

EXHIBIT 11

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Interview of
FORMER STAFFER B,

⋮
OCE Review
20-2124
⋮

Mobile Videoconference Interview of
FORMER STAFFER B
Conducted Virtually
Wednesday, July 29, 2020
10:28 a.m.

Job No.: 310896
Pages 1 through 173
Reported by: Peggy L. Dingle

1 Mobile videoconference interview of
2 FORMER STAFFER B, conducted virtually:

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8 Pursuant to agreement, before Peggy L.
9 Dingle, E-Notary Public of the State of Maryland.

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A P P E A R A N C E S
ON BEHALF OF OFFICE OF CONGRESSIONAL ETHICS
(OCE) OF THE U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:

JEFFREY BROWN, ESQUIRE

HELEN EISNER, ESQUIRE

Office of Congressional Ethics (OCE)
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ALSO PRESENT: Michael Pawela, video
technician
Anna Ellison, (OCE) law clerk

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E X H I B I T S

(Attached to the Transcript)

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| 1 Not identified | 171 |
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1 PROCEEDINGS:

2 MR. BROWN: This is Jeff Brown with the
3 Office of Congressional Ethics. With me is my
4 colleague Helen Eisner. Also with us is our law
5 clerk Anna Ellison.

6 We are undertaking a video interview
7 of Former Staffer B this morning. It is about
8 almost 10:30 a.m. on July 29th, 2020. Former
9 Staffer B has been given a copy of the False
10 Statements Warning and signed the Acknowledgement
11 prior to today's interview.

12 And with that, we will just jump into
13 things, Former Staffer B.

14 FORMER STAFFER B: Yes.

15 MR. BROWN: It's okay if I call you
16 Former Staffer B, I assume?

17 FORMER STAFFER B: Yes, that's fine.

18 MR. BROWN: So, Former Staffer B,
19 you -- you don't work for Representative Palazzo
20 anymore, but you are currently employed
21 somewhere?

22 FORMER STAFFER B: I am not.

1 MR. BROWN: You are not. Okay. Let
2 me ask you, you -- you served in the military.
3 Are you -- are you currently active duty?

4 FORMER STAFFER B: I am not active
5 duty, no.

6 MR. BROWN: Okay. Reservist?

7 FORMER STAFFER B: No.

8 MR. BROWN: Okay. So you -- you were
9 previously on active duty, but -- but no longer?

10 FORMER STAFFER B: Correct.

11 MR. BROWN: Okay. I should say thank
12 you for your service.

13 FORMER STAFFER B: Oh, thank you.

14 MR. BROWN: You -- you worked for
15 Representative Palazzo. What was the -- what was
16 the time frame in which you worked for him?

17 FORMER STAFFER B: Of course you asked
18 me that and I am going to draw a blank.

19 MR. BROWN: Just -- just roughly.

20 FORMER STAFFER B: 2000 -- January --
21 might have been February 2018 to -- it was
22 February 2018 to January 2019.

1 MR. BROWN: Okay.

2 FORMER STAFFER B: And those are
3 estimates. I don't 100 percent know.

4 MR. BROWN: I am not great with dates
5 either. So I understand.

6 FORMER STAFFER B: Okay.

7 MR. BROWN: Your -- your role, what
8 was your -- what was your title when you worked
9 in Congressman Palazzo's office?

10 FORMER STAFFER B: I was the Wounded
11 Warrior Fellow. So I was -- I was a Wounded
12 Warrior Fellow. So I specifically worked with
13 military and veteran -- and, actually, when I
14 first got there I was to shadow another employee
15 and just kind of assist and put on military
16 events, but then I completely took over all of
17 the veteran constituents so -- veteran and
18 military constituents. So I became the Veteran
19 Constituent Liaison.

20 MR. BROWN: Okay. You worked in
21 the -- you worked on the official side in the
22 official office. Did you have any role on the

1 Congressman's campaign?

2 FORMER STAFFER B: I did not.

3 MR. BROWN: And so fair to say then
4 your major responsibilities for you were being a
5 liaison to veterans and sort of being a case
6 worker for all current military and veteran
7 affairs?

8 FORMER STAFFER B: Correct.

9 MR. BROWN: And just tell me, how did
10 you get hired?

11 FORMER STAFFER B: I had a friend
12 contact me and say, Hey, you would be perfect for
13 this job.

14 And I was like, Okay.

15 They said, It's a fellowship. You
16 should look at it.

17 So I looked at it. And in the
18 meantime another person wrote me and said, Hey, I
19 have talked to people in Congressman Palazzo's
20 office and told them that you are a voice for
21 veterans and you are the perfect candidate for
22 this job and you should email this person, which

1 was Michele Gargiulo, who is the District
2 Director.

3 And so I did that. And she said, Go
4 on and complete the U.S.A. Jobs Application. And
5 I explained to her that I did and I had submitted
6 it.

7 And so then she called me and we had a
8 phone conversation and then we did an in-person
9 interview, which I thought I was going to meet
10 with Michele, but I met with Jessica, who was
11 actually the Veteran Constituent Liaison at that
12 time, and T.J. Moran, who was the field rep.

13 So I had my interview with them and
14 then were told, you know, Hey, if you move to the
15 next step, we will have an in-person interview.
16 So then I went to a lunch with all of the local
17 staff.

18 And then about two weeks later -- we
19 kept getting ice storms so it kept getting pushed
20 back -- I met with the Congressman face to face
21 in the office. And there were several other
22 people that were supposed to be interviewed, but

1 he told Michele right on the spot that he wanted
2 to hire me and start me that day.

3 MR. BROWN: Okay. And who was your --
4 who did you directly report to in the office?

5 FORMER STAFFER B: Michele.

6 MR. BROWN: Michele. Okay. And you
7 worked out of the Biloxi office originally and
8 then the Gulfport office?

9 FORMER STAFFER B: Correct. I was --
10 actually, when I was hired -- and -- and I said
11 Michele, but, technically, Anita Bourn out of the
12 Hattiesburg office is who I was supposed to
13 directly report to because she is over all of
14 constituent services, but it was more Michele
15 because I ended up doing a lot of the projects.

16 MR. BROWN: Okay.

17 FORMER STAFFER B: But, yes, I
18 started in the Biloxi office. And when I was
19 hired I was supposed to start -- I chose to go to
20 Biloxi and then go to the Pascagoula office three
21 days a week, but that never happened, so...

22 MR. BROWN: So you worked out of

1 Biloxi originally alongside Michele and then
2 Gulfport later when the offices moved to
3 Gulfport?

4 FORMER STAFFER B: Correct.

5 MR. BROWN: You are a Wounded Warrior
6 Fellow, but you work in Congressman Palazzo's
7 office. Explain to me how that works.

8 FORMER STAFFER B: Okay. So I was --
9 so my understanding, and it's still very
10 confusing, I was -- all my interview process was
11 with the direct office, Congressman Palazzo's,
12 but for paperwork purposes and paper purposes I
13 was employed by Chief Administrative Offices and
14 I -- I had two program liaisons that were over me
15 that I would check in with. I would, you know,
16 submit my mileage, if I had issues, if I needed
17 business cards, I would report to them and check
18 in with them. But other than that, day-to-day it
19 was -- go ahead. Sorry.

20 MR. BROWN: And I was just going to
21 say that's Mac Tolar and Solomon Jennings are the
22 two individuals you just referred to?

1 FORMER STAFFER B: Yes.

2 MR. BROWN: Okay. Sorry.

3 FORMER STAFFER B: That's okay.

4 That's it. I mean, that's -- that's the best I
5 can explain it.

6 MR. BROWN: Okay. So the hiring
7 process occurs through the Congressman's office,
8 all the interviews are with folks in the
9 Congressman's office, but you are sort of in some
10 ways checking in with the staff at the Wounded
11 Warrior Fellowship?

12 FORMER STAFFER B: Correct.

13 MR. BROWN: Is that -- is -- your
14 contact with the Wounded Warrior Fellowship
15 employees Mac and Solomon, is that formal in any
16 way or is that sort of more of an informal
17 connection?

18 FORMER STAFFER B: I think it's really
19 just, you know, they are there to support you,
20 but day-to-day it's, you know, you really need to
21 work with the people that you are working
22 directly with. They are kind of there if some

1 issues do arise.

2 Like, I know one time I was venting to
3 them. They -- you know, there have been
4 officials where they have told me, Hey, this is
5 official, and but it's, I mean, a lot of email
6 exchange, a lot of text message exchange. Very
7 rarely do you ever get them on the phone. So I
8 guess that's kind of --

9 MR. BROWN: I gather that they run an
10 extensive program in which they place a large
11 number of veterans and then they are sort of
12 there as a support network for those vets,
13 veterans?

14 FORMER STAFFER B: Correct, that's
15 exactly it.

16 MR. BROWN: Having gotten some of
17 those preliminaries out of the way, you know,
18 just a little bit more about your background. I
19 would like to jump in to some more specific
20 issues and the one place I want to start, because
21 it sounds like it might be a good place to start,
22 is why did you end up leaving the Congressman's

1 office?

2 FORMER STAFFER B: I was terminated.
3 So I was actually at home with my son, who was
4 sick. He had a hundred and -- it's been over a
5 year. So I think it was over a hundred and
6 (inaudible) --

7 THE COURT REPORTER: Excuse me.

8 (Thereupon, a brief off-the-record
9 discussion occurred, and the interview continued
10 as follows:)

11 MR. BROWN: So, Former Staffer B, you
12 were saying you were terminated and you got a
13 phone call when your son had a fever.

14 FORMER STAFFER B: Correct. So I was
15 home. It's kind of a weird story, but I was -- I
16 had arranged a veterans' Claims Clinic and I had
17 set up where the Jackson VBA, so the Veterans'
18 Benefit Administration, was going to come down to
19 Pascagoula and I had got the Elk's Lodge and we
20 were going to help veterans with their claims --
21 one-day claims processing. And then I had
22 arranged for nonprofit organizations, as well as

1 the VA Medical Center, to be there to set up and
2 help veterans any way that they could.

3 So my son was sick and I told Michele
4 I was going to try to get somebody to watch him.
5 And she said, Can you have a phone call at, I
6 believe it was, 10:00 o'clock.

7 And I said, Yes. So at 9:58 I said,
8 Am I calling you or are you calling me? And
9 before I could even push send, my phone rang and
10 it was Michele. And Michele asked how my son was
11 and I told her.

12 And then immediately Mac came on the
13 line and told me that I was terminated and it was
14 effective that day but that, you know, there
15 could be a severance package offered. And, of
16 course, I became upset because I knew where this
17 was coming from.

18 And so I became upset, plus my child
19 was screaming and crying in the background, and I
20 I told them, I said, I can't even hear this
21 conversation. And they told me it was based off
22 an email that I had sent to a stakeholder. And,

1 you know, I said, What stakeholder? I asked
2 questions.

3 And Mac told me, Listen, there is
4 nothing you can say or do. Your best bet is to
5 stay quiet.

6 And, you know, I ended up hanging up
7 the call because I couldn't hear, I had my child
8 was screaming and I was very -- you know, very
9 upset because I worked my tail off in that office
10 and it's still very, very emotional.

11 Those veterans were like my children.
12 You know, I had over 300 cases. I had Vietnam
13 veterans that wouldn't open up to their family
14 that would come in and sit down and talk to me
15 and I connected with those veterans. I cared
16 about those veterans and I took care of them.

17 And, you know, to have them stripped
18 from me and never be able to make contact with
19 them or make sure that they were taken care of
20 was just -- I was so shocked. And so I did; I
21 became emotional.

22 You know, and I tried to talk to Mac

1 and say -- and he told me he was in the office,
2 that he was in the Gulfport office and then,
3 actually, he had been in town a week ago to do
4 this. And so he said, You know, there is nothing
5 you can do. And that's how I was terminated.

6 MR. BROWN: Okay. I think what I
7 would like to do -- that was a really helpful
8 explanation. I understand, you know, when you
9 said you knew where it was coming from that, you
10 know, you said to us in some prior communications
11 that you think it -- this all resulted from your
12 speaking up about a special favor that the
13 Congressman was seeking from the Secretary of
14 Navy.

15 So if it's okay with you, what I would
16 like to do is just unpack some of what you just
17 said and maybe we can walk through it step by
18 step sort of in line with some of the materials
19 that you sent us. Would that be all right?

20 FORMER STAFFER B: Yes.

21 MR. BROWN: Okay. Before I do that,
22 the one thing I want to ask you is, you know,

1 generally in your emails you refer to a RE Code.

2 That's a Re-enlistment Code, right?

3 FORMER STAFFER B: (Former Staffer B
4 nodded.)

5 MR. BROWN: Okay. And, you know, just
6 generally I am hoping you can spend a minute or
7 so talking about how one is assigned a -- did you
8 say an RE Code or Re-enlistment Code?

9 FORMER STAFFER B: It's an RE Code.

10 MR. BROWN: Okay.

11 FORMER STAFFER B: And it's based off
12 of -- it's actually based off of the Regulation
13 and, obviously, the U.S. Code, but it's -- it's
14 based off of their reasoning in your
15 characterization of your service. So I was a
16 military paralegal. So that's what I did. I did
17 separations.

18 But an RE Code is assigned based off
19 of your service or if you had honorable service
20 and if they would ever want you or you would ever
21 be eligible to come back in the Service.

