

May 21, 2021

Mr. Stuart Bender
Designated Agency Ethics Official and
Director, Office of Ethics
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Room 347-W
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Mr. Bender:

The purpose of this letter is to describe the steps that I will take to avoid any actual or apparent conflict of interest in the event that I am confirmed for the position of Under Secretary for Natural Resources and Environment, U.S. Department of Agriculture. It is my responsibility to understand and comply with commitments outlined in this agreement.

SECTION 1 – GENERAL COMMITMENTS

As required by the criminal conflicts of interest law at 18 U.S.C. § 208(a), I will not participate personally and substantially in any particular matter in which I know that I have a financial interest directly and predictably affected by the matter, or in which I know that a person whose interests are imputed to me has a financial interest directly and predictably affected by the particular matter, unless I first obtain a written waiver, pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 208(b)(1), or qualify for a regulatory exemption, pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 208(b)(2). I understand that the interests of the following persons are imputed to me:

- Any spouse or minor child of mine;
- Any general partner of a partnership in which I am a limited or general partner;
- Any organization in which I serve as an officer, director, trustee, general partner, or employee; and
- Any person or organization with which I am negotiating or have an arrangement concerning prospective employment.

In the event that an actual or potential conflict of interest arises during my appointment, I will consult with an agency ethics official and take the measures necessary to resolve the conflict, such as recusal from the particular matter or divestiture of an asset.

If I have a managed account or otherwise use the services of an investment professional during my appointment, I will ensure that the account manager or investment professional obtains my prior approval on a case-by-case basis for the purchase of any assets other than cash, cash equivalents, investment funds that qualify for the regulatory exemption for diversified mutual funds and unit investment trusts at 5 C.F.R. § 2640.201(a), obligations of the United States, or municipal bonds.

I will receive a live ethics briefing from a member of the ethics office after my confirmation but not later than 15 days after my appointment pursuant to the ethics program regulation at 5 C.F.R. § 2638.305. Within 90 days of my confirmation, I will submit my Certification of Ethics Agreement Compliance which documents my compliance with this ethics agreement.

I understand that as an appointee I will be required to sign the Ethics Pledge (Exec. Order No. 13989) and that I will be bound by it. Among other obligations, I will be required to recuse from particular matters involving specific parties involving my former employer or former clients for a period of two years after I am appointed, with the exception of federal, states and local governments.

I will not modify this ethics agreement without your approval and the approval of the U.S. Office of Government Ethics pursuant to the ethics agreement requirements contained in the financial disclosure regulation at 5 C.F.R. § 2634.803(a)(4).

SECTION 2 – RESIGNATIONS

Upon confirmation, I will resign from my position as President of Coley and Lee, LLC, a residential property management company. I will continue to have a financial interest in this entity, but I will not provide services material to the production of income. Instead, I will receive only passive investment income from it. I will not participate personally and substantially in any particular matter that to my knowledge has a direct and predictable effect on the financial interests of Coley and Lee, LLC, unless I first obtain a written waiver, pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 208(b)(1).

SECTION 3 – USDA CONSERVATION PROGRAM

I will continue to participate in the USDA Conservation Stewardship Program (CSP). My 5-year contract with CSP ends in 2023. I have not, and I will not, participate personally and substantially in any particular matter that to my knowledge has a direct and predictable effect on any payments I receive from USDA programs, unless I first obtain a written waiver, pursuant to 18 U.S.C. § 208(b)(1).

SECTION 4 – PUBLIC POSTING

I have been advised that this ethics agreement and the Certification of Ethics Agreement Compliance will be posted publicly, consistent with the public information law at 5 U.S.C. § 552, on the website of the U.S. Office of Government Ethics with ethics agreements of other Presidential nominees who file public financial disclosure reports.

Sincerely,



Homer Wilkes