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## TODAY'S "QUICK HIT": CONFLICT OF INTEREST: WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

By Stephen L. Bakke  January 16, 2017



### *Here's what provoked me:*

*Too often politicians on BOTH sides of the aisle refer to their opponents' "conflicts of interest" as if it were some sort of disease, or a crime punishable by at least "stoning." My friends, there is NOTHING wrong with having a conflict of interest. It's how you deal with it and conduct yourself that makes a difference. And very often, dealing with the situation appropriately isn't an easy thing to accomplish. It seems you will NEVER make your opponents happy.*

### *Here's my response:*

#### **Conflict of Interest: What Does That Mean?**

All politicians refer to opponents' "conflicts of interest" as if it were a disease, or something punishable by ceremonial "stoning." My friends, there's NOTHING wrong with having a conflict of interest. It's how you conduct yourself in the face of it that makes a difference. And very often, dealing with the situation to everyone's satisfaction is impossible.

Trump deserves no sympathy, but in this case he's got an impossible situation to deal with. He certainly didn't enter politics to further his business interests. He did it because of a combination of hubris and narcissism, but also sincere opinions about what's best for our country.

Dr. Aasma Shaukat ("A nation backslides on ethics," 1/15) steps out of his zone of expertise in suggesting Trump should be a beacon by dramatically resolving his conflicts of interest – i.e. sell or otherwise sacrifice financially.

Should Trump be automatically barred from public office because, unlike many businessmen, his assets are in partnerships and trusts the world over, and are NOT in a form to be liquidated without losing substantial value. It's not as if he owns ExxonMobile common stock, or similar liquid investments. Incurring crippling losses through divestiture is too much to ask!

Ultimately, Trump's finances will be subject to intense public scrutiny and I'm resolved to be satisfied with that. If I were Trump, I'd let my opponents chew on this issue, because even if I threw away most of my net worth, my detractors would just find something else to nag about.