

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT SONNY PERDUE, TRUMP'S SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE

As Governor of Georgia, Sonny Perdue vowed to clean up corruption. But in 8 years in office, he faced 13 official ethics complaints, including for illegally accepting gifts.

CARSON IN THE DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING:

As Governor from 2003-2011, Perdue was responsible for budget cuts that affected the food inspection department of the Georgia Department of Agriculture. The result was a salmonella outbreak that affected 41 states and **killed nine people**, resulting in two recalls.¹ When he came into office, Perdue signed an Executive Order laying out new ethics rules, which he then promptly violated by taking gifts like NASCAR tickets and paid flights.² Once Perdue **used a state helicopter to drop his son off at a football game**.³ Unlike previous governors, he didn't place his assets in a blind trust, meaning he was aware of how his policies and actions would affect his investments. At one point, he made a \$2 million land purchase from a developer he had appointed to a state board.⁴ In his political career, Perdue received a total of \$328,328 from agribusiness, and signed a bill that saved him \$100,000 in state taxes from a land sale.⁵ After his time in office, he founded an agricultural trading company with the contacts he had made while governor.⁶

PERDUE AT AGRICULTURE:

Perdue's main priority has been cutting costs for big agribusiness. He has allowed the USDA to increase **poultry processing line speeds, which endangers workers**.⁷ In early 2017, Perdue axed the Under Secretary for Rural Development position. The 2018 Farm Bill reinstated the Undersecretary position, but the Administration has yet to nominate anyone.⁸ He also appointed multiple lobbyists to key positions: one is a **pesticide lobbyist who continues to meet with her contacts in the pesticide industry**, despite ethics rules, and another who conveys industry talking points to Perdue's speechwriters.⁹

In August, the USDA announced it would move the Economic Research Service and the National Institute of Food and Agriculture out of the DC area. Workers were **given 33 days to decide** whether they would move to Kansas City, and many are choosing to stay in DC, meaning that the Department of Agriculture will lose valuable expertise.¹⁰ This was considered to be retaliatory after the Economic Research Service published negative reports about signature Trump policies like tax reform.

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