

# Standards of Political Conduct for Corporations

**Corporations often cause and get away with the serious harm they inflict on people and the environment around the world because of their political influence.** Corporations typically use this influence to block or eliminate proposed public protections, and to promote and enact policies and regulations that benefit their bottom line at the expense of the public good. **Transnational corporations in particular, operate worldwide, without limits on their power and influence or strong, enforceable standards to protect people and the environment.** To build a better world, regulators and policymakers must be free to protect people and the environment without business interference.

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Corporate Accountability International created the following standards as our vision and goals for how corporations should function in the political arena—toward a safer, healthier, more democratic world. The Standards will raise awareness of how corporate political influence harms people and the environment and facilitate effective corporate campaigning to protect workers, consumers and people in communities where corporations operate. Unlike voluntary corporate codes of conduct—which are often designed by the corporations to serve public relations purposes or to avoid independent regulation—these Standards set a high bar for corporate conduct and are independent from corporate influence.

## Politics for People, Not Profits

Corporate Accountability International is working toward a world where major decisions affecting people and the environment are based on the public interest, not on maximizing corporate profits. Today, corporations use industry trade associations, corporate lobbyists, political connections and campaign contributions to promote their narrow interests. To reach this vision, corporations must obey the law, limit their political influence, and be more transparent about their activities.

- ➔ **Lobbying:** Corporations must fully and publicly disclose all lobbying activities around the world, including through trade associations and public relations campaigns.
- ➔ **Political Contributions:** Corporations must end financial contributions to political candidates, parties and referenda worldwide.
- ➔ **Political Access:** Corporations must not trade favors with or buy access to local, national or international public officials.

## Politics for the Public Interest

**Public safeguards are vitally important to protect people, the air we breathe and the water we drink, and to ensure precious natural resources are not squandered.** Society must apply the “precautionary principle,” placing the burden of proof on corporations to demonstrate that their products and practices are safe. Stronger safeguards are necessary, as corporations often operate without limits to their power and work to dismantle existing protections while using intimidation and surveillance to reach their policy objectives.

- ➔ **Safeguards:** Corporations must follow the precautionary principle and must not interfere in the development or implementation of global, national or local policies affecting human rights, health or the environment. Corporations must also require their subsidiaries and suppliers to abide by such policies.
- ➔ **Independent Oversight:** Corporations must respect the independent authority of and refrain from “partnering” with institutions that set standards affecting their business.
- ➔ **International Institutions and Agreements:** Corporations must accept policies that protect people, human rights and the environment and must not use trade agreements or governing institutions (such as the World Trade Organization) to preempt such policies or use them for private gain.
- ➔ **Local Control:** Corporations must honor local control over natural and financial resources.