



Arnold Ventures' Founders And Execs Question President Trump's Motives And Success

John Arnold – who, along with his wife Laura, founded Arnold Ventures – once [joked](#) that he had “been called the next Koch brother by the far left press and the next George Soros by the far right” and that he was “an equal opportunity special interest pot stirrer.” This quip was a nod to the [ostensible bipartisan nature](#) of Arnold Ventures, where “Evidence-Based Policy, Research, and Advocacy guide [their] work.” The promise of the organization was that it would reach across the aisle to form bipartisan coalitions in pursuit of evidence-based policy solutions.

That promise, however, is far removed from the reality. In practice, Arnold Ventures has let slip the mask of bipartisanship when it comes to President Trump, and key figures within the organization have sought to undermine the President as well as his policies.

Arnold Ventures' Former Vice President Wanted To Change The Electoral System To Prevent The Future Success Of Candidates Like President Trump

Following the protests of January 6, 2021, [Sam Mar](#) – then a vice president at Arnold Ventures – authored a [scathing op-ed](#) that cast President Trump as a symptom of the rise of political extremism in America. Mar described the events of January 6 as an “insurrection,” a “dark day in our nation’s democracy,” and a “symptom of a deeper disease infecting our nation.” This op-ed was [featured](#) on Arnold Ventures’ website before being [discreetly scrubbed](#) from the page sometime at the beginning of this year.

Why might Arnold Ventures want to distance itself from the views expressed in an op-ed written at a time when many did not foresee the possibility of President Trump making a comeback and winning a second term in office? Perhaps because Mar [wrote](#) derisively that President Trump and his supporters “have their fair share of blame” for dealing in “fake news and conspiracy theories” and reflect a political system “that actually encourages this type of hatred and violence.” In Mar’s point of view, our electoral system rewards “[d]emonizing an opponent to the point of dehumanization” and allows “small groups of extremist voices” like President Trump to “exercise asymmetric political power.” As Mar explained, “If it hasn’t been clear thus far, hopefully it is now — this brand of politics is destroying the very fabric of our nation.”

“If it hasn’t been clear thus far, hopefully it is now — this brand of politics is destroying the very fabric of our nation. Most Americans are not eager to storm the Capitol and make our country the laughingstock of the world. Most Americans are not frothing at the mouth for a chance to denigrate someone with a different political ideology. Most Americans are open-minded, empathetic and believe that we are one nation under God, indivisible.”

- [Former Arnold Ventures Vice President Sam Mar](#)

Mar saw the success of President Trump as an unwanted and impermissible outcome of the American electoral system, and he wanted to capitalize on this moment to implement electoral changes in order to prevent the future success of candidates like President Trump. Mar's prescription to "fix this mess" was "change political incentives" by opening up closed primaries "so that a broader cross-section of the electorate has a voice and encourage greater voter participation in primaries so that they are no longer dominated by the extreme ends of our political spectrum." He also advocated for implementing ranked-choice voting so that "the system encourages each candidate to reach out to all voters to win second or third choice votes. This incentive structure changes how candidates campaign, how they view the opposition, and how they govern once elected."

As Arnold Ventures' [Vice President of Advocacy in charge of Political Initiatives](#) before rising to its Executive Vice President of Elections, Energy, and Explorations, Mar's views did not just reflect his own biases, he was also in the position to use the weight and resources of Arnold Ventures to push electoral changes around the country and rig the system against candidates they deemed to be unacceptable – like President Trump.

John Arnold Favored Barring President Trump From Running For Office Again

Criticism of President Trump was not just limited to executives at Arnold Ventures. Indeed, the reproachment comes from the top, starting with the billionaire cofounder of Arnold Ventures – John Arnold. Almost immediately after the January 6th protests, POLITICO's chief Europe correspondent Matthew Karnitschnig [wrote](#) that Twitter's decision to ban the President from the social media platform cut him off from his political power: "the de-platforming effectively ends the Trump presidency." John Arnold [concurred](#) with the dismissive sentiment, himself explaining that "[t]his is weird and scary and soothing and consequential and also feels correct."



