Accountable.US

Thursday, October 13, 2022

Mr. Michel A. Khalaf
President and Chief Executive Officer
200 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10166

Dear Mr. Michel A. Khalaf:

I am writing on behalf of Accountable.US, a nonpartisan investigative research organization that has been documenting the corporate response to the violent insurrection at the U.S. Capitol, the wave of voter suppression efforts that followed at the state level, and efforts in Congress to protect the right to vote. We have unfortunately found that MetLife ranks among the worst of the Fortune 100 companies in terms of supporting our nation's most sacred institution – democracy.

Growing threats to our democracy are now a top concern among Americans, as echoed by President Biden's national address last month. Today, the January 6th Committee is expected to roll out more evidence that the insurrection was incited at the highest levels.

Our organization recently launched the American Democracy Scorecard project. The project assigns a score to each Fortune 100 company based upon its political spending, public statements on voting rights, affiliations with special interest groups working to expand or undermine democracy, transparency in political activities, and other efforts such as providing voter information resources to customers or employees.

Based on fourteen criteria, MetLife received a grade of F.

Our full methodology can be found at:
www.americandemocracyscorecard.org/methodology/

For example, we found MetLife has donated:

- At least $2,500 to members of Congress that voted against certifying the 2020 election in the aftermath of the deadly coup attempt, a group that has been called the 'Sedition Caucus'.
- Your company also contributed $10,000 to state lawmakers that have pushed voter restriction legislation that disproportionately targets voters of color.
- As well as $93,500 to members of Congress that have obstructed key federal legislation to counter such efforts and strengthen voting rights.

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Industry apathy towards the very real and ongoing threat to our democracy is simply short-sighted. Surveys have shown that Americans want corporations to use their power and influence to strengthen it. One survey from Data for Progress found a majority of voters “say they would be less likely to buy from a corporation that donated to members of Congress who voted to overturn the presidential election results,” yet your company gave almost $2,500 to these lawmakers.

A May 2022 Morning Consult survey found that “64%+ of consumers say that a business with a public commitment to democracy shows the business cares about its customers, their employees, and has the right values.” That same Morning Consult survey found that nearly half (45%) of consumers say they are more likely to accept a job if their employer or future employer participated in the democratic process. These surveys even came before the January 6th Committee in Congress began releasing their stunning findings on how twice-impeached former President Trump and many of his congressional allies incited the Capitol riot with the intent of negating the will of the American people.

It is easy to see from these surveys that consumers and employees want to be part of companies that share their values and stand up for our democracy. But too many companies are using phrases like 'corporate social responsibility' or 'environmental, social, and governance-friendly,' while their actions appear to be more about preserving their political influence than preserving democracy, even though the latter is what really impacts their bottom line.

But what could be more socially responsible than stepping up and protecting democracy? What could be more good governance than upholding the rule of law? How does supporting policymakers peddling the Big Lie align with any of these values? It doesn't. If companies truly supported democracy, they would match their political activity with their purported values.

It is clear that companies that play an active role in preserving democracy will only find it is good for their business and the economy overall. Even your peers agree: a staggering 96% of business leaders say the existence of a well-functioning democracy is "important" to a strong economy, the Morning Consult survey found. But for whatever reason, your company has chosen to go down another path: to make little effort to uphold democracy or voting rights; to pay lip service to democratic ideals while taking actions that undermine democracy; to funnel money to lawmakers who have pushed the Big Lie and supported legislation that would make it harder to vote – particularly in already marginalized communities.

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While your company is currently failing to stand up for democracy, it is not too late to get your priorities straight and begin aligning your values with the values shared by most Americans. The American Democracy Scorecard will continue to serve as a living, interactive public resource for consumers, shareholders, and prospective employees to see where major companies stand on democracy.

At the end of the day, Americans overwhelmingly say corporations like MetLife should stand up for democracy. Consumers, employees, and shareholders alike want to buy from, work for, or invest in a company that shares its values, not just one that preserves its bottom line. They do not want lip service to democratic ideals and the rule of law from companies that at the same time support policymakers peddling the Big Lie.

Our democracy's survival is quite literally at stake, which means your bottom line might be as well. It is our sincere hope that down the road we are able to update MetLife's public profile on the website with a more positive grade. If you have any questions or concerns about how our organization arrived at these conclusions, please do not hesitate to reach out.

Sincerely,



Kyle Herrig
President, Accountable.US

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