22 So somebody that, you know, is --

1 reached their ATS date -- I don't know if you
2 know what that is, but that's their expiration
3 term of service. So if they have reached that,
4 they are going to be able to come back in no
5 problem. They have had honorable service.

6 Somebody that has been kicked out for
7 things like fraudulent enlistment or drug use,
8 they are going to have an RE Code that either --
9 I can't -- because my mind is a little -- I am
10 going to be honest, I am a little nervous and I
11 am a little overwhelmed with all of this, but
12 there are certain RE Codes that you can get a
13 waiver. So I think it's a two. I don't
14 remember, to be honest with you. But certain RE
15 Codes you can get a waiver.

16 And what that is is you go to their
17 recruiter and you -- you know, you ask for, Hey,
18 I require a waiver; can you go forward? And some
19 they require, like, a medical and some they
20 require, you know, that they prove that they have
21 gone through drug rehab.

22 The RE Code that Kyle Palazzo had is

1 non-waiverable. It is we don't want you in the
2 Service; you are not welcome in the Service ever
3 again.

4 MR. BROWN: Okay. Let me -- let me
5 stop you for one second. You know, I have looked
6 online and it looks like the -- the Navy has an
7 entire -- you know, there is the Naval Discharge
8 Review Board website that outlines this process.
9 That's the place you would be looking to
10 understand how this process works and it sort of
11 out -- outlines all the steps that you, on behalf
12 of Kyle, would have needed to -- to go through in
13 order to -- to -- to try and get that RE Code
14 adjusted?

15 FORMER STAFFER B: Yes and no. It's
16 kind of -- so I hate to be so detailed because I
17 know you really all don't want to spend millions
18 of hours on the phone, but I kind of need to
19 explain.

20 So an RE Code, your Re-entry Code, you
21 can't just ask the Navy, hey, change my RE Code,
22 unless you are Congressman Palazzo. But, okay,

1 so by law and by Regulation, you cannot ask the
2 Navy to change your -- to up your RE Code so that
3 you are waiverable. You cannot do it.

4 What you have to do is prove that the
5 way that you got your Code. For Kyle's -- for
6 Kyle's situation he was given a fraudulent
7 enlistment. Okay? So that's what he was
8 separated under was fraudulent enlistment.

9 What they would have had to do is
10 argue that because he was a brand new individual
11 into the Navy he should have been given -- he
12 could have been given or should have been given
13 an entry-level separation. Instead of banning
14 him for service altogether, they could have given
15 him an entry-level separation, given him the
16 opportunity to rehabilitate and have the chance
17 to serve again. That's to show that there was
18 unjust reasoning and that there was clerical
19 error in the separation that he was given. Once
20 they can get that changed, then they can request
21 the RE Code to be changed.

22 I know that's very confusing. I

1 probably just confused you.

2 MR. BROWN: No, no, that's okay. I --
3 I -- I -- you know, I spent some time on the
4 Naval Discharge Review Board site and it -- it --
5 it outlines a pretty detailed process by which
6 you go about doing these things.

7 So I -- I guess the only thing I
8 wanted to confirm was that is -- you know that --
9 that website and that eligibility process, those
10 are the sorts of things that you would be looking
11 at when you are trying to assist Kyle or any
12 other vet -- veteran that's trying to do this
13 sort of stuff?

14 FORMER STAFFER B: Correct.

15 MR. BROWN: Okay. With that out of
16 the way, let me -- let's -- let's dive into
17 the -- the situation with Kyle. And so how did
18 you first become aware of or come to assist Kyle
19 with his Re-enlistment Code issues?

20 A The Congressman came into my office
21 and said, Can you come here? I went into his
22 office and there was a young man sitting there

1 that I had never seen in my life. And he said,
2 Close the door. And, you know, I just -- I
3 closed the door and I set there.

4 And he said, Okay, before I say
5 anything, let me remind you of confidentiality
6 and, you know, nothing that is said in this
7 office leaves this office.

8 And I said, Yes, sir. And, of course,
9 I was a little confused because I had no idea who
10 this guy was.

11 And then he introduced him and said,
12 You have met my little brother Kyle before?

13 And I said, No.

14 And he said, Okay. Well, this is my
15 little brother Kyle and he, you know, had some
16 trouble in the Navy. And he said, I want him to
17 be able to serve in the Mississippi National
18 Guard with me and I think if there is anybody
19 that can make this happen, it would be you.

20 And I said, Okay.

21 And he said, I am not going to go in
22 to the details of it. I will let Kyle let you --

1 you know, tell you the story and give you all the
2 details. So I would like for you to take Kyle in
3 your office, sit down with him and he can explain
4 to you everything that has happened with him and
5 we can go from there and you can handle it.

6 And I said, Yes, sir. And so Kyle
7 came into my office and he explained to me that
8 the day before he left for, I call it basic
9 training but I think the Navy calls it boot camp,
10 but that he did, I want to say, [REDACTED].
11 And I can't remember, to be honest, right now.
12 It's been a year and some change, so. And I
13 said, Okay.

14 And he said, As soon as I got to
15 reception, he said, I got notified and called in
16 and told that I had popped hot.

17 So when you go to ship out for the
18 military you go through what's called MEPS and
19 that's the Military Entry -- Entry Processing
20 System like where they do all your physical and
21 they make you do a urinalysis. That is the
22 urinalysis that he tested positive on. By the

1 time he made it through his unit, with the
2 traveling they had already -- he said it was two
3 days later they notified him. And so then he was
4 quickly processed out and separated.

5 So I explained to him that -- you
6 know, I asked him, I said, You know, what -- what
7 is the thought process here?

8 And he said, I don't know. You know,
9 the Congressman seems to think that, you know, we
10 can get this fixed. I have been through, you
11 know, some rehab and he is going to get some
12 generals and some higher-ranking people to write
13 me letters of recommendation.

14 And I said, Do you have your DD214? Do
15 you even have a DD214?

16 And he said, I don't know what I have.
17 So I told him the first step would be for us to
18 request his records because there is a separation
19 packet. No matter how long you are in, there is
20 a separation packet. They have to -- you have
21 been enlisted, you know, through the MEPS. You
22 are property of the military at that point and so

1 the fact that he made it to his duty station they
2 would have had to separate him.

3 So we talked about ordering that and I
4 needed him to go online and do that. I couldn't
5 do that for him, plus there was documents that he
6 needed to fill out.

7 So we started that process and in the
8 meantime I had explained to him that, you know,
9 while we waiting for these documents you are
10 going to want to -- any rehab documentation that
11 you are talking about, this MEPS. But I
12 explained to him at that point that, you know,
13 this isn't just asking the Navy to change your RE
14 Code.

15 But I went over with him, you know,
16 about the entry-level separation and that they
17 could have processed him out of the military that
18 way and we would have to go that route about it.

19 So do you want me to go further into
20 it? That's kind of how I...

21 MR. BROWN: That -- that is -- that was
22 very helpful. Let me unpack some of that.

1 FORMER STAFFER B: Okay.

2 MR. BROWN: So as I understand it, the
3 first time that you are approached about this
4 assisting Kyle it occurs during your work hours
5 in the Congressman's office, again, during your
6 official hours?

7 FORMER STAFFER B: Yes.

8 MS. EISNER: And can I just ask on that
9 point if you know approximately when that would
10 have been? You don't need to know the specific
11 date, just what, you know, month or generally
12 when that would have occurred?

13 FORMER STAFFER B: I don't, but -- I
14 don't know if I forward documentation when I was
15 put on the administrative leave, but it was about
16 a month before that.

17 MS. EISNER: Okay. So I think would
18 that have been sometime in the early fall,
19 September or August of 2018?

20 FORMER STAFFER B: It was actually
21 right before the Election because I -- I had to
22 wait for the -- for the Election to be finished

1 to go back. So --

2 MR. BROWN: In an earlier --

3 FORMER STAFFER B: -- I don't --

4 MR. BROWN: In an earlier

5 submission -- in an earlier submission to us you

6 said it was around October of 2018. Does that

7 sound about right?

8 FORMER STAFFER B: That would be about

9 right. I just -- like I said, I don't know --

10 actually, it would be because I remember I was

11 texting with Kyle around my son's birthday and

12 that's in November. So that would be around that

13 time frame, yes.

14 MR. BROWN: Okay. So the first

15 request, again, this occurs in the Congressman's

16 office. This is in the Gulfport office?

17 FORMER STAFFER B: This is in the

18 Biloxi office.

19 MR. BROWN: Biloxi office. Okay. And

20 this is -- there is no implication that this is

21 a -- a volun -- you know, that you are

22 volunteering to do this or anything like that?

1 This was an ask of you in your official capacity?

2 FORMER STAFFER B: Yes.

3 MR. BROWN: Okay. You started talking
4 a little bit about you -- you had an initial
5 conversation with Kyle in which you -- he
6 essentially told you the story about how he was
7 kicked out of the -- the Navy. So you learn --
8 you learn all this stuff by Kyle telling you
9 about it.

10 Did you ever see any documentation on
11 all that? In other words, I am trying to
12 understand, you know, you learned he was kicked
13 out for [REDACTED] and he had an RE Code 4. Did --
14 did you ever see any documentation about that or
15 was that just a conversation with Kyle?

16 FORMER STAFFER B: So we requested
17 Kyle's military records and they came back with
18 two sheets and one of them did confirm that.

19 The other thing is there was
20 Angeline -- I cannot remember her last name, and
21 I believe she was -- she was not hired as a
22 Wounded Warrior, but she worked as a veteran --

1 she had attempted to start the process with him.

2 And I can't remember the name of the
3 system we used to track -- you know, keep track
4 of all of our cases and input all of our
5 documentation, but in there I could see where she
6 had contacted the Department of Navy to try to
7 get his records and there was notes in there.

8 MR. BROWN: And the notes said what?

9 FORMER STAFFER B: That she was trying
10 to assist him to get his RE Code changed. It
11 didn't go into detail as far as what his RE Code
12 was. The documentation that we received back did
13 confirm that he was kicked out and that it was a
14 fraudulent enlistment.

15 I can't tell you right now exactly
16 what it was, but I do believe he had -- it wasn't
17 a DD214, but it was still a separation document.
18 And I don't know -- I would have to look up what
19 they call it, but he did not have a DD214.

20 MR. BROWN: Okay. And so during that
21 initial conversation with Kyle he told you that
22 it was drug-related discharge and that he has

1 since gone to rehab?

2 FORMER STAFFER B: Correct.

3 MR. BROWN: Okay. In the submission
4 you sent to us -- again, I am going to ask you
5 about dates and I know I am not good with dates
6 and I don't mean to put you on the spot here, but
7 you said --

8 FORMER STAFFER B: That's okay.

9 MR. BROWN: -- the discharge -- his
10 discharge occurred in 1998. I think that -- that
11 Kyle's, you know, roughly 32 years old now. So I
12 am guessing it wasn't 1998. Is it possible that
13 that date's off?

14 FORMER STAFFER B: I believe it
15 actually -- he was -- I think he was 17. Like,
16 he was really young. This was -- this was quite
17 a long time ago. So if I said that right around
18 the time that I was -- my original email to that
19 office was right after I was terminated and I had
20 emailed multiple people about it. So it would
21 have been fresh in my head.

22 Today I couldn't tell you what date

1 that would be. But if that email was sent back
2 then, then that would be the correct date.

3 MR. BROWN: Let me -- let me ask you a
4 follow up. You said I think her name was
5 Angeline was somebody who was also working with
6 Kyle. Do you know Angeline's last name?

7 FORMER STAFFER B: I don't. I don't.

8 MR. BROWN: This is somebody who
9 worked in the Congressman's Biloxi and/or
10 Gulfport office?

11 FORMER STAFFER B: Yes.

12 MR. BROWN: Okay.

13 MS. EISNER: Is it -- is it possible
14 that -- I am sorry to interrupt, Jeff -- the last
15 name is Delgado-Francis?

16 FORMER STAFFER B: That sounds right,
17 correct.

18 MR. BROWN: Okay. And so you said
19 Angeline had sort of started this process but
20 it -- it -- it hadn't gotten anywhere by the time
21 you got on board?

22 FORMER STAFFER B: Correct, correct.

1 And I don't know, you know, how long she worked
2 on it. The only thing -- and that was Kyle
3 telling me and then there was a little -- in the
4 system that we use, like I said, there was just a
5 little note that she had asked his records to
6 assist with his RE Code, but there was no detail.
7 And all that was is just the transmission to the
8 Department of the Navy requesting his records,
9 and I don't know if she ever got them back.

10 I don't think she did because when we
11 got the documentation back for Kyle we literally
12 got about two documents and we were both shocked.
13 I mean, I did separations and I can tell you a
14 separation packet is not two documents. So we
15 were both shocked.

16 And based off of his reaction of only
17 getting the two documents, I don't think they
18 ever did receive them from when Angeline had
19 requested them.

20 MR. BROWN: Let me back up again for
21 just one second to unpack something that you said
22 previously. You said when the Congressman first

1 approached you about this he called you in to his
2 office, said, Close the door, and then he made a
3 mention about keeping this confidential.

4 What's your understanding of why he
5 is -- he is telling you that this should all be
6 kept confidential?

7 A Well, he did go into detail of, you
8 know, this is -- this is, you know, a family
9 matter. It is confidential. You know, I don't
10 want everybody to know Kyle's business. And --
11 and he went into the whole anything that happens
12 in this office doesn't leave this office.

