

Trump's Pick to Head the FDA Is a Big Pharma Mega-Lobbyist



By Alex Thomas | [The Anti-Media](#)

(ANTIMEDIA) President Trump's promise to "drain the swamp" seems to nearly have been all but forgotten. He's appointed [bankers](#) to run his economy, [climate-change deniers](#) to lead the EPA, a [defense executive](#) to help run the Pentagon, and a [consultant](#) to lead the FCC. And now, he's appointed Scott Gottlieb to head up the Food and Drug Administration (FDA).

While Democrats will rage that Trump has no sense, Gottlieb is a sound pick for Trump's agenda to cut regulations. Nearly every one of his cabinet appointees detests regulations and has set out to eliminate them. Some of those regulations are probably arduous and unnecessary. But others, like [the FCC regulations](#) keeping internet companies off your private information – a rule the administration rolled back last week, actually benefit the American public more than multi-billion dollar companies.

Democrats are worried that Gottlieb has more interests in the companies he's been associated with than the good of the American public – and those concerns are only intensified by the escalating opioid epidemic.

Public Citizen, a left-leaning consumer rights watchdog, published [a press release](#) on Tuesday blasting Gottlieb's credentials and claiming he's unfit to head the FDA. The group stated that from 2013 to 2015, "*Gottlieb received a total of \$414,000 from multiple drug and medical device companies—including Pfizer (the maker of an extended release oxycodone opioid product), AstraZeneca, GlaxoSmithKline, Bristol-Myers Squibb and Valeant Pharmaceuticals.*" In 2012, GlaxoSmithKline [was forced](#) to pay \$3 billion for fraud.

Perhaps the most frightening part of Gottlieb's resume is his seeming allegiance to opioid companies. These groups are notoriously heavy-handed in their lobbying and lax in their commitment to customers. A set of [newly released financial disclosures](#) paints the Trump pick as a man who doesn't mind filling his pockets with money drawn from opioids. He's received tens of thousands of dollars in speaking fees from opioid companies. In 2012, Gottlieb [penned an op-ed](#) for the American Enterprise Institute in which he attacked the Drug Enforcement Agency for being too zealous in their investigation of opioid distributor Cardinal Health.

Gottlieb [defends his intent](#) to cut regulations by hoping this will get drugs onto the market faster. This could also lead to reducing the time that drug companies are able to hold a monopoly patent on their products – the sooner the monopoly expires, the sooner other companies can begin making the product, thus driving competition and cutting the price of a drug. While the left will attack him as a corporate stooge, most of us will agree that cheaper drugs are a good thing.

Senator Sherrod Brown (D-OH) [told reporters](#) earlier this week that "*we need all hands on deck to fight [the opioid] crisis,*

including and especially the FDA. Unfortunately, Dr. Gottlieb's record indicates that as commissioner he wouldn't take the epidemic and the FDA's authority to rein in prescription painkillers and other drugs seriously enough."

That sentiment will certainly be echoed by members of the house who represent districts racked by opioid crises and are facing pressure from constituents to be tough on companies that manufacture drugs like Vicodin and Oxycodone.

Unlike some other Trump cabinet picks, Gottlieb actually has a reasonable amount of experience. He's a medical doctor and a cancer survivor. He even served in the FDA under President Bush (though his lobbying career is a bit more extensive than his career in government). That experience and familiarity with the beltway insiders could help ease his Senate confirmation. However, if any progressives are on the panel, he will likely face burning questions about his deep ties with massive pharmaceutical companies.

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