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COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON TRADE, RANKING MEMBER  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON SOCIAL SECURITY

DEMOCRATIC STEERING AND POLICY COMMITTEE

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**

February 25, 2019

Mr. Doug McMillon  
President and CEO, Walmart  
702 S.W. 8th Street  
Bentonville, Arkansas 72716

Mr. Todd Jones  
CEO, Publix  
3300 Publix Corporate Pkwy  
Lakeland, Florida 33811

Mr. Rodney McMullen  
CEO, Kroger  
1014 Vine Street  
Cincinnati, Ohio 45202

Mr. Frans W. H. Muller  
CEO, Food Lion  
2110 Executive Dr  
Salisbury, North Carolina 28147

Mr. Jim Donald  
CEO, Albertsons  
250 E Parkcenter Boulevard  
Boise City, Idaho 83706

Dear Sirs:

I write to request your businesses discontinue sales of the National Enquirer tabloid. Recent events make clear that the tabloid is a purveyor of fabricated news and possibly a vehicle in furtherance of illegal extortion, blackmail, and other crimes. In the interest of your millions of customers, this tabloid should be removed from all your store shelves.

The travails surrounding the National Enquirer's publisher David Pecker and his company American Media Inc. (AMI) and its tabloid, the National Enquirer, have become well known. During the 2016 presidential campaign, the tabloid acted as an unofficial arm of Donald Trump's presidential campaign, maintaining a near-complete flow of negative publicity aimed at Mr. Trump's opponents.<sup>1</sup> Verified reports note that Mr. Pecker routinely bought the rights to numerous stories potentially negative to Mr. Trump and never ran them, a modus operandi typically called "catch-and-kill." This practice was the subject of an investigation by the U.S. Department of Justice in 2018. Mr. Pecker signed an agreement for witness immunity in exchange for his testimony before a federal grand jury empaneled in a larger federal investigation into Mr. Trump.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2018/08/24/president-donald-trump-rivals-say-national-enquirer-supported-him/1087658002/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.cnn.com/2018/08/23/politics/david-pecker-immunity-cohen/index.html>

In his agreement with prosecutors, Mr. Pecker acknowledged paying \$150,000 to “suppress” a story on Mr. Trump’s extramarital relationship to protect the then-presidential nominee.<sup>3</sup>

In recent weeks, Jeff Bezos, the owner of Amazon and the publisher of the Washington Post, has alleged that confederates of AMI threatened to blackmail him before publishing salacious private stories involving Mr. Bezos.<sup>4</sup> There are reports that Mr. Pecker and AMI are now subject to renewed prosecutorial scrutiny and possible criminal penalties for violating his plea agreement.<sup>5</sup>

This pattern of behavior makes it clear that Mr. Pecker uses the National Enquirer tabloid both in total support of the leader of a political party and in furtherance of scabrous and potentially illegal schemes. And I would be remiss not to mention that since Mr. Pecker purchased the National Enquirer, the tabloid has been sued repeatedly and successfully for publishing libelous items about scores of public figures.<sup>6</sup> Given this history, his flagship tabloid publication should not be given a platform in your businesses through which to poison Americans with lies.

This matter transcends politics and speaks directly to the valued place each of you holds in our national life. Supermarkets mark the upward evolution of modern society. I hope you feel enormous pride that your businesses play such integral and trusted roles in the lives of nearly every American. Just as none of you would sell a contaminated food product, I know you would never dispense other agents of sickness to the tens of millions of customers who walk through your aisles every day. Misinformation makes our society sick and the National Enquirer tabloid is a primary purveyor of it.

In its 2014 move to cease the sales of cigarettes and other tobacco products, CVS made a decision that was not good for its financial bottom line, but one that was in the best interests of its customers and our nation. The impact of that decision was unalloyed good for the health of America. Helping stop the torrent flow of misinformation that batters Americans would be a public good. You should follow the spirit of that decision and no longer carry the National Enquirer tabloid on your shelves. Importantly, we must preserve First Amendment rights -- while the National Enquirer has a right to publish material as they see fit, no publication has a First Amendment right to sell its products in private businesses.

I look forward to working with you to achieve this goal. If you disagree, please explain the rationale for the continued dissemination of fabricated news.

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<sup>3</sup> [https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/publisher-of-the-national-enquirer-admits-to-hush-money-payments-made-on-trumps-behalf/2018/12/12/ebf24b76-fe49-11e8-83c0-b06139e540e5\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.e37ce6a34711](https://www.washingtonpost.com/lifestyle/style/publisher-of-the-national-enquirer-admits-to-hush-money-payments-made-on-trumps-behalf/2018/12/12/ebf24b76-fe49-11e8-83c0-b06139e540e5_story.html?utm_term=.e37ce6a34711)

<sup>4</sup> <https://medium.com/@jeffreypbezos/no-thank-you-mr-pecker-146e3922310f>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.cnn.com/2019/02/08/media/national-enquirer-jeff-bezos/index.html>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/claudiarosenbaum/dr-phil-drops-250-million-defamation-lawsuit>; [https://www.heraldextra.com/news/local/national-enquirer-retracts-smart-story-that-netted-reporters/article\\_1c521c00-bf23-5259-bb41-56880dea9be7.html](https://www.heraldextra.com/news/local/national-enquirer-retracts-smart-story-that-netted-reporters/article_1c521c00-bf23-5259-bb41-56880dea9be7.html); <https://www.rcfp.org/carolyn-condit-and-national-enquirer-settle-suit/>; <https://www.today.com/popculture/cameron-diaz-sues-national-enquirer-wbna8079101>; <https://www.foxnews.com/entertainment/judge-judy-gets-apology-for-false-national-enquirer-alzheimer-story>

Thank you for your time and attention to my request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bill Pascrell Jr". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Bill Pascrell, Jr.  
Member of Congress