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ONE HUNDRED ELEVENTH CONGRESS

## U.S. House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS OF  
OFFICIAL CONDUCT

Washington, DC 20515-6328

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### STATEMENT OF THE CHAIR AND RANKING REPUBLICAN MEMBER OF THE COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS OF OFFICIAL CONDUCT REGARDING ITS REPORT IN THE MATTER OF THE CARIB NEWS FOUNDATION MULTI- NATIONAL BUSINESS CONFERENCES IN 2007 AND 2008

February 26, 2010

#### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Pursuant to Committee Rule 7(g), the Committee on Standards of Official Conduct (Standards Committee) determined on February 25, 2010, to release the following statement:

Pursuant to Rule 18, in 2009 the Committee, on its own initiative, began investigating officially-connected travel in 2007 and 2008 that was sponsored, funded, or organized by organizations known as Carib News or Carib News Foundation. The travel involved in the investigation concerned the Carib News Foundation Multi-National Business Conferences, which were held in Antigua and Barbuda in November 2007 and St. Maarten in November 2008. During the course of the Committee's independent investigation, the Committee received referrals naming particular Members from the Office of Congressional Ethics (OCE) regarding this matter. On June 24, 2009, in accordance with clause 3 of House Rule XI and Committee Rules 14(a)(3) and 18, the Committee voted unanimously to establish an Investigative Subcommittee to conduct an inquiry regarding allegations that have arisen regarding sponsorship of travel relating to six Members.

The Investigative Subcommittee conducted a thorough eight-month investigation. The Investigative Subcommittee authorized the issuance of six subpoenas; interviewed 29 witnesses; reviewed and analyzed over 3,000 pages of documents; and held over 19 Investigative Subcommittee meetings. The members of the Subcommittee voted unanimously to adopt the report which was presented to the Committee.

Following the conclusion of the Subcommittee's investigation and report to the full Committee, the Standards Committee has unanimously voted to release a public Report finding that Representatives Bennie Thompson, Yvette Clarke, Donald Payne, Carolyn Cheeks Kilpatrick, and Delegate Donna Christensen did not knowingly violate any provision of the Code of Official Conduct or any law, rule, regulation, or other standard of conduct applicable to each

individual's conduct in the performance of his or her duties or the discharge of his or her responsibilities with respect to the acceptance of payment or reimbursement for travel to either or both of the Carib News Foundation Multi-National Business conferences held in 2007 and 2008. These Members properly relied on the information provided to them by the officers and employees of Carib News and the Carib News Foundation, in seeking and receiving pre-trip approval from the Committee to accept these trips.

The Investigative Subcommittee found that these Members did not violate any House rule, regulation, law, or other standard of conduct. Only after the initiation of the Subcommittee's investigation was it learned that payments were made for their travel that were impermissible. Unfortunately, because false and misleading information was provided to the Committee, the Members inadvertently received impermissible gifts of travel that require repayment for the costs of their trips.

Although the Committee had approved the Members' travel, that approval was conditional upon the information provided to the Committee being true and correct. That was not the case. Since the Members were provided false information by others, and relied upon that information in seeking approval to accept the trips, the Committee concludes that the Members committed no wrongdoing. Nevertheless, since the Members did, in fact, receive impermissible gifts of travel, they must repay the costs of their trips to the respective entities that paid for their travel. Because some portions of transportation costs were paid by Carib News out of funds the actual source of which could not be determined, the Committee will require those funds to be paid to the U.S. Treasury.

The Report further finds that Representative Charles B. Rangel violated the House gift rule by accepting payment or reimbursement for travel to the 2007 and 2008 conferences. The evidence shows that members of Representative Rangel's staff knew that corporations had contributed funds to Carib News specifically for the 2007 and 2008 conferences. This information was not provided to the Standards Committee when he sought and received approval from the Committee to accept these trips. The Committee does not find sufficient evidence to conclude, nor does it believe that it would discover additional evidence to alter its conclusion, that Representative Rangel had actual knowledge of the memoranda written by his staff. However, the report finds that Representative Rangel was responsible for the knowledge and actions of his staff in the performance of their official duties. It is the intention of the Committee that publication of this Report will serve as a public admonishment by the Standards Committee of Representative Rangel. The Committee will also require Representative Rangel to repay the costs of the trips to the respective entities that paid for his travel. Because some portions of his transportation costs were paid by Carib News out of funds the actual source of which could not be determined, the Committee will require those funds to be paid to the U.S. Treasury.

The Report further finds that Dawn Kelly Mobley, then designated counsel to the former Chair of the Standards Committee, improperly communicated confidential internal Committee information to officers and employees of Carib News, Karl Rodney and Patricia Louis, and that she improperly influenced the information provided by Karl Rodney and Patricia Louis to Standards Committee staff during the Committee's review of the 2007 Multi-National Business

Conference. It is the intention of the Committee that publication of this Report will serve as a public admonishment by the Standards Committee of Ms. Mobley.

Finally, the Report finds that officers and employees of Carib News and the Carib News Foundation – Karl Rodney, Faye Rodney, and Patricia Louis – submitted false or misleading information to the Committee during its pre-travel review of the 2007 and 2008 conferences and again when providing sworn testimony to the Investigative Subcommittee. The Committee unanimously voted to refer the conduct of these officers and employees of Carib News and the Carib News Foundation to the United States Department of Justice for further action as it deems appropriate.

In accordance with clauses 3(a)(2) and 3(b) of House Rule XI, and Standards Committee Rule 10(a)(7), the Standards Committee unanimously agreed to issue the attached Report to the House. The Report follows the receipt of materials forwarded to the Standards Committee by the Office of Congressional Ethics (OCE) and addresses the findings and conclusions of the Standards Committee with regard to the conduct of Representatives Thompson, Payne, Kilpatrick, Clarke, Rangel, and Delegate Christensen. OCE's Report and Findings for each member are contained within the Standards Committee's Report.

The Standards Committee thanks the members of the Investigative Subcommittee for their hard work, dedication, and service to the Committee and to the House. Representative G.K. Butterfield served as Chair of the Investigative Subcommittee. Representative Charles W. Dent served as Ranking Republican Member. Representatives Brad Miller and Michael K. Simpson also served on the Subcommittee. In addition, Representative J. Gresham Barrett initially served as Ranking Republican Member before resigning his position on the Standards Committee, at which time Representative Dent was selected as Ranking Republican Member. Each of these members devoted substantial time and effort to this investigation, and the Committee thanks each of them for their service.