13 So, you know, respecting, one, Kyle's
14 privacy and, two, you know, we always -- we did
15 that for any constituent. You are not supposed
16 to go home and talk about, you know, their
17 situations with your family or anybody or, you
18 know, call up and talk to, you know, anybody else
19 about situations that come up.

20 So but I think, you know -- and -- and
21 I can -- I am going to elaborate on that a little
22 bit. When I was put on administrative leave I

1 had put Kyle's name in there because in order to
2 keep track of all the cases I had put his name in
3 there and just said that I was working a case.
4 Everybody knew that I was working a case for Kyle
5 that the Congressman had had me do.

6 And Anita Bourn had contacted Michele
7 and asked, Hey, Former Staffer B's, got this case
8 in here. It says that it's for Kyle. Do you
9 want me to do it?

10 And Michele had called the Congressman
11 and he told her, No, nobody is to touch that
12 case. Wait until Former Staffer B gets back.

13 And so it was -- even the Privacy
14 Release Form, you know, I did have Kyle fill out
15 a Privacy Release Form because, you know, to get
16 the information from the Department of the Navy I
17 had to have a copy of that, but I didn't keep any
18 copies of that. I got rid of it immediately
19 because we had to put, you know, what we were
20 doing on that.

21 So I took extra -- extra steps to try
22 to make sure that everybody in the office wasn't

1 made aware because that is a personal matter
2 that, you know, you don't really -- you can't
3 control what your family member does, but it
4 could negatively affect, you know, the
5 Congressman and, plus, Kyle doesn't want
6 everybody to know his business. So I tried to
7 make sure that, you know, all tracks were covered
8 with that.

9 MR. BROWN: Did you in any way
10 understand his request to keep this situation
11 confidential to relate to the fact that he would
12 have been doing something inappropriate on behalf
13 of his brother?

14 FORMER STAFFER B: No. And to be 100
15 percent honest, I believe at the time that he
16 made that statement he had full faith that I was
17 going to take care of it, I was going to do it,
18 it was going to happen overnight and he just
19 wanted it done behind the scenes without, you
20 know, everybody in the office knowing.

21 I don't -- and this is -- this is just
22 based off of all of the -- everything that

1 happened, I don't think when he made that
2 statement that it was because he was going to go
3 directly to the Secretary of the Navy and I think
4 it was just, Hey, if anybody can do this, you can
5 do this, but keep-it-quiet type thing.

6 MR. BROWN: You also mentioned that
7 the Congressman said -- said something along the
8 lines of he was going to have some military
9 personnel write favorable letters on Kyle's
10 behalf. Can you elaborate on that at all?

11 FORMER STAFFER B: Kyle told me that
12 he was -- that -- every -- everybody who refers
13 to -- everybody besides myself refers to the
14 Congressman as Boss. So that's who I am talking
15 about when I say Boss is the Congressman.

16 He said, The Boss says that, you know,
17 he is going to get letters from generals and
18 colonels to submit on my packet. And that was
19 actually one of the reasons that everything got
20 held up is because there was never any of these
21 letters came forward.

22 MR. BROWN: Well, let's get --

1 let's -- let's jump ahead and get to that. So my
2 understanding --

3 MS. EISNER: But, Jeff, can I -- can I
4 just jump in and ask a question, which is you
5 were having quite a bit of interaction with Kyle
6 at that point of time. What was Kyle doing
7 professionally and -- I mean, did you get a sense
8 of where he was employed or what was happening in
9 his life at that point in time?

10 FORMER STAFFER B: Kyle randomly
11 showed back up to the area and I was told, you
12 know, from him that he had a very successful
13 painting business in Alabama, didn't have a place
14 to live, was staying at the River house that was
15 in D'iberville and he did not have a job. It was
16 mentioned that he came to help take care of the
17 parents, but he didn't have a job, didn't have a
18 place to stay and just randomly showed up one
19 day.

20 MS. EISNER: And how frequently were
21 you in communication with him during this period
22 of time?

1 FORMER STAFFER B: When it first
2 started we would communicate quite a bit just --
3 and we would talk, you know, kind of personally.
4 You know, I think he felt comfortable with, you
5 know, hey, this -- she knows a lot of my
6 business.

7 And, actually, on my son's birthday he
8 asked to come over to my house and I said no.
9 And that was kind of when it was a little
10 awkward. You know, it's like, uh, you are, you
11 know, the Boss's brother and I am not trying to
12 hang out with you, plus, I don't know you and the
13 only thing I do know about you isn't great
14 information, but I am trying to help you.

15 And so we would text, you know, about
16 just random stuff. He told me he had a daughter
17 and that. But he would come into the office --
18 it started out he was very -- not in the office
19 that often, but when we moved, then he came in
20 the office all the time. He started working in
21 the office and he was going to events just about
22 daily.

1 MS. EISNER: And that was when the
2 office moved to the Gulfport office? That was
3 the transition point?

4 FORMER STAFFER B: Correct.

5 MS. EISNER: Okay.

6 MR. BROWN: Let me -- let me ask you
7 this, Former Staffer B. So you begin helping
8 Kyle, as I understand it, in or around October
9 2008 and this is the sort of stuff --

10 FORMER STAFFER B: Didn't come out.
11 Sorry.

12 MR. BROWN: Sorry to --

13 FORMER STAFFER B: Go ahead.

14 MR. BROWN: So this -- the assistance
15 to Kyle begins in or around October of 2018, as I
16 understand it. You are requesting his separation
17 packet materials at that time. You are also
18 trying to put together his -- you know, I think
19 there is the initial application, which I think
20 is the DD293? Is that what you are referring to?

21 FORMER STAFFER B: I don't remember
22 the document numbers now, but what -- what the

1 only -- it would have been a DD293. The document
2 that I would have sent forward to reflect his
3 records from the Department of Navy I can't
4 remember whether it would be a DD293 request.

5 MR. BROWN: I think the DD214, as I
6 see it on their site, is the document that you
7 would submit in order to request
8 separation-related records and then there is a
9 separate document, sort of like an application,
10 that you have to prepare, in which I think you
11 would attach, like you said, letters of
12 recommendation from folks.

13 But that's -- I guess all I am trying
14 to ask at this point is those are the issues that
15 you are working on in October, November, December
16 of 2000 --

17 FORMER STAFFER B: Yeah.

18 MR. BROWN: Okay.

19 FORMER STAFFER B: Those are the --
20 those are the items I am trying to gather to be
21 able to submit. The only thing that was actually
22 submitted was the request for records.

1 MR. BROWN: Right. And as I
2 understand from one of the submissions you sent
3 to us early on was that, you know, you had sent
4 an email to Kyle, I assume from your official
5 account, listing all the things and all the steps
6 that he needed to take in order to start get --
7 getting this process rolling?

8 FORMER STAFFER B: Yes.

9 MR. BROWN: Okay. And then it sounds
10 like, from, again, the submission that -- that
11 you -- you had sent us shortly after this all
12 occurred, in or around January of 2019 the
13 Congressman and some others got back involved in
14 Kyle's case. And I am specifically referring to
15 it sounds like in about January of 2019 you said
16 the Congressman contacted you about Kyle's
17 Privacy Release Form. What -- what happened
18 there?

19 FORMER STAFFER B: So I got a phone
20 call. And I very rarely ever got phone calls
21 from the Congressman. And so I -- I answered it
22 and he said, I need Kyle's Privacy Release Form

1 sent to me.

2 And I said, I didn't maintain a copy
3 of that, sir.

4 And he said, You don't have it in --
5 again, I can't remember the name of the program
6 we used, but where we upload all of our --

7 And I said, No, sir, I didn't keep
8 that to try to keep privacy and I didn't want it,
9 you know, around the office.

10 And he said, Okay.

11 Before I could hang up the phone, Kyle
12 had called me on my cell phone and said he was
13 (inaudible) -- sorry. I had another call come
14 in.

15 MR. BROWN: Yeah, I think we -- we
16 probably missed just the last couple seconds of
17 that. So if you could, restart.

18 FORMER STAFFER B: Okay. So the
19 Congressman called me, asked about the Privacy
20 Release Form. And then before I could hang up --
21 you know, I explained I didn't have it. Before I
22 could hang up the phone, Kyle called me on my

1 cell phone, asked if I was in the office and then
2 he appeared in the office. And he shut the door
3 and said, What is going on?

4 And I said, I don't know. You tell
5 me. And I said, All I know is that the
6 Congressman has asked for your Privacy Release
7 Form. And I said, I did not keep your Privacy
8 Release Form.

9 And he said, Okay. Well, I am
10 supposed to get one.

11 And I said, Well, here is the form.
12 You can fill it out.

13 And he said, What is going on? And he
14 showed me the email traffic with Patrick Large,
15 the Congressman, and Kyle was, I guess, cc'd on
16 it, where he was going to go directly to the
17 Secretary of the Navy and ask for this RE Code.

18 He -- Patrick Large had an appointment
19 with the Secretary of the Navy and had been
20 communicating with the Secretary of the Navy's
21 Office to go and sit down and request for Kyle's
22 RE Code to be changed.

1 And I told Kyle, I am not okay with
2 this. And I said to him -- I explained, I said,
3 Kyle, if we do this and somebody gets wind of
4 this, I said, it's not going to be good, I said,
5 especially because people are already -- this
6 will lead in to another issue, but I said, People
7 don't believe that your brother served and, you
8 know, there is lots of accusations out there that
9 he doesn't drill.

10 And I said, And people are all on top
11 of his military -- you know, his National Guard,
12 I said, and then all of a sudden your name pops
13 up and people are going to start looking at how
14 you randomly got into the Mississippi National
15 Guard.

16 And I said, We would not do this for
17 any other constituent. And I told him, I said,
18 We need to go about this the right way and I
19 don't want to be involved in this.

20 And he said, I know. I know. I am
21 just -- I got to get the Privacy Release Form. I
22 don't know. I don't really agree with it,

1 either. I hear what you are saying.

2 And I said, Well, here is the Privacy
3 Release Form. If you want to fill it out and
4 send it to him, go right ahead, but I do not want
5 to be involved in this process.

6 So I was in my office when we had that
7 conversation. And the more and more I thought
8 about it, I became really upset because I knew it
9 wasn't the right thing to do, two, I spent just
10 about, I mean, 12 to 13 hours a day helping
11 veterans and we would never do this. And trying
12 to get the Congressman to help any veteran that
13 truly deserved help was never something that we
14 would do. And just because you are his brother
15 doesn't mean you should, you know -- and so I
16 really got concerned.

17 And so I went outside and I called
18 Michele --

19 MR. BROWN: Can -- can I interrupt
20 you --

21 FORMER STAFFER B: -- and I told
22 her, I said --

1 MR. BROWN: Former Staffer B, can I
2 just (inaudible) --

3 FORMER STAFFER B: Oh, I am sorry.
4 You are really quiet.

5 MR. BROWN: Sorry. Let me just
6 interrupt you (inaudible) --

7 FORMER STAFFER B: Oh, you know why?
8 I know what happened. Hold on one second. I
9 can't hear you. Okay. Go ahead.

10 MR. BROWN: I just -- I wanted to
11 interrupt you before you got to the conversation
12 with Michele and I wanted to unpack a little
13 bit --

14 FORMER STAFFER B: Yup.

15 MR. BROWN: -- what you said there.
16 Let me just start with this. So as I understand
17 it, Kyle came in to your office. And when he was
18 in your office did he have a copy, like a
19 physical copy, of the email string?

20 FORMER STAFFER B: It was on his cell
21 phone. He pulled out his cell phone and said,
22 What is this and what -- he said, What the hell

1 is going on?

2 He was pretty -- he was pretty -- you
3 know, he was confused as to what was going on and
4 why he was being ordered to come in -- you know,
5 in to the office and get a Privacy Release Form
6 and I don't think he really understood the aspect
7 of requesting that meeting with the Secretary of
8 the Navy really meant. And so that's where he
9 was kind of like, What the hell is going on? He
10 showed it to me not realizing that probably
11 shouldn't have showed it to me.

12 MR. BROWN: So you looked on Kyle's
13 phone and you saw a copy of an email exchange
14 between the Congressman and Patrick Large and
15 somebody in the Secretary of the Navy's Office?

16 FORMER STAFFER B: Correct.

17 MR. BROWN: Can you tell us -- I -- I
18 know it's been a while, but just what do you
19 remember about -- what -- what specifics do you
20 remember about that email string?

21 FORMER STAFFER B: They were simply
22 requesting an appointment with that office to

1 talk to them about getting Kyle's RE Code
2 changed. The exact wording I couldn't tell you,
3 but that's -- that's what the email was -- that
4 was what the request was.

5 MR. BROWN: And so that was sent from
6 Patrick Large to somebody in the Secretary of the
7 Navy's Office?

8 FORMER STAFFER B: That -- to be
9 honest with you, I cannot remember if it was the
10 direct email to the Secretary of the Navy's
11 Office or it was the -- him telling the
12 Congressman that he had requested it. Does that
13 make sense?

14 MR. BROWN: Yeah. I guess what I am
15 trying to figure out is, you know, sort of what
16 exactly was conveyed to the Secretary of the Navy
17 versus what was the understanding between Patrick
18 and the Congressman or Patrick, the Congressman
19 and Kyle. Does that -- does that make sense?

