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Business leaders, including many who backed Trump, say it's time to make way for Biden

More than 160 CEOs call on the administration to allow for the changeover to begin for the good of the country.

By [Hannah Denham](#) and [Juliet Eilperin](#)
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This story has been updated.

More than 160 of the nation's top business executives, including several who have been major donors to the Republican Party, urged the Trump administration to accept the results of the 2020 presidential election and begin the transition process.

A letter published Monday afternoon by a New York group representing more than 300 businesses said that President Trump's refusal to acknowledge his loss to Democrat Joe Biden on Nov. 3 — citing baseless claims of voter fraud in several key states — and his administration's delay in allowing the official changeover to begin are putting the country at risk.

Monday evening, Trump tweeted that the transition would be allowed to begin, "in the best interest of our Country." He did not concede, however, saying the fight would continue.

The letter was one of several signs showing corporate America is preparing for a Biden White House. General Motors announced Monday it was withdrawing from a lawsuit backing the Trump administration's effort to block California from imposing stricter tailpipe emissions on cars and SUVs. In a letter penned by CEO Mary Barra, the automaker pledged to work with nearly a dozen environmental leaders and the incoming Biden administration. She said the company's "ambitious electrification goals" are aligned with those of California and the president-elect.

The letter from the Partnership for New York City represents some of the biggest names in business and industry. Among the 164 signatories are Mastercard chief executive Ajay Banga, Goldman Sachs chairman and CEO David M. Solomon and Condé Nast CEO Roger Lynch.

"Every day that an orderly presidential transition process is delayed, our democracy grows weaker in the eyes of our own citizens and the nation's stature on the global stage is diminished," the letter reads. "Our national interest and respect for the integrity of our democratic process requires that the administrator of the federal General Services Administration immediately ascertain that Joseph R. Biden and Kamala D. Harris are the president-elect and vice president-elect so that a proper transition can begin.

"Withholding resources and vital information from an incoming administration puts the public and economic health and security of America at risk." Kathryn Wylde, the partnership's president and CEO, told The Post that New York Attorney General Letitia James had asked her to join a call Friday with New York business leaders to weigh in on the presidential transition. The group decided the "business community has a responsibility" to make the case for the transition to proceed.

The signatories included many who count themselves as Republican or independent, Wylde said. The Partnership for New York City is a nonprofit made up of business leaders from more than 300 companies that seek to bridge gaps between global industries and government.

“This isn’t about partisan politics, but about protecting our democracy,” James said in an emailed statement. “Without the rule of law and an orderly transfer of power, everything from commerce to health care delivery to national security is in peril, and our business leaders can see that as clearly as the rest of us.”

During Friday’s conference call, some executives discussed the possibility of withholding campaign contributions from Georgia’s two Republican Senate candidates to motivate the party to push for the transition, according to a person familiar with the deliberations who spoke on the condition of anonymity to speak candidly. Incumbents Kelly Loeffler and David Perdue face runoff elections in early January that will determine which party holds the majority in the chamber.

“America is being ravaged by a deadly pandemic with enormous social and economic consequences,” the letter reads. “The attention and energy of public and private sector leaders should be entirely focused on uniting our country to fight the coronavirus, provide aid to those in need, prevent further business disruption and loss of jobs, and invest in our economic recovery and revitalization.”

Notably, while Blackstone president and COO Jon Gray signed the letter, the private equity firm’s chief executive Stephen Schwarzman — a high-profile Trump ally — did not. But Schwarzman made clear Monday that it is time for the country to move forward.

“The outcome is very certain today, and the country should move on,” Schwarzman said in a statement, first reported by [Axios](#). “I supported President Trump and the strong economic path he built. Like many in the business community, I am ready to help President-elect Biden and his team as they confront the significant challenges of rebuilding our post-COVID economy.”

Schwarzman’s comments reflect a growing chorus of Republican officials and corporate leaders previously aligned with Trump who are now distancing themselves from — or outright calling out — the administration for its refusal to accept the results of the election. On Monday, more than [100 leading national security experts](#) urged congressional Republicans in a letter to take action and demand the Trump administration immediately launch the transition.

Trump has refused to acknowledge his defeat to Biden, who is projected to win the popular vote by 6 million, and his campaign has waged multiple legal battles to overturn the election’s outcome in several key states. It also [instructed senior government leaders](#) to block any cooperation with Biden’s transition team. That apparently changed Monday, when the head of the General Services Administration notified Biden that her office would begin the formal presidential transition. Emily Murphy’s move, nearly three weeks after Election Day, allows the new administration to access millions of dollars needed to facilitate the transfer of power.

The pivot came as many in the business world prepared for the transition. Barra, the top executive at GM, said the “ambitious electrification goals” of the incoming

administration and her company are aligned. “We are confident that the Biden Administration, California, and the U.S. auto industry, which supports 10.3 million jobs, can collaboratively find the pathway that will deliver an all-electric future.” “GM’s choice to work with the Biden-Harris Administration and California to advance these goals demonstrates a promising path forward for how industry, labor, government, and environmental organizations can come together to tackle big problems and make vital progress on behalf of the American people,” Biden said of the GM announcement in a statement.

GM’s move was significant because it had refused to join four other automakers last year in [negotiating a secret agreement with California](#) last year to adopt stricter mileage standards in the face of a Trump administration rollback. This spring, the Environmental Protection Agency and Transportation Department [finalized](#) a rule requiring U.S. cars, pickup trucks and SUVs improve their average fuel efficiency by 1.5 percent per year between model years 2021 and 2026, compared to a nearly 5 percent annual increase put in place under the Obama administration.

California and nearly two dozen other states are fighting the administration in court over the state’s right to set its own air emission standards. Under the deal California struck with Ford, Honda, Volkswagen and BMW of North America, the fleet would reach an average of nearly 50 miles per gallon by model year 2026.

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