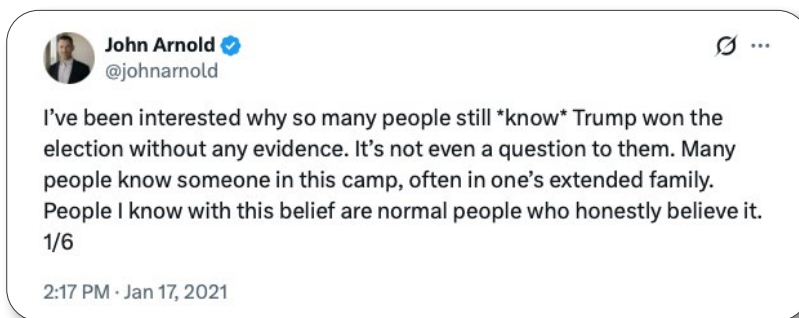
Arnold also seemingly drew a line in the sand and favored barring President Trump from running for office again, [saying](#) matter-of-factly that "[t]here will be 4 years of chaos and infighting in the Republican Party if Trump is not prohibited from running again. McConnell knows this."



Arnold **believed** that President Trump would be less “of a distraction if the party doesn’t have to worry about him running again.”



Arnold’s barbs were not just limited to President Trump but **extended** also to his supporters who believed that there had been irregularities during the election: “I’ve been interested why so many people still *know* Trump won the election without any evidence. It’s not even a question to them. Many people know someone in this camp, often in one’s extended family. People I know with this belief are normal people who honestly believe it.”



All in all, what it amounts to is that at the end of President Trump’s first term, John Arnold felt confident that the President was no longer politically relevant and would not win reelection in the future. Arnold thereby felt free to publicly criticize the President without jeopardizing the desired public policy outcomes of his “bipartisan” organization.

Laura And John Arnold Have Repeatedly Questioned President Trump's Motives Underlying His Policy Agenda

Beyond the forays into political prognostication about President Trump, Laura and John Arnold have also proven to be detractors of major planks of the President's policy agenda. A look at the rhetoric they employ, however, shows that rather than just disagreeing over policy outcomes, the Arnolds have repeatedly questioned the President's motives for wanting to get things done.

Nowhere is this more evident than in their opposition to the One Big Beautiful Bill (OB BB), which they [deemed](#) to be "catastrophic." Laura Arnold explained that although some of what they lobbied for was included in the bill, "arguably those have been completely overshadowed by the catastrophic deficit." John Arnold believes that OB BB was "crammed through" on an "artificial timeline" and included a lot of pork "because there was no fiscal constraint." In his view, "the cost [of OB BB] is really hidden. The cost is in inflation and in interest rates." Ultimately, John Arnold believes that OB BB was enacted "for no good reason besides that it's politically popular and helps one get reelected."

"I feel as if the country is playing with fire in some of these aspects and doing it for no good reason besides that it's politically popular and helps one get reelected."

- [John Arnold](#)

Arnold Ventures has used the same playbook when it comes to [healthcare](#), which is a core focus of his organization. During President Trump's first term, John Arnold [penned](#) an op-ed criticizing a proposed rule by the Department of Health and Human Services that would have prohibited pharmacy benefit managers from receiving rebates from manufacturers on prescription drugs as "bad policy" and "not the answer the nation needs." Rather than stopping with a policy argument, however, Arnold questioned President Trump's motivations by saying the Administration was "promoting smart politics over smart policy" and that the proposal was an "unnecessary distraction" that "conveniently takes the focus off the pharmaceutical industry" – suggesting that the President was colluding with PhRMA for political gain. This implication would show up again a year later when Arnold [wrote](#) that President Trump's healthcare agenda was "just a campaign slogan": "I appreciate that Trump talks about standing up to pharma. ... But change takes more than talk, more than press events. It requires finalizing rules, publishing them & a lengthy rule-making process. Without action, it's just a campaign slogan."



More recently, President Trump has [sought](#) to prevent institutional investors from competing with Main Street homebuyers and driving up the cost of single-family homes. Former hedge fund manager John Arnold was [quick to defend](#) those investors, saying that “some politicians have been quick to identify a villain” while referencing the President’s executive order. He then condescendingly remarked that the President’s argument was “attractive in its simplicity, is incorrect and indeed deeply flawed.”

“Some politicians have been quick to identify a villain — the institutional investor — and advocate for limiting institutional ownership of single-family homes. Their argument is this: Investment funds buy single-family homes en masse, thereby removing from the market potential inventory that otherwise would be available to individual buyers. Fewer houses available for purchase, they argue, leads to fewer housing options and therefore higher prices. This argument, however attractive in its simplicity, is incorrect and indeed deeply flawed.”

- [John Arnold](#)

Arnold Ventures’ Contempt For The President Starts At The Top

Although Arnold Ventures claims to be an evidence-based organization interested in building lasting, bipartisan coalitions, a peek behind the curtain shows that narrative to be a convenient fiction and that contempt for President Trump starts at the very top of the organization with its founders and executives. This ethos is embedded into the DNA of the organization and drives its projects, spending, and constellation of grantees who are also working against the President’s agenda.

