

July 14, 2026

The Honorable Todd W. Blanche
Acting Attorney General
United States Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington D.C., 20530

Dear Acting Attorney General Blanche:

In light of your nomination to be Attorney General, I write to raise serious concerns about potential conflicts of interest between your official position at the Department of Justice (DOJ) and your close familial connection to Check-Mate Industries. In recent months, the Department has announced over 30 rules that would make significant and sweeping changes to federal firearms regulations – changes from which Check-Mate Industries and the broader firearms industry stand to benefit. At the same time, these changes would, as DOJ has admitted, create “greater” and “increased” risks to public safety, including, in some instances, “mass casualties” and “potential mass casualty events.”

In April 2026, you attended the National Rifle Association’s Annual Meetings and Exhibits in Houston, Texas. There, you were asked in a video interview whether you were “part of the gun industry.” You said, “Yes, I am.”¹

As you well know, the Department comprises numerous component agencies, including the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF). ATF’s mission is to protect the public from violent gun crime, which it does by enforcing federal firearms laws and, of course, regulating and overseeing the firearms industry. If confirmed, you will be responsible for industry regulation and oversight and, where appropriate, holding industry actors – including those who provide illegal firearms to gun traffickers, prohibited persons, and violent criminals – accountable. I am alarmed that a self-proclaimed “part” of the firearms industry could be expected to independently and impartially regulate and oversee that same industry. I am even more alarmed given the actions that the Department has already taken to benefit the industry at the expense of public safety. In other words, I do not believe that the fox should be trusted to guard the henhouse – especially one whose own family, as you have said, “has been in the gun manufacturing business for 40 years.”²

The longstanding family business is Check-Mate Industries – a magazine manufacturer founded in 1972 by the late Thomas Vieweg and Regina Vieweg. Mrs. Vieweg, who now serves as Check-Mate Industries’ Chair and CEO, is your mother-in-law. Check-Mate Industries operates facilities in West Babylon, New York, and Thomasville, Georgia. Check-Mate Industries reports

¹ See Gun Talk Media, *Acting U.S. Attorney General Talks 2A Changes, DOJ Plans*, YouTube (Apr. 21, 2026), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FwB-2ckEwuA> (last viewed July 7, 2026).

² *Id.*

that, over the last four decades, it has “manufactured over 100 million firearm magazines for the U.S. Military, law enforcement, and leading firearms manufacturers.”³ In fact, Check-Mate Industries has received federal contracts as recently as the current Fiscal Year.⁴ Check-Mate Industries also sells pistol and rifle magazines to civilians. In Check-Mate Industries’ own words, “When you buy a new 1911 [pistol] or M1A [rifle] from a major manufacturer, there’s a good chance it came with a Check-Mate magazine in the box – even if our name wasn’t on it.”⁵

Check-Mate Industries also manufactures high-capacity magazines (HCMs). HCMs allow shooters to fire more rounds without needing to reload. The more rounds a shooter can fire without reloading, the more wounds – fatal and non-fatal – the shooter can inflict on more victims. Since 2016, all 10 of the highest-casualty mass shootings in the United States have involved HCMs and assault weapons. HCMs are also used in everyday gun crime and gun violence. Firearms equipped with HCMs account for 22 percent to 36 percent of crime guns in most jurisdictions, with some estimates of up to 40 percent in cases involving serious violence, including homicides of law enforcement officers. To protect public safety, 15 states and Washington D.C. have enacted bans on HCMs.⁶

In November 2025, you visited Check-Mate Industries in Georgia. Check-Mate Industries celebrated your Thomasville visit, posting on LinkedIn, “This week, we had the honor of hosting United States Deputy Attorney General Todd Blanche He toured our operations, spent time with our CEO, Vice President, and our team members, and saw firsthand the precision, craftsmanship, and dedication that define Check-Mate.”⁷ Mrs. Vieweg reposted Check-Mate Industries’ post as her own, writing that Check-Mate Industries was “looking forward to seeing ... Blanche at SHOT Show” and that attendees could “[s]top by the Check-Mate booth ... [to] catch him there.”⁸ Three months later, you did, in fact, attend the National Shooting Sports Foundation’s Shooting, Hunting, Outdoor Trade Show – otherwise known as SHOT Show – in Las Vegas, Nevada.⁹