20 FORMER STAFFER B: Correct. So, I
21 mean, really all they -- I mean, really what they
22 were doing is asking to come in to sit down to

1 get Kyle's RE Code changed and to discuss Kyle's
2 RE Code with the Secretary of the Navy, and that
3 meeting specifically would have been held by
4 Patrick Large. Does that make sense?

5 MR. BROWN: Yeah. No, that does. And
6 so, you know, there -- in other words, in that
7 email there was specific -- to the Secretary of
8 the Navy there was a specific ask for a meeting
9 and it was -- it was clear that that meeting was
10 going to be about Kyle Palazzo and that the
11 meeting would involve changing his RE Code?

12 FORMER STAFFER B: Correct.

13 MR. BROWN: Helen, did you have
14 anything there?

15 MS. EISNER: Yeah, just one thing. In
16 your time as a Wounded Warrior Fellow had you
17 ever seen any other direct communications with
18 the Secretary of the Navy on behalf of any
19 constituents or anyone who was seeking help from
20 the Office?

21 FORMER STAFFER B: Give me one second.

22 (Thereupon, a brief off-the-record

1 discussion occurred, and the interview continued
2 as follows:)

3 FORMER STAFFER B: But when I would
4 send out requests for -- for constituents, that's
5 who you contacted the Secretary of the Navy for
6 certain things. But, let's be honest, that is --
7 just like with the Congressman, that's a --
8 that's a -- you know, a populated -- prepopulated
9 doc -- you know, stationery. That's not an
10 actual the Secretary of the Navy has officially
11 addressed that. You know what I mean?

12 That's -- that's like when you
13 write -- well, that's like if a constituent came
14 to the Congressman, I would send him those
15 letters, but it has the Congressman's signature
16 on it.

17 So I got several responses from the
18 Secretary of the Navy but no direct email with
19 the Secretary of the Navy requesting a meeting to
20 sit down with the Secretary of the Navy.

21 MS. EISNER: Okay. So the difference
22 between a form letter and something that's been

1 personalized?

2 FORMER STAFFER B: Correct. And there
3 is no email -- I mean, when we would email, we
4 had liaisons that we would email with and they
5 probably weren't even anywhere near that office.

6 But, yes, I mean, it's a completely
7 different office. Where it's very direct, this
8 is more of a process that I would go through.
9 Does that make sense?

10 MR. BROWN: So to be clear, this was
11 not an email to a -- you know, a sort of
12 prepopulated inbox or to one of the liaisons in
13 the Office? This was an email to the Secretary
14 of the Navy for personnel management issues?

15 FORMER STAFFER B: Correct. This
16 was -- this was a request for a meeting to sit
17 down face to face to discuss this RE Code in
18 confidence for -- for Patrick on behalf of Kyle
19 to -- well, not really on behalf, but to speak
20 about his RE Code.

21 MR. BROWN: And I assume this was sent
22 from Patrick's official accounts, his official

1 email accounts?

2 FORMER STAFFER B: And -- and that's
3 the part that I can't -- I saw an exchange and --
4 but, yes, all of it was on their personal -- I
5 mean, their professional accounts discussing
6 this.

7 So what I am saying is is I can't
8 remember if I saw the actual email, like the
9 first email was the email directly to the
10 Secretary of the Navy's Office, or if it was the
11 exchange of him sending it -- their response to
12 the Congressman to say, you know, I am going to
13 give the appointment, only because it's been
14 quite a while. But I know that the request was
15 made and that's what the email exchange was
16 about.

17 Does that make sense? I am sorry. I
18 am probably confusing you.

19 MR. BROWN: No, that does make sense
20 and -- and, you know, we are just trying to nail
21 down the details. And I understand it's been a
22 while, so I -- I -- I certainly understand if

1 it's hard to remember each and every specific
2 detail we may be asking you.

3 FORMER STAFFER B: I just don't want
4 to make -- I don't want to make a statement that,
5 you know, is not exactly what I saw. I mean, I
6 know that the detail of the email was -- of the
7 email exchange was we are requesting a meeting
8 with the Secretary of the Navy to discuss Kyle's
9 RE Code.

10 So, you know, who the first email was
11 to and all that, that's the part I can't 100
12 percent sure, but I know that there was a request
13 made to the Secretary of the Navy for that
14 meeting.

15 MR. BROWN: And -- and -- and that
16 email string may have later included
17 conversations between Patrick and the Congressman
18 about that request?

19 FORMER STAFFER B: Correct.

20 MR. BROWN: Okay. So I interrupted
21 you previously and you were starting to talk
22 about how you saw that email and the email, you

1 know, upset you because you didn't think it was
2 appropriate and that you then called Michele. So
3 please elaborate on what your conversation with
4 Michele entailed.

5 FORMER STAFFER B: Okay. So I went
6 outside the building and I told Michele. I
7 called her and, you know, I started out by saying
8 to her, You know that I am working on something
9 for the Congressman.

10 And she said, I do.

11 And I said, And I know all about, you
12 know, the privacy and this and that. And I said,
13 But at this point I don't care, I said, about
14 that. If I get fired because of this, I don't
15 care because, I said, this is risking all of our
16 jobs.

17 And I told her, I said, Michele, I
18 respect you and I respect your position and I
19 don't -- I think all of us will be on the line if
20 somebody gets wind of this.

21 And she was like, Well, where are you
22 at right now?

1 And I said, I am outside of the
2 office.

3 And she said, Why don't you drive down
4 the street?

5 So I got in my car and I drove down
6 the street to talk to her and I explained to her,
7 you know, what was going on and this and that.
8 And I, you know, told her, I said, Michele, we
9 would never do this for another constituent and,
10 you know, I was working all this stuff for him.
11 So I said, I don't know why all of a sudden the
12 rush, what's going on, but I am not okay with
13 this.

14 And I, you know, told her, I said, if
15 this happens, somebody is going to look into it
16 because the entire State of Mississippi talks
17 about how the Congressman does not do his drills
18 and how he is No-Show Palazzo when it comes to
19 the Mississippi National Guard.

20 And I said, Imagine when you add
21 another Palazzo to the ranks, that's going to
22 raise eyebrows and people are going to start

1 investigating.

2 And I said, If they come back and find
3 out that our office went directly to the
4 Secretary of the Navy, got his RE Code changed
5 without going through any process, even though he
6 has an RE Code that is not waiverable, we are
7 toast. Like, we are done. Our careers are over.

8 And I said, You know, if me coming to
9 you about this I end up losing my job, I don't
10 even care because, I said, this is wrong. And we
11 had a very long, probably couple-hour-long
12 conversation.

13 And she told me she agreed, that she
14 didn't think it was right and that we wouldn't do
15 it for any other constituents. And she told me,
16 Continue doing what you are doing. Continue
17 gathering the documentation for his packet the
18 same -- drive on with what you were doing.

19 And She said, You know, sometimes you
20 can't tell the Congressman what to do and, you
21 know, this is the way that he wants to do this.
22 We just kind of have to sit back and -- and --

1 and let it happen.

2 And I was like, Michele, it's wrong.

3 And she said, It is, but just continue
4 driving forward.

5 So in the meantime she told me that
6 she had major concerns with why Kyle was suddenly
7 back in the office and that she thought that he
8 was potentially on drugs.

9 I apologize. My seven-year-old is
10 interrupting give me one second.

11 (Thereupon, a brief break was taken,
12 and the interview continued as follows:)

13 MR. BROWN: And, Former Staffer B, I
14 will -- I will let you continue on.

15 FORMER STAFFER B: Okay. I couldn't
16 even remember where I was.

17 MR. BROWN: Do you want me to remind
18 you where we were?

19 FORMER STAFFER B: No. I drove down
20 the street and Michele raised concerns. I
21 remember now. Sorry. My son threw my head off a
22 little bit.

1 So Michele said that she had some
2 concerns with Kyle and that she felt like he
3 could possibly be on drugs. He was spending a
4 lot of time in the office and he was -- was being
5 sent to a lot of events to represent the
6 Congressman.

7 And she -- you know, he was also doing
8 work on the new office and it was the -- the move
9 was originally supposed to happen and then it got
10 postponed and then so he was doing a lot of work
11 in the office as far as taking stuff down off the
12 walls or moving things and he would go to events.
13 He was kind of, essentially, a field rep, but
14 there was never an official title put on that.
15 And Michele said --

16 MR. BROWN: Let me --

17 FORMER STAFFER B: Oh, go ahead.

18 MR. BROWN: Let me interrupt you one
19 second. So he is doing official work in the
20 official office?

21 FORMER STAFFER B: Yes. Let me back
22 up a little bit. When I was asked about the

1 communication with him, he did tell me at one
2 point -- he emailed me -- no, he text me and
3 said, Hey, I am taking over Bridgette, Bridgette
4 Jones, who used to handle -- I believe she would
5 campaign. She -- she would come and go a lot.
6 She had been -- she had quit. She was full-time,
7 quit, came back and then was gone again.

8 And he said, I am taking over her
9 email. So if you are going to email me, you can
10 email me on that.

11 So at that point I assumed he was, you
12 know, working on the campaign side. But he would
13 go to a lot of events and -- sorry.

14 (Thereupon, a brief break was taken,
15 and the interview continued as follows:)

16 FORMER STAFFER B: So she told me that
17 they had gone to an event in -- I want to say it
18 was in Jackson. Michele had gone and she had
19 explained to me that Kyle was going to go to the
20 event, as well. And so she had asked him if he
21 wanted to ride together. And they did not ride
22 together -- maybe they did ride together. I

1 can't remember the -- the actual details of that.

2 But Leslie Churchwell -- Bridgette had
3 gotten a job elsewhere and she was going to be at
4 this event was in Jackson. And Leslie had been
5 out for several days with strep but ended up
6 going to -- she missed a day of work but ended up
7 going to that event, as well.

8 And Michele either went with Kyle or
9 was supposed to meet up with Kyle and on several
10 points he would disappear for long periods of
11 time and she wasn't able to make contact with
12 him.

13 And so she told me, she said, Former
14 Staffer B, I have concerns that, you know, he
15 is -- he is back on drugs, like, you know, just
16 from his behavior is erratic and weird.

17 And I told her, I said, Well, Michele,

18 [REDACTED] -- [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
19 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
20 [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
21 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]
22 [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

And then so, anyways, we had that long discussion and she told me she felt she wasn't part of the in crew and that we needed to be careful and this and that. And, you know, that was it. And I told her -- you know, and she thanked me for telling her and bringing it to her attention.

But she did tell me, You know, we really just got to do what the Congressman asks us to do and you continue driving forward with what you think is right and that way, you know, we would have -- you would have the paperwork to back yourself up of, you know, this is you were doing the appropriate steps.

MR. BROWN: Well, let me -- let me ask you this. You have this conversation with Michele and then, as I understand from the submission you sent us later, I think it's two

1 days later Kyle sent you a text. Can you tell us
2 about the text and what that said? Or do you
3 need me --

4 FORMER STAFFER B: I don't remember
5 that.

6 MR. BROWN: Do you need me to jog your
7 memory a little further?

8 FORMER STAFFER B: Yes.

9 MR. BROWN: Yeah, I think you -- you
10 stated -- two days later, after you had a
11 conversation with Michele, you said, I received a
12 text from Kyle stating I guess he -- I believe
13 the he is the Congressman -- decided to go about
14 it the right way.

15 FORMER STAFFER B: Okay. That I do
16 remember. Okay. So there is a little bit of
17 story that has to go with that to understand that
18 whole aspect.

19 I think the very next day after I had
20 that conversation with Michele she explained to
21 me that she was trying to get in touch with
22 somebody with the Department of the Army because

1 her son, who either was a lieutenant or a
2 captain, was requesting to get out of the Army
3 early because the Congressman had offered him a
4 position in his office in D.C.

5 And I told her, I said, Michele, I
6 don't know why you would try to do this on your
7 own. I make things happen. Let me handle it.

8 And she said, I don't know why I
9 didn't ask you, but you are right. Go ahead. If
10 you think you can handle it, handle it.

11 Within 24 hours or maybe it might have
12 been 48, it was within a few days, he had orders
13 and was able to separate from the military. And
14 Michele had apparently been working on this for a
15 long time.

16 And so she told me that she had told
17 the Boss that, you know, Former Staffer B is a
18 beast. She was able to get -- I can't remember
19 his name, her son -- out of the Army. She made
20 this happen. I have been trying to make this
21 happen. She made this happen in less than -- I
22 will say -- 72 hours.

1 And after that, that's when I received
2 the message from Kyle. And then Michele had --
3 Kyle told me that the Congressman had forwarded
4 the response from the Secretary of the Navy to
5 Michele. And Michele and I had a big, long
6 conversation about that.

7 And she said, I truly think that when
8 I told him you were a beast that's when he
9 decided that he should let you handle this.

10 Well, no, it was because the Secretary
11 of the Navy's letter came back and said this is
12 the process of how you go about requesting an RE
13 Code change. And I don't -- I -- I want to say
14 that this email was actually sent from my
15 personal email, but I can't -- I know that I got
16 an email either a day or two later from the
17 Congressman asking me, you know, what was my
18 thought on their response.

19 MR. BROWN: Before we get to that --

20 FORMER STAFFER B: And I explained --

21 MR. BROWN: Before we get to that --

22 FORMER STAFFER B: Oh, sorry.

1 MR. BROWN: -- Former Staffer B, can I
2 interrupt for one second?

3 FORMER STAFFER B: Yeah.

4 MR. BROWN: I want to ask -- I want to
5 unpack some of that.

6 FORMER STAFFER B: Okay.

7 MR. BROWN: The text from Kyle where
8 he said something along the lines of, I guess, he
9 decided to go about it the right way, what was
10 your understanding of what Kyle was trying to
11 convey with that text?

