25 small donations totaling \$1,200 in 2020 to Stop Republicans PAC and other campaigns through ActBlue.

WOODROW WILSON CENTER

Woodrow Wilson Center employees made 90 contributions to Democratic candidates and PACs for almost \$17,000, including \$10,800 to two Biden funds. All donations \$1,000 and more were to Biden campaign funds.

Thirty-seven donations were mostly in denominations of \$25 from one person to the campaign of Sen. Chris Van Hollen of Maryland, totaling \$975.

There was one \$500 donation to the National Republican Senate Committee in 2020.

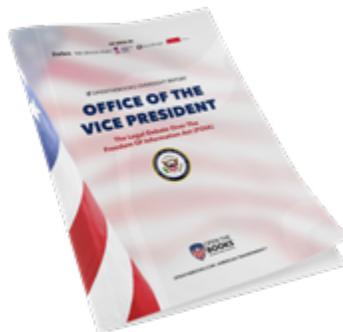
Anders Beal, a program associate with the Center, made 20 small donations through ActBlue and to Biden for President, totaling \$637 in 2020.

PREVIOUS OVERSIGHT

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**WHITE HOUSE
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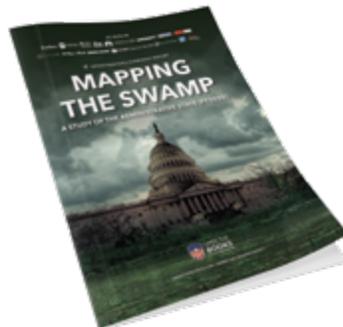
**OFFICE OF THE
VICE PRESIDENT**
*The Legal Debate Over The
Freedom Of Information Act*



WHERE'S THE PORK?
*Mapping Waste, Fraud,
Corruption, and Taxpayer Abuse*



DR. ANTHONY FAUCI
Investigating Fauci's Finances



MAPPING THE SWAMP
*A Study of the Administrative
State (FY2020)*



U.S. FOREIGN AID
*How and Where The U.S.
Spent \$282.6 Billion
(FY2013-2018)*

AS FEATURED IN



ABOUT AMERICAN TRANSPARENCY

OPENTHEBOOKS.COM

EVERY DIME. ONLINE. IN REAL TIME.

We are the world's largest private database of public-sector expenditures. Captured \$12 trillion in public expenditures including all disclosed federal spending since 2001; 49 of 50 state checkbooks; and 25 million public employee salary and pension records from 50,000 public bodies across America.

Our aggressive transparency and forensic auditing has led to the assembly of grand juries, indictments, and successful prosecutions; congressional briefings, hearings, audits, subpoenas, and legislation; administrative and White House policy changes; and much more.

In 2020...

The President's Budget To Congress FY2021 included a first-ever chapter, "Stopping Wasteful and Unnecessary Spending," which was inspired by our oversight report, *Where's The Pork? A Study of \$600 Billion In Federal Grants*. Included in the President's Budget was our report, *Use-It-Or-Lose-It - How The Federal Government Spent \$97 Billion In September 2018*. The President committed to stopping this wasteful phenomenon. Also, the budget cited our report on the National Endowment of the Arts as the principle reason to eliminate the agency. (Media coverage included USA Today, The Wall Street Journal, and FOX News.)

In 2019...

Our Top 82 U.S. Non-Profit Hospitals: Quantifying Government Payments & Financial Assets report launched on *FOX News' Tucker Carlson Tonight* and *USA TODAY*. This report backstopped President Trump's two executive orders on healthcare price transparency by showing that wealthy charitable non-profit healthcare providers and their CEO's were making big profits. Colorado Governor Jared Polis (D) also cited this data in his state of the state address while arguing for price reforms.

In 2018...

Open The Books' Mapping The Swamp, A Study Of The Administrative State Media report launched on *FOX News' The Ingraham Angle* and directly led to Representative Judy Hice's (R-GA) legislation on pension and bonus transparency (H.R. 2612). Furthermore, we briefed the Executive Office of the President, Office of Management & Budget regarding our policy ideas to drain the swamp.

In 2017...

The Tax Cuts And Jobs Act 2017, passed into law and included a claw-back tax on Ivy League-style, excessive university endowments. The *Boston Globe* cited our Ivy League, Inc. oversight report as a catalyst for the legislative provision. Coverage included *The Wall Street Journal* and eight segments on *Fox News*.

In 2016...

We exposed the \$20 million luxury-art procurement program at the Department of Veterans Affairs, which forced a public apology from the V.A. Secretary and the adoption of new rules to stop the abuse. Coverage included *Good Morning America* and *ABC World News Tonight*.

IN RECOGNITION OF OUR TEAM

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Chief Executive Officer
& Founder

Craig Mijares

Chief Operating
Officer

Matthew Tyrmand

Deputy Director
at Large

Courtenay Lyons

Development
Director

Rachel O'Brien

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Christopher Neefus

Communications
Director

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Public Relations
Specialist

Amber Todoroff

Writing
Specialist

Milan Erastus-Obilo

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