DOJ and ATF have since announced over 30 rules to “reduce burdens on” and “rebuild trust with” the firearms industry.¹⁰ On April 29, 2026, you – as Acting Attorney General – and ATF Director Robert Cekada made this announcement as you stood before nearly a dozen firearms industry lobbyists, including those from organizations who have called for ATF to be defunded

³ See Check-Mate Industries, *About Check-Mate: 50+ Years Building America's Most Trusted Magazines*, <https://www.checkmatemagazines.com/pages/about-check-mate-50-years-building-americas-most-trusted-magazine> [hereinafter “*About Check-Mate*”].

⁴ See Search Results for Check-Mate Industries on USASPENDING.gov (last viewed July 7, 2026), <https://www.usaspending.gov/search?hash=8f73cea570fdb919b6a788d01411c42>.

⁵ See *About Check Mate*, *supra* note 3.

⁶ See Tannuja D. Rozario and Paige Tetens, *Assault Weapons and High-Capacity Magazines*, Everytown Research & Policy (last updated June 24, 2026), <https://everytownresearch.org/report/assault-weapons-and-high-capacity-magazines/>.

⁷ See Check-Mate Industries on LinkedIn (Nov. 2025), <https://www.linkedin.com/posts/check-mate-industries-inc-checkmateindustries-manufacturingexcellence-activity-7397742340322279424-BTRL/> (last viewed July 7, 2026).

⁸ See Regina Vieweg on LinkedIn (Nov. 2025), https://www.linkedin.com/posts/regina-vieweg-0b07873a_it-was-a-great-day-and-we-are-looking-forward-share-7397786057490210816-HF4C/ (last viewed July 7, 2026).

⁹ See SHOT Show, *48th SHOT Show Closes With Big Crowds, Big Deals, Big Innovation* (Jan. 25, 2026), <https://shotshow.org/48th-shot-show-closes-with-big-crowds-big-deals-big-innovation/>.

¹⁰ See Press Release, Dep’t of Justice, *DOJ and ATF Announce Regulatory Reforms to Reduce Burdens on Law-Abiding Gun Owners and Businesses* (Apr. 29, 2026), <https://www.atf.gov/news/press-releases/doj-and-atf-announce-regulatory-reforms-to-reduce-burdens-law-abiding-gun-owners-and-businesses> [hereinafter “DOJ Press Release”].

and dismantled¹¹ and then abolished altogether.¹² You stated, “We listened to industry leaders – many of whom are in this room” because, “[f]or too long, regulations [had been] written without any real understanding of how firearms businesses operate.”¹³

These rules make clear how the firearms industry operates: not for public safety, but for profit. These rules are filled with statements about increasing revenue for, saving costs to, and reducing burdens on the industry.¹⁴ At the same time, numerous rules contain statements that their so-called “regulatory reforms”¹⁵ could result in “greater”¹⁶ and “increased risks”¹⁷ to public safety. In at least two separate rules, the Department and ATF admit that these risks could even involve “potential mass casualty events”¹⁸ and “mass casualties.”¹⁹ In another, DOJ and ATF concede that such changes could make it harder for law enforcement “to track and stop violent offenders.”²⁰ Those are just *some* of the stated risks. These new rules would also create more opportunities for gun traffickers, violent criminals, and prohibited persons to obtain illegal firearms, make it more difficult for law enforcement to investigate and solve gun crimes, and allow more gun dealers to engage in irresponsible and even unlawful business operations.²¹

In addition, under your leadership, the Department has also settled legal matters and brought new legal challenges that also stand to benefit Check-Mate Industries and the broader firearms industry, which raise additional conflict of interest questions. These actions, too, appear to have been taken despite clear risks to the public. For example, in May 2025, DOJ announced a settlement with Rare Breed Triggers related to forced-reset triggers (FRTs). FRTs are replacement triggers that automatically return forward, or reset, after being pulled, which, in effect, turn semi-automatic firearms into fully automatic machine guns. The Department’s settlement reversed ATF’s longstanding classification of FRTs as machine guns, which, in turn, legalized these devices for the civilian market – even though civilian ownership of machine guns and the parts that convert firearms into machine guns has been banned under federal law for 40

¹¹ See Testimony of Erich Pratt, Senior Vice President, Gun Owners of America, before the Senate Comm. on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs (Apr. 15, 2026), <https://www.hsgac.senate.gov/wp-content/uploads/Testimony-Pratt-2026-04-15-REVISED.pdf>.