12 FORMER STAFFER B: That he was no
13 longer going to request for the Secretary of the
14 Navy to just change -- do a personal favor and
15 change his RE Code.

16 MR. BROWN: In other words, it
17 would -- it was now the -- the thought that --
18 that we would go about it the right way through
19 the formal channels?

20 FORMER STAFFER B: Correct. That,
21 Former Staffer B, the way that I was -- the way
22 that I was originally approaching it is how we

1 would continue to drive forward --

2 MR. BROWN: Okay.

3 FORMER STAFFER B: -- and go about it
4 the right way.

5 MR. BROWN: And then you mentioned
6 there is a letter from the Secretary of the Navy.
7 Is this letter that you were forwarded and you
8 saw, correct?

9 FORMER STAFFER B: Correct.

10 MR. BROWN: Okay. Is this letter a
11 direct response to what we were talking about
12 earlier, the request from Patrick and the
13 Congressman for a meeting?

14 FORMER STAFFER B: Yes. So that
15 letter was -- it was a formatted like it would be
16 a -- like the letters that I would have sent out,
17 like a form letter, but very detailed information
18 of the process and the steps that needed to be
19 taken.

20 MR. BROWN: So it wasn't an -- it
21 wasn't an -- it wasn't an email that was a
22 response to Patrick? It was a formal letter sent

1 to the office, but it was -- it was certainly in
2 response to Patrick's and/or the Congressman's
3 request?

4 FORMER STAFFER B: I -- I mean, to be
5 honest with you, I think that the letters would
6 look the same. I am just saying that it wasn't
7 like an email. It was an actual, like -- like
8 the letters that I would send out. It looked
9 exactly the same, the letterhead, that, you know,
10 block. It was -- it was a very official letter,
11 not just an email response. It was -- it was a
12 very official letter saying these are the
13 appropriate steps that need to be taken for this
14 to happen.

15 MR. BROWN: So as I understand then,
16 this is sort of the Secretary of the Navy's way
17 of saying what you asked for would not be
18 appropriate; here is the appropriate way to go
19 about it?

20 FORMER STAFFER B: Correct.

21 MR. BROWN: Okay. I interrupted you.
22 You were starting to talk about the fact that the

1 Congressman came to you, was it in your office,
2 later to talk about all of this --

3 FORMER STAFFER B: No, it was an
4 email -- it was an email and he asked me what
5 was -- you know, what -- what's your opinion of
6 the response from the Secretary of the Navy.

7 And I explained to him that it was
8 exactly what I had tried to explain to Kyle and
9 that's why we were taking those steps, that in
10 order to get his RE Code changed or even attempt
11 to get his RE Code changed we would have to first
12 get his separation changed.

13 And, you know, I told him and I
14 think -- and this is just me assuming, but I was
15 a paralegal in the military. I have a huge JAG
16 family, you know. And I told him that I asked,
17 you know, without any names or any scenarios or
18 telling them, you know, anything about that, that
19 I had talked to some of my JAG lawyers that --
20 you know, and asked them do you think fighting to
21 say that he could have received a entry-level
22 separation where he could have rehabilitated and

1 given the opportunity to come back into the
2 military was the right way to go, and that they
3 had all advised that yes.

4 And I -- I believe, and I -- this is
5 speaking from memory, that I even sent him the
6 actual Army regulation or Navy regulation --
7 sorry. I sent him a couple different Navy
8 regulations, I do remember, ways that we could
9 approach this. And that was the -- I never got a
10 response from him.

11 MR. BROWN: Just real quickly, what
12 are your thoughts on the likelihood that Kyle
13 would have been able to be successful in -- in
14 regards to changing his RE Code?

15 I mean, when I am on the Secretary of
16 the Navy's website and I am looking at this
17 stuff, I -- you know, I saw some stuff on there
18 that said like, you know, the Discharge Review
19 Board has no authority to upgrade a discharge for
20 the sole purpose of enhancing re-enlistment
21 opportunities and that they don't have the
22 authority to upgrade a discharge based solely on

1 the passage of time or of good conduct subsequent
2 to leaving Naval service.

3 When I read these sort of things and
4 I -- I hear you talk about Kyle's situation, it
5 seems to me like this is definitely an uphill --
6 uphill fight.

7 A Correct. I mean, it is -- in my
8 opinion, it was not going to happen, but, you
9 know, that -- and that Board is created for
10 people who are -- you know, you get -- obviously,
11 I did a lot of military justice. You get victims
12 of military sexual trauma who then have a mental
13 breakdown and then get separated. You know, they
14 get punished for the behaviors that they are
15 displaying while they are going through all this
16 and mental health stuff and they end up getting
17 kicked out of the military, you know, with an
18 other than honorable discharge because, you know,
19 they have gone off the deep end and done some
20 crazy stuff.

21 And -- and that's really what -- what
22 that Board is for, where this situation is

1 somebody who truly was -- their entire situation
2 wasn't looked at and they were separated and it
3 was unjust and, you know, somebody needs to take
4 a -- a second look at it. That's really what
5 it's intended for.

6 So people just wanting to come back in
7 the Navy after they have, you know, been kicked
8 out is very -- I mean, even -- even some of these
9 cases where, you know, women, you know, get
10 orders to deploy and they just had a baby and,
11 you know, they don't want to leave their baby so
12 they go AWOL for a few days, you know -- there
13 is just situations where it's -- it's a lot
14 different situation than, hey, I did drugs, lie
15 about doing drugs and, you know, two days into
16 the military I was kicked out and now all of a
17 sudden my brother wants me to serve because he
18 thinks that it would be good for me. You know, I
19 just don't -- I know that's a very detailed, long
20 explanation.

21 MR. BROWN: Okay. Very, very helpful.
22 So I -- I think what I would like to do next is

1 sort of move on to a -- a bit of a different but,
2 I think, connected topic, which is your actual
3 termination.

4 I don't know what your thoughts are.
5 Would you like to take a little bit of a -- a
6 break and we can all come back on?

7 FORMER STAFFER B: No, I am okay as
8 long as my kids and my dog cooperate because now
9 they are wresting and I am so sorry.

10 MR. BROWN: Okay. Well, we will -- we
11 will keep moving on then. So let's talk about
12 the -- the actual termination. Do you have an
13 actual date for when that phone call was with Mac
14 and Michele or a rough date when that occurred?

15 MS. EISNER: Former Staffer B, we lost
16 you for about 30 seconds there and now I think we
17 are having trouble hearing you, but we can see
18 you if you can hear us.

19 (Thereupon, a brief break was taken
20 due to transmission issues, and the interview
21 continued as follows:)

22 FORMER STAFFER B: Sorry. I don't

1 know what happened.

2 MR. BROWN: That's okay. Okay. So I
3 think you cut out right after my question. So I
4 will reask it.

5 And the question is do you have an
6 approximate date or do you know the actual date
7 when you had that call with Michele and -- and
8 Mac Toller about your termination?

9 FORMER STAFFER B: I don't. It's
10 whatever day I received the -- I forget what it's
11 called -- severance package offer. Whatever date
12 that email is dated, I received that the same
13 day.

14 MR. BROWN: So the -- the severance
15 conversation that you had with Mac -- and I
16 believe it was Angie at the CAO's office, that
17 occurred on the same day as your conversation
18 with Michele and Mac?

19 FORMER STAFFER B: Correct.

20 MR. BROWN: Okay. Let me ask you
21 this. I -- I believe that's February 20th. When
22 does your -- when does the -- the -- your

1 termination occur -- I think it's February 20th.
2 When does that occur relative to your
3 conversations with Michele and the Congressman
4 about your concerns about Kyle Palazzo and the
5 way his Re-enlistment Code was being handled?

6 FORMER STAFFER B: I would say it was
7 probably a couple weeks to a month because it was
8 in the middle of the move with everything. So
9 that conversation happened and then things
10 started becoming very, very, very awkward and
11 then the move happened. And I don't even think
12 we were in that office for a week before I was
13 terminated.

14 MR. BROWN: And -- and you said in a
15 few submissions to us that you felt like your
16 termination was directly tied to speaking up
17 about the -- the issue involving Kyle and the
18 Re-enlistment Code; is that correct?

19 FORMER STAFFER B: I do. So my
20 reviews -- you know, through the Wounded Warrior
21 Fellowship you had reviews and the Congressman's
22 office had reviews. I was not -- I was not

1 required to have a review by Michele. That was
2 not something that was necessary, however, I
3 never objected to it.

4 I never had any negative remarks. I
5 always had perfect. And, actually, in my review
6 Michele stated in there that she would have me do
7 district director work because she felt that I
8 was the only one in the office that she could
9 trust that could get the job done and not have
10 any, you know, problems and be able to accomplish
11 it and that I was constantly keeping her on her
12 toes with new ideas and ways to, you know, help
13 our veterans.

14 And it was always very positive. I
15 never had a negative review. I was put on
16 terminal leave -- or, no, not terminal leave --
17 administrative leave for approximately six weeks
18 and even then, you know, they only had positive
19 things to say about me.

20 And so it was very, very random that
21 it happened. And after that conversation, things
22 drastically changed in that office. And I had

1 sent Sol an email because I had become very
2 frustrated with the sudden changes.

3 MR. BROWN: Can you tell me a little
4 bit more about administrative leave? What --
5 what happened there? Why did you get placed on
6 administrative leave? And, preliminarily, was
7 that leave paid or unpaid?

8 FORMER STAFFER B: It was paid.

9 MR. BROWN: Okay. And -- and what --

10 FORMER STAFFER B: And --

11 MR. BROWN: -- what -- what prompted
12 it? I know you sent some emails to us about it.
13 It looks to me like there was a disagreement
14 between you and Anita and that may have resulted
15 in some -- some turmoil in the office?

16 FORMER STAFFER B: Correct. So Anita
17 was -- anyway, well, let me just say this. When
18 I took the position and -- and Jessica was doing
19 the veterans' cases, as well as some Social
20 Security and some State issues in the Biloxi
21 office, she was the only caseworker.

22 She was to train me and I thought when

1 I went to D.C. that I was going to get some
2 training, and I really didn't. Jessica had a lot
3 of cases. I never really received any training
4 and the second day in there I was calling
5 constituents and doing casework. So I really
6 trained myself.

7 And Anita was over Constituent
8 Services. She's been with the Congressman -- she
9 was with Gene Taylor. So she's been doing this
10 for a very long time, never served in the
11 military, doesn't have any military connections.
12 It is -- and -- and -- and it is more of a get
13 your response from the military or from the VA
14 and forward it on to the -- forward -- I have
15 another call -- forward that on to the veterans
16 or the servicemen rather than Jessica or I, where
17 we understood it, and we would be able to fight
18 on behalf of the members to make sure that they
19 got the correct treatment.

20 And there was a case where it was voc
21 rehab, and that is a very weird program within
22 the VA. There is not a lot of regulations on it.

1 There is not a lot of documentation. There just
2 isn't a lot of training on it. You don't get a
3 lot of cases with it because it's not used very
4 often.

5 So I had a constituent come in, have
6 some issues with voc rehab. I don't understand
7 voc rehab enough and the documentation that the
8 VA has doesn't -- you know, doesn't explain it
9 enough. So I had sent out an email to Anita and
10 Maureen and Jessica and some other people and
11 said, Who really understands voc rehab?

12 I am going to cut this kind of short,
13 but long story short, and Alita -- not Alita. I
14 am sorry. Anita wrote back and gave some
15 guidance and that guidance ended up being wrong.
16 And so a couple -- I don't know -- a week later
17 or something she wrote me about it and in that
18 email she highlighted Michele Gargiulo, she
19 highlighted the veteran constituent liaison that
20 work with the VA that we worked with. She -- she
21 bolded and highlighted and all this stuff and it
22 was -- she was nasty.

1 I mean, she just -- she would talk to
2 people however she wanted. She wouldn't
3 understand somebody and she would put you down
4 and it was -- it was -- she ran off a lot of
5 caseworkers. Let's just say that. A lot of
6 people ended up quitting because of her.

7 Maureen that used to work in that
8 office would call almost daily crying that you
9 could feel the tension in that office with them.

10 And so there was an email exchange,
11 you know, and I told her, You don't need to, you
12 know, send highlighted and this and that. And I
13 explained to her, You know, I went based off of
14 the guidance that you had provided me. I, you
15 know, was never trained. You are the senior
16 caseworker here. I have reached out for you for
17 guidance. You provided this guidance. You
18 provided the wrong guidance. So there was an
19 exchange.

20 And then that night when I got home to
21 my house she called me on my cell phone and
22 cussed me out. And one of the reasons that, you

1 know, I am a Wounded Warrior is I have taken PTSD
2 and part of that is, you know, dealing with
3 situations where somebody is coming at you
4 aggressively. You know, whether it be on the
5 phone or that, I don't handle them very well.

6 And I sent Michele a text and told her
7 I was going to come in tomorrow and I was going
8 to, I said, put in my two weeks' notice, but I
9 was going to talk to Mac and Sol to find out, you
10 know, what -- what I needed to do to terminate
11 this employment because I wasn't going to have a
12 hostile work environment because somebody didn't
13 train me and that.

