

May 18, 2020

Altria Group, Inc.
6601 W. Broad Street
Richmond, VA 23230-1723

To:

Billy Gifford, Chief Executive Officer
Murray Garnick, Executive Vice President and General Counsel
Todd Walker, Senior Vice President, Government Affairs
Megan Witherspoon, Vice President, Communications

We are writing to urge that you cease your association with, and end your funding of, the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), which is leading an effort to lobby government officials—including President Trump—to ignore public health officials and discontinue mitigation measures before the COVID-19 outbreak is under control. ALEC's work in this effort, which your company is funding through its support of ALEC, poses a serious threat to the health and safety of all us all.

Recently, ALEC teamed up with a coalition of far-right lobbying groups to launch the "Save Our Country" campaign protesting the public health quarantine orders put in place to reduce the health risks of COVID-19. As *The Washington Post* recently reported, the ALEC-led coalition's focus is on "pushing for the White House and GOP lawmakers to push back against health professionals who have urged more caution."

Among health professionals, the consensus is clear on the risks of rolling back protective measures too early. As a prominent epidemiologist from Columbia University put it, "The math is unfortunately pretty simple. It's not a matter of whether infections will increase but by how much." Dr. Anthony Fauci, the leading infectious-disease expert at the National Institutes of Health, has warned that "unless we get the virus under control, the real recovery economically is not going to happen." Prematurely moving to lift public-safety regulations poses a clear threat to public health.

ALEC's own partner organizations, such as the Convention of States and FreedomWorks, are organizing and promoting dangerous protests in a variety of states in direct violation of public health orders, which we know will lead to the increased spread of COVID-19. These organizations have previously sponsored ALEC conferences and have been active members of ALEC along with your company.

Make no mistake, your continued financial support of ALEC is an active endorsement of this dangerous effort. The money your company is contributing to ALEC is helping fund this campaign—one which is direct contravention of public health guidelines.

ALEC has a long and well-documented history of opposing what is in the interest of the public for the sake of profit. The organization's agenda has included limiting people's access to lifesaving healthcare, denying climate science and repealing environmental safeguards that keep our air and water safe and clean, restricting workers' right to safe working conditions, lobbying on behalf big tobacco corporations against commonsense public health interests,

promoting laws that have led to more gun violence, privatizing social safety nets like Medicare, Medicaid and Social Security—the list goes on.

ALEC pushes this dangerous agenda behind closed doors, skirting state gift and lobbying laws at lavish resorts where legislators and lobbyists conspire in secret to rig the rules of the game without the public's consent. Much like ALEC's anti-transparent operating style, it has also pushed anti-democratic laws that block Americans' right to vote and restrict voters' right to know who is funding political campaigns.

We, the undersigned organizations, work on a variety of issues and don't always agree on every policy, but are well aware of the suffering and anxiety many people are feeling because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Many of those who have gotten sick, are dealing with emergency family care issues, or have lost their job are members of our organizations. We understand the damage the COVID-19 crisis has caused to our communities and economy and support lifting public safety measures when it's safe, but now is not the time to rush a political agenda or jump to unfounded conclusions. To get through this crisis together, we must follow science and listen to public health experts instead of shutting them out of the conversation.

At this time of crisis, we are asking your company align its values with what's best for the health and safety of everyone, reject this dangerous political campaign that will only prolong this crisis and put us all at risk, and immediately cease all funding and sever all ties with ALEC.

Sincerely,

Adrian Dominican Sisters
AFL-CIO
African American Ministers In Action
Alliance for Retired Americans
Amalgamated Transit Union
American Family Voices
American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME)
American Federation of Teachers (AFT)
Americans for Democratic Action
Battleborn Progress
Boston Common Asset Management
Brave New Films
Campaign for America's Future
Center for Biological Diversity
Center for Common Ground
Center for Constitutional Rights
Center for Media and Democracy
Center for Popular Democracy
Centered Wealth
Clean Yield Asset Management
Common Cause
Communication Workers of America (CWA)
Congregation of St. Joseph
Courage California
Daughters of Charity, Province of St. Louise
Democracy 21

Democracy Initiative
Franciscan Action Network
Free Press
Free Speech For People
Friends of the Earth
Greenpeace USA
Harrington Investments, Inc.
Holy Spirit Missionary Sisters, JPIC-USA
In The Public Interest
Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy
Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility
International Brotherhood of Teamsters
Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement
Jefferson County Teachers Association
Malden Education Association
Mercy Investment Services
Missionary Oblates/OIP Trust
Money Out Voters In
Montana Environmental Information Center
National Council of Urban Education Associations
New Progressive Alliance
NorthStar Asset Management, Inc
People Demanding Action
People For the American Way
People's Action
PolicyLink
Progress Florida
Progress Iowa
Public Citizen
Rise and Resist
rootsaction.org
Save Our State - Alaska
Science and Environmental Health Network
Sierra Club
Sisters of the Presentation of Aberdeen SD
Social Equity Group
Stand UP to ALEC
Teamsters Local 104 (Arizona)
The Sisters of St. Francis of Philadelphia
The Wildfire Project
True North Research
UnChainDemocracy.org
Union of Concerned Scientists
Unitarian Universalist Association
UnKoch My Campus
Women's Institute for Freedom of the Press
Zevin Asset Management