¹² See National Alert of Gun Owners of America (Jan. 23, 2025), <https://www.gunowners.org/na012325/>.

¹³ See Video, Dep’t of Justice, *Acting AG Blanche and Acting ATF Director Cekada Announce Changes to ATF Regulations* (Apr. 29, 2026), <https://www.justice.gov/opa/video/acting-ag-blanche-and-acting-atf-director-cekada-announce-changes-atf-regulations>.

¹⁴ See Greg Lickenbrock, *ATF Rules Reflect an Agency Captured by the Gun Industry*, The Smoking Gun (May 12, 2026), <https://smokinggun.org/atf-rules-reflect-an-agency-captured-by-the-gun-industry/>.

¹⁵ See DOJ Press Release, *supra* note 10.

¹⁶ See, e.g., ATF, Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, Defining “Willfully” for Firearms Violations (May 8, 2026), <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2026/05/08/2026-09159/defining-willfully-for-firearms-violations>.

¹⁷ See, e.g., ATF, Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, Removing Factoring Criteria for Firearms With Attached “Stabilizing Braces” (May 6, 2026), <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2026/05/06/2026-08930/removing-factoring-criteria-for-firearms-with-attached-stabilizing-braces>.

¹⁸ See ATF, Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, Revising Definitions of “Adjudicated as a Mental Defective” and “Committed to a Mental Institution” (May 8, 2026), <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2026/05/08/2026-09156/revising-definitions-of-adjudicated-as-a-mental-defective-and-committed-to-a-mental-institution>.

¹⁹ See ATF, Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, Revising Firearms Transaction Record, “Form 4473” (May 8, 2026), <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2026/05/08/2026-09182/revising-firearms-transaction-record-form-4473>.

²⁰ See ATF, Notice of Proposed Rulemaking, Firearm Records Retention Periods (May 6, 2026), <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2026/05/06/2026-08929/firearm-records-retention-periods>.

²¹ See Greg Lickenbrock, *ATF Announces Over 30 Rules to Deregulate the Gun Industry*, The Smoking Gun (Apr. 30, 2026), <https://smokinggun.org/atf-announces-over-30-rules-to-deregulate-the-gun-industry/>.

years.²² Such rapid fire will empty magazines at a quick rate, making magazines with high capacity, like those manufactured by your mother-in-law's company, Check-Mate Industries, more appealing to reduce the need to reload. In addition, DOJ has also filed lawsuits against HCM bans in Washington D.C. and Colorado.²³ If these statutes are invalidated, it stands to reason that Check-Mate Industries would be able to regain access to these markets.

I request written responses to the following questions by July 21, 2026:

1. You have previously acknowledged publicly your wife's family owns Check-Mate Industries, a manufacturer of high-capacity firearms magazines, and has "been in the gun manufacturing business for 40 years."²⁴ Do you or your wife currently hold ownership in, or otherwise receive financial benefits from, Check-Mate Industries or its subsidiaries or affiliate businesses?
 - a. If so, please describe the nature of the financial benefits you or wife receive from Check-Mate Industries.
 - b. If confirmed, will you or your wife commit to divesting all ownership or financial interests you have in Check-Mate Industries?
2. Do you believe your familial relationship with Check-Mate Industries or any of its subsidiaries creates a conflict of interest?
 - a. If not, why do you believe your relationship does not create a conflict of interest?
 - b. If confirmed, will you commit to recusing yourself from any cases or investigations involving Check-Mate Industries or its subsidiaries?
3. During an April 2026 interview at the National Rifle Association's Annual Meetings and Exhibits, you responded "Yes, I am" when asked if you are "part of the gun industry."²⁵ In reference to your relationship to Check-Mate Industries, you stated "I've been part of the fight, struggle, everything that we've been going through as a nation for really for 40 years."²⁶ What did you mean by this statement?
 - a. In that same interview, you stated "Any gun owner, anyone who is in the industry, whether you're a manufacturer, you're a reseller, you're going to be, to realize that this Administration is going to do more to restore rights to where they belong than any other Administration in history."²⁷ Does your relationship to Check-Mate Industries influence your desire to "restore rights" for weapons manufacturers "more than any other Administration in history?"
4. Have you ever discussed forthcoming regulations published by DOJ agencies, including by ATF, with lobbyists, employees, or shareholders of Check-Mate Industries?
5. Check-Mate has received federal contracts in FY26.²⁸ Have you ever contacted anyone within the Administration regarding Check-Mate's contracts?