14 And Michele at the end of the day --
15 Anita had cc'd Michele on all of these emails and
16 at the end of the day Michele had said, I don't
17 know why I am getting cc'd. I don't know why
18 there is all this, you know, bold and
19 highlighting and this and that, but if we are
20 going to communicate in this office, we are going
21 to do it professionally.

22 And so, you know, Michele had tried to

1 call me that night and I was upset. You know, I
2 really -- I mean, I know everybody can, you know,
3 stroke their own ego and -- and so say that they
4 worked their butt off for that training, but I
5 really did. I mean, I was in the office every
6 weekend. I was the first person in the office.
7 I was always the last person to leave and I --
8 you know, I put my heart and soul into that job.

9 And so to have somebody treat me like
10 that because I had asked for help, I was just
11 like this is not -- this is not worth it.

12 And so I went in that morning -- and I
13 took the next day off. Michele told me to take
14 the day off. And I went in the very next day and
15 Michele had said, You know, we will talk when I
16 get in the office. And so I thought, you know, I
17 had a really good -- I thought I had a really
18 good professional working relationship with
19 Michele and, you know, I thought we would discuss
20 everything that was going on and this and that.

21 And, instead, when I went into the
22 system, all of my cases had been reassigned to

1 Anita. So I didn't have any work. And I was a
2 little, you know, thrown back by that and I was,
3 like, okay.

4 So when Michele came in, you know,
5 I -- we sat down and it was not a good
6 conversation. She was very on me. I would --
7 Michele and I had -- would talk almost every day
8 multiple times throughout the day and I thought
9 it would be one of those casual conversations.
10 It was not. It was very -- I don't know what
11 word I am looking for, but she was very -- I
12 don't want to say angry, but on the verge of
13 being angry.

14 And, you know, she told me, she said,
15 I just need to know, you know, when you are
16 leaving, what your last day is and, you know, I
17 have work that needs to be done here and so, you
18 know.

19 And I said, Michele, I don't want to
20 leave this job, but I am not going to be -- you
21 know, I said, You have a bully in the office that
22 you have over Constituent Services. I said, She

1 doesn't really do the job the way it's supposed
2 to be done and, I said, she talks to people
3 however she wants and I am not that person that's
4 going to allow that. And I said, And -- and I
5 don't think that you, as a district director,
6 should allow her to continue to do this to
7 people.

8 And it -- it got really ugly and --
9 and I just -- I got up. I walked out of her
10 office and I was sending -- I was sending Sol an
11 email and was calling him. And she came in to my
12 office and she said, What are you doing?

13 And I said, I am logging into my
14 computer.

15 And she said, Who are you -- who are
16 you contacting and what are you doing?

17 And I said, I am contacting Sol.

18 And she said, You need to get out of
19 the office immediately. You are -- you need to
20 go home. You need to leave here immediately
21 right now, Former Staffer B. You need to leave.

22 So I called Sol and I explained

1 everything that had happened and, you know, I had
2 vented to him about it before and about how there
3 was, you know -- but most of the time it was, you
4 know, bragging about the great things that were
5 happening, you know, putting on the veterans'
6 events and, you know, trying to be the model
7 Wounded Warrior Fellow and being able to help
8 other Wounded Warrior Fellows put on events
9 throughout the United States that, you know,
10 mimicked the event that I had put on for the
11 Claims Clinic.

12 And so, you know, I reached out to
13 him. And -- and he was like, I am sure
14 everything will calm down and, you know, just
15 stay calm and, you know, I got to call Mac and
16 let him know. And he was -- you know, he is
17 like, I will call and talk to Michele. And so he
18 called me back and said, Hey, I talked to
19 Michele. She said you both just needed to take,
20 you know, some time to calm down, you know, that
21 things weren't right and everything is going to
22 be all right, Former Staffer B.

1 And I said, Okay. Well, that's good.
2 In the meantime, my car had broke down, but -- so
3 I was like, you know, and so okay.

4 Not even an hour later I got a text
5 message from Sol that said I needed to turn in my
6 computer and my cell phone and all of my
7 belongings and my key. And I was really confused
8 because I was like, wait. What is happening?

9 And he said, I don't know. He said, I
10 don't know why they are asking for this. I don't
11 know anything -- or, no, I got a text message
12 from Leslie, the scheduler, asking me to turn in
13 my keys and stuff. And I text Sol and was like,
14 You know, what is this all about?

15 And he is like, I don't know. I will
16 find out.

17 And the next -- I think the very next
18 day I got told, Hey, you are being put on
19 administrative leave, you know, until we can
20 figure things out.

21 MR. BROWN: And what -- what was the --
22 you told you were being put on administrative

1 leave --

2 FORMER STAFFER B: Sorry. What? For
3 some reason you are really quiet. Please, go
4 ahead.

5 MR. BROWN: You were told you were
6 being put on administrative leave because of this
7 incident with Michele and Anita?

8 FORMER STAFFER B: Correct.

9 MR. BROWN: Okay. And -- and at some
10 point you find out about the -- the -- the terms
11 of it and how long it's going to last and that
12 you are going to be allowed to come back. Can
13 you walk us through that real quick?

14 FORMER STAFFER B: I really don't
15 remember all of how I was told, but I knew that I
16 had to talk to the Office of Employee Assistance.
17 That was one of the requirements of that. And so
18 I did that. You know, I immediately contacted
19 them and I had appointments with that guy and he
20 was -- I mean, I don't -- I don't know what that
21 was supposed to accomplish because, you know, it
22 was -- you know, he understood exactly where I

1 was coming from and everything.

2 And he said, You know, you are very
3 passionate about your job and your veterans.

4 And, you know, I don't know what information he
5 had received, but he said, You know, the office
6 and everybody has only said good -- has always,
7 you know, only had good things to say about you.

8 (Thereupon, a brief break was taken,
9 and the interview continued as follows:)

10 FORMER STAFFER B: And so those
11 conversations were just really, to be honest with
12 you, I mean, shooting the crap. I mean, they
13 were nothing --

14 MR. BROWN: And so eventually --

15 FORMER STAFFER B: -- work related.

16 MR. BROWN: -- eventually you go --
17 six weeks later it is you go back and work in the
18 office. Were there some terms set for your
19 ability to come back to the office or -- or how
20 did the -- you know, getting restarted in the
21 office, how did that occur?

22 FORMER STAFFER B: So I kept

1 hounding -- I kept hounding them because I wanted
2 to go back and, you know, if I was going to be
3 terminated, I wanted to know, you know, this and
4 that.

5 And I was told that -- oh, so Mac and
6 Sol actually flew here and met with me, which, of
7 course, I thought they were going to terminate
8 me. And they told me, they said, Hey, you work
9 in an office that has some issues, you know, and
10 the office only has very positive things to say
11 about you, but, you know, maybe you need to see
12 about getting on to medicine for your PTSD and,
13 you know, being able to control, you know, how
14 you respond.

15 And at that point, to be honest with
16 you, I was willing to do just about anything to
17 go back to that office because I knew that the
18 veterans wouldn't be being taken care of like
19 they were. So I agreed. I said, I will go, you
20 know. Oh, I had started counseling. That was
21 the one thing they said, you know, start
22 counseling with the VA.

1 Then I was told when they came down
2 that in order for me to return I would have to be
3 cleared by the VA Medical Center Behavioral
4 Health, that I would have to get a clearance to
5 return to work. Okay. I never -- I never had
6 anything that said I couldn't work. So I figured
7 it was an easy process.

8 So I called over to mental health and,
9 of course, I couldn't get an appointment. But I
10 had developed a really good working relationship
11 with the VA director, the center -- you know, the
12 medical center director. And so I would text
13 him. He would, you know, help me get
14 appointments or whatever because -- well, I don't
15 know. But the VA, if you can't get an
16 appointment within a certain amount of time, they
17 have to send you off post. But in order for this
18 to happen I needed it to be directly with them.
19 So I was explaining to him that, you know, I
20 really didn't even need an appointment, I didn't
21 think.

22 But when I called and requested that,

1 they said, Well, we have the girl that is
2 counseling you call you back on that because I
3 don't know if she can do that over the phone. So
4 she told me that, you know, she wasn't
5 comfortable --

6 MR. BROWN: I am sorry. Let me -- let
7 me interrupt real quick.

8 FORMER STAFFER B: Yes.

9 MR. BROWN: So I think I saw in your
10 emails eventually this -- you know, you get
11 that -- you get that issue sorted, right?

12 FORMER STAFFER B: No. They -- the VA
13 told me, They are violating your rights. Do not
14 do that.

15 MR. BROWN: Okay. And you go -- and
16 you eventually go back it's about six weeks
17 later. Are there any conditions put on your
18 coming back or it's just --

19 FORMER STAFFER B: No.

20 MR. BROWN: -- you get to restart; you
21 have kind of jumped through all of our hoops?

22 FORMER STAFFER B: Correct.

1 MR. BROWN: Okay. Well, let -- let me
2 ask you this then. So what I am hearing from you
3 is the administrative leave occurs, but, you
4 know, everybody still thinks you can -- you know,
5 you can do the job and you do the job well.

6 Getting back to the termination, in a
7 lot of the -- the stuff that you sent us you said
8 that the -- the suggestion was that you were
9 terminated because of an inappropriate email or
10 your emails were being monitored. Can you walk
11 me through what the issue was there or how that
12 was explained to you?

13 FORMER STAFFER B: I was told that
14 there was an inappropriate email sent to a
15 stakeholder, which is, apparently, exactly what
16 Jessica was told when she was terminated, as
17 well.

18 MR. BROWN: Okay.

19 MS. EISNER: And what -- what might
20 they have been talking about?

21 FORMER STAFFER B: I have no idea. I
22 did -- there was a -- there was a Captain [REDACTED]

1 that worked over at Keesler Air Force Base that
2 we would exchange, like, funny emails.

3 He was -- he was -- he worked directly
4 for the Base Commander and we would exchange
5 emails that he had some of that putty -- he was
6 a -- he was a funny character, but he had, like,
7 that putty and it looked like poop and he would
8 send me emails about just -- we would joke going
9 back and forth and joke.

10 So could it be about that? Maybe.
11 Don't know. I don't really think we ever sent
12 anybody anything inappropriate.

13 And I was -- I mean, I never saw a
14 need for my emails to be -- the only other email
15 would be -- and that went out to a stakeholder
16 Gabby, who is the staff assistant. She -- her
17 and I exchanged one or two emails about the joke
18 in the office that they would call the Leaning
19 Tower of Palazzo. And nobody -- I mean, she --
20 her and I and one other staffer were the only
21 ones that even knew what that meant. So I don't
22 think it would be that.

1 Other than that, I don't know, unless
2 I -- you know, to be honest with you, I thought
3 about this ever since I was terminated because,
4 like I said, I busted my butt. I -- you know, I
5 had veterans' wives that would stalk me. I had
6 several people that would threaten me. You know,
7 it was not -- it was not an easy job, but, you
8 know, I did it. I did a good job at it.
9 Everybody -- you know, Michele told me, I have
10 never met a caseworker like you, Former Staffer
11 B, and I was a caseworker.

12 And we had an individual --

13 MS. EISNER: What about --

14 FORMER STAFFER B: Go ahead. Yes?

15 MS. EISNER: Was there ever an
16 incident where -- and this might have included
17 Captain [REDACTED] or anyone else, where you asked any
18 individuals for -- for money or for financial
19 support?

20 FORMER STAFFER B: Captain [REDACTED] and
21 I -- actually, I loaned him money and he loaned
22 me money on several different occasions.

1 MS. EISNER: Okay. And but what type
2 of occasions?

3 FORMER STAFFER B: Do what?

4 MS. EISNER: What -- what types of
5 occasions? What was the -- what were the
6 circumstances surrounding the loans?

7 FORMER STAFFER B: Nothing. I mean,
8 he loaned me money and I loaned him money. I
9 think he loaned me \$50 one time and I loaned him
10 \$150 one time and we paid it back. We met. And
11 then one time he helped me move some belongings.

12 MS. EISNER: Okay.

13 MR. BROWN: Did you guys have a --

14 MS. EISNER: What --

15 MR. BROWN: Did you guys have a
16 relationship outside of, you know, the official
17 office in any way?

18 FORMER STAFFER B: Yes. I mean, we
19 talked outside of the office. We text all the
20 time and it was really more of, like, a -- a
21 playful type -- I mean, just like a joking and
22 then, I mean, like I said, he loaned me money the

1 one time and I loaned him money and I don't think
2 I actually ever even got paid back.

3 And I actually talked to him even
4 after I was terminated. We continued talking for
5 a while, but then I -- what I did is I ended up
6 getting rid of my cell phone, that cell phone,
7 and really cut off communication from most people
8 in regards to that.

9 MS. EISNER: Was it ever for more than
10 \$150. Is that the maximum amount that it was
11 for?

12 FORMER STAFFER B: I am not going to
13 lie. I don't remember, to be honest with you. I
14 know that I loaned him that. I don't think we
15 ever exchanged any more than that, no.

16 MS. EISNER: Okay.

17 FORMER STAFFER B: But could we have
18 had -- I mean, I don't -- I am not going to say
19 no because there could have been communication
20 about that and so I don't want to say no because,
21 like I said, it's been -- it's been quite a bit.
22 But I don't know, to be honest with you.

