

Top US health official resigns in conflict of interest

January 31 2018



Brenda Fitzgerald (R), seen here in a 2014 file picture with Georgia Governor Nathan Deal (L), has resigned as head of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention because of financial conflicts of interests

The top US public health official resigned Wednesday due to financial conflicts of interest, a day after US media reported she bought tobacco

stocks while heading the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

A statement from the US Department of Health and Human Services confirmed that it had accepted the resignation of CDC director Brenda Fitzgerald.

"Dr. Fitzgerald owns certain complex financial interests that have imposed a broad recusal limiting her ability to complete all of her duties as the CDC director," said the statement by spokesman Matt Lloyd.

"Due to the nature of these financial interests, Dr. Fitzgerald could not divest from them in a definitive time period."

On Tuesday, POLITICO reported that Fitzgerald bought shares in a tobacco, drug and food companies just weeks after taking the job.

Among the CDC's top responsibilities is reducing smoking, which is a top killer and leading cause of lung cancer and heart disease.

Fitzgerald, a medical doctor and former Georgia Department of Public Health commissioner, has long publicly championed anti-smoking efforts.

She became CDC chief on July 7, 2017.

That same month, and in August and September, she "bought tens of thousands of dollars in new stock holdings in at least a dozen companies," Politico reported.

"Purchases included between \$1,001 and \$15,000 of Japan Tobacco, one of the largest such companies in the world, which sells four [tobacco](#) brands in the US through a subsidiary."

She also bought shares of Merck, Bayer and the [health insurance company](#) Humana.

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