²² See Greg Lickenbrock, *Trump DOJ Legalizes Forced-Reset Triggers*, The Smoking Gun (May 19, 2025), <https://smokinggun.org/trump-doj-legalizes-forced-reset-triggers/>.

²³ See Jennifer Mascia and Chip Brownlee, *Department of Justice Sues Virginia and California Over Gun Restrictions*, The Trace (July 1, 2026), <https://www.thetrace.org/2026/07/virginia-california-gun-bans-doj/>.

²⁴ See GUN TALK MEDIA, *Acting U.S. Attorney General Talks 2A Changes, DOJ Plans*, at 0:38 (YouTube, Apr. 21, 2026), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FwB-2ckEwuA>.

²⁵ *Id.* at 0:49.

²⁶ *Id.* at 1:02.

²⁷ *Id.* 3:04.

²⁸ See Search Results for Check-Mate Industries, USASPENDING.gov, <https://www.usaspending.gov/search?hash=8f73cea570fcd919b6a788d01411c42> (last viewed July 14, 2026.).

- a. If so, will you commit to providing complete records of those communications to my staff at least one week prior to a floor vote on your nomination?
 - b. If so, why did you believe your relationship to Check-Mate Industries did not create a conflict of interest?
6. In November 2025, in your capacity as Deputy Attorney General, you conducted an official visit to Check-Mate Industries' Georgia facility. Why did you select Check-Mate Industries for this visit?²⁹
 - a. How did your family's connection to Check-Mate Industries play a role in your decision to visit?
 - b. Were there other facilities you considered visiting? If so, please explain why you ultimately decided not to visit them.
7. In May 2025, the Department announced a settlement with Rare Breed Triggers and reversed a longstanding classification of forced-reset triggers (FRTs) as machine guns, effectively legalizing these devices – which have been previously banned under federal law for 40 years – for the civilian market.³⁰
 - a. Please describe the role you played in this settlement.
 - b. Did your relationship with Check-Mate Industries play a role in your involvement with the case?
 - c. Did your relationship with Check-Mate Industries inform your position in this case? If so, please explain.
 - d. Did you consult with individuals at Check-Mate Industries at any point throughout the ongoing litigation with Rare Breed Triggers?

Thank you for your prompt attention to these concerns. DOJ's mission is to uphold the rule of law and keep our nation safe. The Attorney General of the United States must understand the immense and important responsibility the Department has to protect the public from gun crime and violence. For the Attorney General, conflicts of interest are unacceptable, and appearances of impropriety are inexcusable. The Attorney General must be someone who puts public safety first – not gun industry profits. Given your track record so far at DOJ, I have strong concerns that you will do just the opposite.

Sincerely,



Adam B. Schiff
United States Senator

²⁹ See Check-Mate Industries, LINKEDIN (Nov. 2025), <https://www.linkedin.com/posts/check-mate-industries-inc-checkmateindustries-manufacturingexcellence-activity-7397742340322279424-BTRL/>.

³⁰ *Department of Justice Announces Settlement of Litigation Between the Federal Government and Rare Breed Triggers*, DEPT. OF JUSTICE (May 16, 2025), <https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/department-justice-announces-settlement-litigation-between-federal-government-and-rare-breed>. See also Dave Collins, *Are Forced-Reset Triggers Illegal Machine Guns? ATF And Gun Rights Advocates At Odds In Court Fights*, AP (Aug. 24, 2023), <https://apnews.com/article/forced-reset-triggers-rifles-machine-guns-atf-a17b5aada285a780286e209683955b6>.