1 MS. EISNER: Okay.

2 FORMER STAFFER B: I don't want to say
3 no if there was.

4 MS. EISNER: And just so we fully
5 understand, what did -- what did you need the
6 money for?

7 FORMER STAFFER B: I don't even
8 remember. It could have been rent, could have
9 been my cell phone. I don't remember, to be
10 honest with you.

11 MR. BROWN: Did -- did anybody --

12 FORMER STAFFER B: I mean --

13 MR. BROWN: Did anybody ever say
14 anything to you about, you know, your
15 relationship with the individual at Keesler or
16 about any of your communications? Was that ever
17 raised with you during your time with
18 Representative Palazzo?

19 FORMER STAFFER B: No. Michele knew
20 that I would joke with Captain [REDACTED] all the
21 time. There was -- we would joke about it. She
22 was -- he called the office one time and he acted

1 like a little old lady -- and this is where it
2 goes back to the -- the putty, you know, said, I
3 need help and I need you guys to investigative.
4 I have a pile of poop on my desk. And he
5 literally sounded like a little old lady. And I
6 was like what in the heck is happening right now?
7 And it was him.

8 And so -- and -- and she had been
9 standing outside of my office when that call
10 happened and so she knew and everybody in the
11 office knew that, you know, I would joke with him
12 a lot and that. And she -- there was -- so there
13 was two Captain [REDACTED] at Keesler and she was
14 always, Is it this one or is it this one?

15 MS. EISNER: Did -- did Mac or
16 Solomon, Sol, ever ask you about that
17 relationship?

18 FORMER STAFFER B: Never.

19 MS. EISNER: Okay.

20 MR. BROWN: Let me ask you this. In
21 one of submissions to us you said that, I think
22 it was right after your termination, you tried to

1 explain to Mac that you had just spoken up to the
2 Congressman about, you know, Kyle and his
3 Re-enlistment Code. What -- what was that
4 conversation like with Mac and -- and how would
5 -- how did he react to it?

6 FORMER STAFFER B: It wasn't good. I
7 tried to explain to Mac that immediately after
8 all of that had happened that things were
9 different, that I was treated different, that
10 suddenly we weren't allowed to be in the office
11 by ourselves, that, you know, there was -- you
12 know, I was stripped of an office and that we
13 weren't allowed to work on weekends or nights,
14 that everybody was stripped of keys, other than
15 Leslie and Michele.

16 And so I explained to him that I had
17 vented or had reached out to Solomon about this
18 because after that conversation with Michele
19 there was a huge change in the office and how I
20 was treated.

21 And he just told me, You know, Former
22 Staffer B, you are -- you are hardheaded. You

1 know, the best I can tell you is don't have
2 communication with anybody that you have met
3 through this office and through this job.

4 And I said, Why?

5 And he said, Because you are going to
6 ruin any future chances you have of employment.
7 You are good at what you do. You know, you just
8 need to stop, take the emotional aspect out of it
9 and, you know, step back from your phone and
10 don't communicate with anybody at all about this.

11 And I was like, That's not me and you
12 should know that. And --

13 MR. BROWN: You -- you said -- you
14 said the relationship with the office changed
15 after that conversation with Michele. You are
16 talking about the conversation regarding
17 administrative leave or the conversation
18 regarding Kyle Palazzo and the RE Code?

19 FORMER STAFFER B: And I mean the
20 office. The relationship in the office -- the
21 environment in the office, in the Biloxi and
22 Gulfport office, with the Congressman. Not

1 with -- not with Mac and Sol, but I mean the
2 conversation that I had with Michele.

3 MS. EISNER: Did Mac and Sol know
4 prior to this about the efforts on behalf of Kyle
5 Palazzo? Were they familiar with the fact that
6 that was happening?

7 FORMER STAFFER B: They don't. I -- I
8 don't -- actually, I -- no, I don't think I -- so
9 I can't -- I felt things were really weird and,
10 like I said, I was stripped of an office and I
11 was -- a key was taken away. I was working in
12 the office, on the weekend before we moved, by
13 myself. I was, you know, getting all my veteran
14 cases caught up. And the Congressman came in and
15 he said, Who is here?

16 And I said, Former Staffer B. And he
17 immediately turned around and walked out. Every
18 other weekend if I was in there he would stay in
19 there and he would work. There was never an
20 issue. So I thought that was real weird. So I
21 literally think that my staff gathered my stuff
22 and left him know that I had left. And he never

1 responded to that.

2 And then after that we were told we
3 weren't allowed to work on weekends, we weren't
4 allowed to work in the evenings. When we moved
5 the only people that would have keys were Michele
6 and Leslie. Well, Leslie would show up to
7 work --

8 MR. BROWN: Former Staffer B, Former
9 Staffer B, let me interrupt you and -- and I will
10 circle back on some of this stuff, but I want to
11 finish up with the -- the termination and the
12 severance stuff before we get any further.

13 Would -- just -- just to be clear,
14 the --

15 VIDEO TECHNICIAN: Counsel, I --

16 MS. EISNER: I think Michael has a
17 comment.

18 VIDEO TECHNICIAN: I apologize for
19 interrupting. It looks like she may have lost
20 connection to the audio briefly. I don't think
21 she can hear you.

22 MR. BROWN: While we are waiting

1 for her to reconnect, Peggy, do you or does
2 anybody --

3 FORMER STAFFER B: Okay. I am back.

4 MR. BROWN: Okay.

5 FORMER STAFFER B: Can you hear me?

6 MR. BROWN: Yes, we can hear you,
7 Former Staffer B.

8 FORMER STAFFER B: I tried a different
9 way this time.

10 MR. BROWN: Okay. So what I was
11 saying, Former Staffer B, is I would like to
12 just -- before we get any further, I want to talk
13 about the -- the severance. And -- and but right
14 before we --

15 MS. EISNER: Let's just -- I am sorry.
16 I just want to confirm that Former Staffer B is
17 there because her screen looks a little bit
18 frozen.

19 FORMER STAFFER B: Okay. I am trying
20 to get back to the Zoom. Okay. There we go.
21 Okay. I am sorry.

22 MS. EISNER: Okay.

1 MR. BROWN: Okay. Real quick, you --
2 again, you -- you said you were terminated.
3 This -- this wasn't a resignation, right?

4 FORMER STAFFER B: I think I was
5 offered the opportunity to resign. No, I was
6 not. Well, I think I ended up having to resign
7 to not accept the severance. I don't remember
8 how that worked.

9 MR. BROWN: Okay.

10 FORMER STAFFER B: I just said I was
11 not accepting the severance.

12 MR. BROWN: Okay. Well, --

13 FORMER STAFFER B: So whatever the
14 substance of that was --

15 MR. BROWN: Let -- let's get to that.
16 You sent Helen a copy of an email and it was an
17 email that was from Angie in the CAO's office and
18 attached to that email was a Severance Agreement.
19 I just want to make sure this -- this email and
20 this Severance Agreement, those are the
21 documents. That's an email to you and that's the
22 Severance Agreement you received from them?

1 FORMER STAFFER B: Correct.

2 MR. BROWN: Okay. And can you just
3 tell us who -- who Angie is and how she got
4 involved in this process?

5 FORMER STAFFER B: I don't know. She
6 was on the phone, I guess, and sent me that email
7 and that was all I know. When I was on the phone
8 with Mac and Michele, you know, when Mac came on
9 the phone he told me, You are being terminated,
10 blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. I have HR on the
11 phone and they will, you know, follow up with
12 you. And then I received that email later in the
13 day.

14 MR. BROWN: And this conversation with
15 Mac occurred shortly after your conversation with
16 Michele about -- about --

17 FORMER STAFFER B: It -- it -- they
18 were on the same phone call and, apparently, when
19 they called me it was a conference call that HR,
20 Michele -- I don't know who else was on the phone
21 because I thought it was just me and Michele, and
22 then all of a sudden I was surprised with, Hey,

1 there is about seven other people on the phone
2 and you are being terminated.

3 MR. BROWN: Correct me if I am wrong,
4 but I thought you had said you heard from her
5 and, you know, I know you said your son was sick
6 and you had disconnected and terminated the call
7 at some point. Was that before -- you know,
8 did -- did Mac speak up and did Angie speak up
9 before you ended up terminating the call?

10 FORMER STAFFER B: Oh, yeah. So the
11 call -- the call started with Michele asking me
12 how my son was and then Mac chimed in and
13 terminated me and then I believe the HR lady
14 started speaking.

15 And, honestly, it was all like a
16 whirlwind because here I thought, you know, I am
17 going to talk to Michele about finalizing the
18 Claims Clinic and I was going to go get the
19 packets that we were putting together from the
20 office and I thought I was making arrangements
21 for the Claims Clinic.

22 So I had notes that I had taken and

1 stuff like that. So I was prepared to discuss
2 the Claims Clinic and then I am, you know, thrown
3 off by Mac and -- I -- I don't remember if the HR
4 lady spoke up on the phone, but I was notified
5 somehow that she was on the phone.

6 MR. BROWN: Did -- did you guys -- on
7 that call did Michele or Mac -- did anybody talk
8 to you in any detail about the Severance
9 Agreement?

10 FORMER STAFFER B: No.

11 MR. BROWN: Okay. So --

12 FORMER STAFFER B: Actually, I
13 think -- actually, I -- I -- I apologize. I
14 think that when I called Mac back -- so Mac was
15 actually in the Gulfport office and Gabby, who is
16 the staff assistant, it's Gabriella Putnam, but
17 she had text me and said, Are you okay? You
18 know, what's going on? Leslie just told me
19 something and Mac is here and you are not here.
20 And she said, Mac just told me that if I am
21 talking to you or if I talk to you to tell you to
22 stay calm. And what's going on?

1 And so I had called Mac and tried to
2 explain to him that, You know, you all are
3 believing this is about an email, but nobody can
4 explain to me randomly my emails started being
5 monitored. Nobody can tell me what that alleged
6 email was. You know nothing.

7 But, you know, here is a person that
8 the Congressman is asking you to take care of his
9 brother's situation because he believes you are
10 such a great caseworker, your district director
11 has asked you to handle her son's situation
12 because you are able to make things happen and
13 suddenly, all of a sudden, after you have done
14 all this stuff because you are really good at
15 what you do and you are taking care of all these
16 veterans, so much so that he took all military
17 and veteran cases away from his senior
18 caseworker, randomly somebody starts monitoring
19 your email. There is no -- this is well after I
20 came back from my -- my administrative leave. We
21 have already moved offices.

22 And, you know, I -- I tried to explain

1 to him, I said, You know, even if, you know,
2 there is an email that they are alleging was
3 inappropriate, you know, what was the reasoning
4 that anybody started -- and I know that they
5 don't have to tell you that they are monitoring
6 your email, but I tried to get him to -- to
7 understand what had all --

8 And he just kept telling me, You just
9 need to calm down and not talk to anybody and,
10 you know, don't ruin your chances --

11 MR. BROWN: Is this all -- is this all
12 happening -- is this all happening on the call
13 with Michele and Sol -- Mac or is this -- is this
14 happening after all this happens?

15 FORMER STAFFER B: I did mention it
16 while I was on the phone and I -- I lost my cool
17 when all that -- when I got terminated. You
18 know, I started flying off the mouth, but I
19 called Mac later and had this conversation with
20 him.

21 MR. BROWN: Okay. Well, let me just
22 confirm a couple things about the Severance

1 Agreement. So it looks to me like, just to be
2 clear, you did not accept this Severance
3 Agreement? You didn't sign it?

4 FORMER STAFFER B: I did not.

5 MR. BROWN: Okay.

6 FORMER STAFFER B: Did not.

7 MR. BROWN: And why not?

8 FORMER STAFFER B: Because to me it
9 was hush money. And I know that, you know, when
10 you are, you know, terminated that there can be a
11 severance package. But I -- with a lot of the
12 things that happened in that office, I -- you
13 know, one of the things that people praise me
14 about is my voice to speak up for what's right.

15 And, to me, accepting that would be --
16 you know, I -- I just didn't feel right doing it
17 and I felt like it was hush money and that's what
18 I responded. You know, and that's truly how I
19 felt. And, you know, I lost income for -- I
20 don't know -- what was it? -- two, three months,
21 but --

22 MR. BROWN: Yeah. Well, let me ask

1 you this. I am trying to get a sense for to what
2 degree Representative Palazzo and/or the CAO were
3 involved with this. So on the call where the
4 severance was offered Michele was on that call,
5 correct?

6 FORMER STAFFER B: Correct.

7 MR. BROWN: Okay. And Mac was on that
8 call?

9 FORMER STAFFER B: Correct.

10 MR. BROWN: Okay. And there was
11 somebody from HR?

12 FORMER STAFFER B: Correct. And there
13 might have been somebody else.

14 MR. BROWN: HR. Okay. And -- and I
15 presume Mac was in Representative Palazzo's
16 office at that time with Michele calling you?

17 FORMER STAFFER B: Yes.

18 MR. BROWN: Okay. So the Palazzo
19 office had some understanding of, you know, that
20 this -- this was a termination and they were
21 going to offer you a -- a severance?

22 FORMER STAFFER B: I would imagine,

1 since Michele --

2 MR. BROWN: At least -- at least
3 Michele was aware of it?

4 FORMER STAFFER B: Yes.

5 MR. BROWN: Okay. And let me just
6 confirm. So the -- the -- as you understood this
7 Severance Agreement, the plan was you would get,
8 I think it was, six weeks of pay, but no one was
9 expecting you to work during these six weeks?

