

Rights group files legal request on Trump business ties
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The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) filed a legal request with several government agencies yesterday demanding details on Donald Trump's potential conflicts of interest related to the extensive business affairs of the incoming US president and his family.

The request, made under the Freedom of Information Act, demands the agencies to turn over documents that shed light on any of Trump's actual or potential conflicts of interest and seeks details concerning regulations on divestment of financial interests and prohibitions on nepotism.

The request on the eve of his inauguration marked the first salvo in what promises to be a contentious relationship between the rights group and Trump.

"We have serious concerns that Donald Trump will be in violation of the Constitution on Day One," ACLU executive director Anthony Romero said in an interview. "He has taken anemic steps to address the real questions around his businesses, his family's business interests and his role now as president of the United States."

Trump, a wealthy real estate developer, said on Jan 11 he would maintain ownership of his global business empire but hand off control to his two oldest sons while president. The Trump Organization will not enter into any new overseas deals, his legal adviser Sheri Dillon said.

Trump raised nepotism concerns by naming his daughter Ivanka Trump's husband, Jared Kushner, to a senior advisory role in the White House.

The ACLU's legal request demands emails, legal opinions, memos and other communications drafted since Nov 9, the day after Trump was elected, from agencies including the US Office of Government Ethics, the Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel and the General Services Administration. It also seeks all communications to and from the presidential transition team.

The ACLU vowed an aggressive posture toward the new Trump administration, committing to hire an extra 100 employees to mount possible legal challenges in the areas of abortion

and birth control, immigration, government openness, free speech and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender rights.

Using a flood of donations made since Election Day, it also said it has created a fund that now stands at US\$47 million to fight any civil rights violations by the Trump administration.

- Reuters

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