10 FORMER STAFFER B: Correct.

11 MR. BROWN: Okay. And that the
12 severance was --

13 FORMER STAFFER B: Well, actually to
14 be honest -- sorry. I don't mean to talk over
15 you, but let me be honest. I didn't -- I didn't
16 100 percent read it.

17 MR. BROWN: Okay. The severance,
18 though, as you understood it, it wasn't like a
19 payout for accrued vacation or anything like
20 that? It was --

21 FORMER STAFFER B: (Former Staffer B
22 shook her head.)

1 MR. BROWN: Yeah. Okay. And that --
2 okay.

3 Helen, did you have anything else
4 about the severance?

5 MS. EISNER: No, I don't think so. I
6 think that covers it.

7 MR. BROWN: Then, Former Staffer B, I
8 would like to switch gears, and I realize we have
9 been going at this for a little while now. I
10 don't know if anybody needs a break.

11 THE COURT REPORTER: I would like a
12 break, please.

13 FORMER STAFFER B: I don't.

14 MR. BROWN: Peggy? Okay.

15 THE COURT REPORTER: Yeah.

16 MR. BROWN: What do you need?

17 THE COURT REPORTER: Just five
18 minutes.

19 MR. BROWN: Okay. Let's take five
20 minutes and then we can all come back.

21 (Thereupon, a brief break was taken,
22 and the interview continued as follows:)

1 MR. BROWN: Former Staffer B, I want to
2 move on to a bit of a -- a different but perhaps
3 related topic here and that is, you know, you --
4 you said in some of your submissions to us that
5 there were staff members in Representative
6 Palazzo's Congressional office that were
7 performing personal errands for the Congressman
8 and his family. So I am hoping we can -- we can
9 talk about some of that.

10 Have -- have you seen, have you
11 witnessed, have you done personal errands on
12 behalf of the Congressman during official hours?

13 FORMER STAFFER B: The only thing that
14 I was involved in is I went -- the entire day
15 Michele and I spent searching for going from
16 Joanne Fabrics to Office Depot to several
17 different locations trying to find labels for his
18 children's clothing for camp. And she actually
19 ended up having a lady that was going to make
20 them. They were embroidered and then you just
21 ironed them on.

22 MR. BROWN: And this was all done

1 during -- during a workday?

2 FORMER STAFFER B: Yes, it was.

3 MR. BROWN: And it was you and
4 Michele?

5 FORMER STAFFER B: Correct.

6 MR. BROWN: Was -- were you asked to
7 volunteer to do this or was -- did you feel like
8 this was an ask of you on your official time that
9 you -- you couldn't necessarily get out of?

10 FORMER STAFFER B: Michele asked me to
11 go with her and this was a thing that we were
12 told to do by the Congressman and I was told we
13 were going to iron the -- the kids' clothes, as
14 well, but --

15 MR. BROWN: This was because --

16 FORMER STAFFER B: -- I don't know who
17 made that --

18 MR. BROWN: This is because they were
19 going to summer camp and they needed their
20 clothes labeled in advance of, you know, some
21 weeks away at camp.

22 FORMER STAFFER B: Correct.

1 MR. BROWN: Okay. That was the only
2 thing you were involved in, but I know you sent
3 us some materials where you highlighted that
4 other staffers were involved in doing personal
5 errands for the Congressman.

6 And so let me just tick through some
7 of those and you can elaborate on them. You
8 don't have to --

9 FORMER STAFFER B: Okay.

10 MR. BROWN: We -- we don't have to
11 spend too much time on them, but if you can kind
12 of give me the -- some details on it, that would
13 be great.

14 In one of your submissions to us you
15 said his staff would go to his house and let the
16 real estate agent and guests viewing the house
17 during the -- the duty day. What -- what do you
18 mean by that? What did you see in that respect?

19 FORMER STAFFER B: Well, they were --
20 one -- it was also the -- the people that would
21 do work on the house, but mainly it was one man.
22 But Michele would go to the house or Leslie would

1 have to go to the house because there was a
2 viewing. I never went to the house. Even though
3 he held an event there, I never went.

4 MR. BROWN: And you are -- you are
5 talking about the river house, what's commonly
6 referred to as the river house? And --

7 FORMER STAFFER B: Correct. They
8 called the river house.

9 MR. BROWN: -- basically, you are
10 saying is -- is Leslie and Michele were often
11 times required to go to the river house during
12 the workday in order to let either contractors in
13 to work on the property or to assist the real
14 estate agent in -- in sale-related issues?

15 FORMER STAFFER B: Correct.

16 MR. BROWN: Okay.

17 FORMER STAFFER B: Correct.

18 MR. BROWN: And -- and how are you
19 aware of this? Did you see it -- see them going
20 there? Did they tell you that they were going to
21 do this?

22 FORMER STAFFER B: They would tell us

1 and then I -- I don't know why, but for reasons
2 today my head is like a big fog, but I think the
3 contractor's name was Joe. But Michele and
4 Leslie would have to go out there and, you know,
5 look at what he was doing or pay him or he would
6 come in to the office to be paid.

7 And they would tell us, you know, Oh,
8 we are going to meet with I want to say his name
9 was Joe. And I don't know why I am having a
10 blank on it.

11 And then one time Michele asked me
12 about the Congressman wanted to know about mold
13 and how to remove mold and, you know, what the
14 best treatment for that and what he should use
15 for that.

16 And we had this big, long conversation
17 about he wanted her to re -- you know, find
18 somebody. And I told her that, you know, getting
19 somebody that is certified versus not certified
20 when it comes to mold remediation is a -- you
21 know, you pay a lot of money and the problem is
22 solved versus you pay a little bit of money and

1 the problem isn't fixed; it's just covered up.

2 So --

3 MR. BROWN: And, again, this is --

4 FORMER STAFFER B: -- there was --

5 MR. BROWN: -- this is all relative to
6 the river house and the preparations for getting
7 it sold?

8 FORMER STAFFER B: Correct, yes.

9 MR. BROWN: Okay.

10 MS. EISNER: And how do you -- sorry to
11 interrupt, Jeff.

12 How do you know it was related to the
13 preparations for getting it sold?

14 FORMER STAFFER B: Because they always
15 talked about that he was selling it and that's
16 why they were making the repairs to the house.

17 MS. EISNER: Okay.

18 MR. BROWN: Was there -- was there ever
19 any suggestion that, you know, this is something
20 that Leslie or Michele are doing on a volunteer
21 basis or is this stuff that they are doing during
22 official work hours?

1 FORMER STAFFER B: It was always
2 during official work hours and sometimes it would
3 turn into, you know, We are going to meet the
4 Boss at the river house and, you know, we have
5 got to look at whatever, the carpeting or
6 whatever. I don't -- you know, actual details
7 were not always -- most of the time they were
8 discussed as far as what they were going over
9 there for, but remembering those today, I don't.

10 But, I mean, the -- the office
11 communicated very well as far as, Hey, we are
12 going here. We are -- you know, we are going to
13 the storage unit. We are going to the river
14 house. We are going to pick up the Boss's
15 laundry to take it to his vehicle at the airport.

16 MR. BROWN: Okay.

17 FORMER STAFFER B: We are going to
18 his --

19 MR. BROWN: That brings me to my --
20 my -- my next point, which is that's another item
21 that you mentioned. So tell us about that. You
22 said that, you know, staff was picking up his

1 laundry and delivering it to his car at the
2 airport. How did that work and who was doing
3 that?

4 FORMER STAFFER B: It was either
5 Leslie or Michele. It alternated. Those were
6 the two that, you know, were essentially his
7 personal assistants, I guess, since they would do
8 that and they would have to have it there by the
9 time that he got in from -- you know, from his
10 flight. It would have to be in the car ready for
11 him. Michele --

12 MR. BROWN: Is this --

13 FORMER STAFFER B: Go ahead.

14 MR. BROWN: -- this laundry that they
15 are picking up at his personal residence and
16 doing it and then --

17 FORMER STAFFER B: No, it's the dry
18 cleaning that they dropped off to the -- to the
19 dry cleaner.

20 MR. BROWN: Okay. And do you know how
21 they get that? Does the Congressman give it to
22 them in the office or how does that work?

1 FORMER STAFFER B: That I don't know.
2 I don't know if he dropped that off and then they
3 would pick it up to put it back in there, but any
4 time he was coming in, the dry cleaning had to be
5 put into his vehicle.

6 MR. BROWN: Okay.

7 MS. EISNER: Did they ever complain
8 about that?

9 FORMER STAFFER B: Yes.

10 MS. EISNER: And how frequently would
11 you say they were doing these types of tasks
12 going to the house, paying contractors, doing
13 laundry? Was -- was it --

14 FORMER STAFFER B: It was a day -- it
15 was a daily -- it was a daily thing. And the --
16 the contractor I am -- I am -- I can't say this
17 100 percent, but almost sure he was paid weekly
18 and it consisted of them going to the CPA firm to
19 get a check to be able to pay him. So it was
20 kind of a big ordeal.

21 So it was -- you know, Michele was
22 really good at communicating where she was at and

1 what she was doing and a lot of times she would
2 be on the phone and, you know, driving down the
3 street and trying to handle business while she
4 was doing this.

5 And so it was, I would say, I mean,
6 there was something almost daily that was being
7 done --

8 MR. BROWN: And you --

9 FORMER STAFFER B: -- for the river
10 house or for laundry or --

11 MR. BROWN: And you said on a couple
12 occasions that, you know, they were his personal
13 assistants. Is that like a joke in the office?
14 Is that the way you describe it? Is that the way
15 that they described it?

16 FORMER STAFFER B: It was never really
17 discussed. Like, at the office Gabby and I used
18 to talk about it. You know, Jessica used to talk
19 about it. It -- it would be Bridgette and
20 Michele and Leslie would go and go to the river
21 house and do these errands for the Congressman
22 and, you know, it was a conversation that other

1 staffers that weren't involved in doing that
2 would talk about.

3 MR. BROWN: Okay.

4 MS. EISNER: And just -- just real
5 quick, besides laundry and the work related to
6 the river house, is there anything else specific
7 that comes to mind that they were involved in?

8 FORMER STAFFER B: Leslie would do his
9 grocery shopping. And I don't -- I only remember
10 one or two occasions that she did that. I mean,
11 other than that, that was just typical, you know,
12 scheduler stuff. I could probably think of
13 something else if I thought, but I -- that's
14 what -- those are the things that come to mind
15 that were -- I mean, the -- the river house thing
16 was like an every day, constant paying the guy,
17 you know, checking out the work that he was
18 doing, making sure that they were all on the same
19 page, finding, you know, additional contractors
20 to do work that was needed there.

21 MR. BROWN: How about --

22 FORMER STAFFER B: And so that -- go

1 ahead. I am sorry.

2 MR. BROWN: How about -- how about
3 taking care of the -- the kids or shuttling the
4 kids back and forth? Like, when -- when he was
5 responsible for the kids was the staff ever
6 involved in -- in taking care of that?

7 FORMER STAFFER B: I was not there
8 during that part. I do know that at one point
9 Leslie was asked to watch them one night, but I
10 think that was like an emergency situation.

11 I do know that there was talk in the
12 office that staff would take off time for -- to
13 watch them or for camp, but that was -- I
14 never -- I never personally witnessed that and I
15 think that was before my time.

16 MR. BROWN: You have mentioned on a
17 couple occasions that, you know, the Congressman
18 coming into the office on weekends and staying
19 there. Can you elaborate on that? You know, was
20 it your impression that he was staying at the
21 office?

22 FORMER STAFFER B: It was -- well,

1 everybody knows that in the D.C. office he sleeps
2 there. He lives there. We know that. That's
3 fine.

4 The Biloxi office wasn't -- there was
5 really nowhere to sleep in there, you know, his
6 desk and then just two office chairs. But he was
7 in there all the time and nobody -- you know,
8 people used to joke like, Where does he live?
9 You know, he is not at the river house on the
10 weekends and he would come in and spend -- spend
11 a lot of time there.

12 But when we moved to the Gulfport
13 office it was actually my friend that sold him
14 the furniture and he demanded that a custom
15 leather sleeper sofa be ordered for him for his
16 office.

17 Q And -- and was that -- you saw that
18 sofa? That sofa did exist in the office?

19 A Yes. And Southern Charm Furniture
20 received payment for it and it is in the office,
21 so. And there was concern that it wasn't a fit
22 and, yes, it is in the office.

1 MR. BROWN: And this is a sleeper
2 sofa? It's not like a wall bed that comes out of
3 a shelving unit?

4 FORMER STAFFER B: No, it's a leather
5 sleeper sofa.

6 MR. BROWN: Okay. And --

7 MS. EISNER: You said the -- the -- I
8 am sorry. The name was Southern Charm Furniture?

9 FORMER STAFFER B: Correct.

10 MS. EISNER: Okay.

11 FORMER STAFFER B: She is in Gulfport.

12 MR. BROWN: And -- and did the
13 Congressman indicate or did you ever see evidence
14 that he is sleeping in the Gulfport office?

15 FORMER STAFFER B: No, I -- like I
16 said, I only ended up in the Gulfport office for
17 about a week after our furniture arrived before I
18 was terminated.

19 MR. BROWN: So you wouldn't have
20 really had the opportunity to -- to see or
21 establish any of that, but you are aware that
22 there was a sleeper -- a leather sleeper --

1 sleeper sofa in the Gulfport office -- Gulfport
2 office?

3 FORMER STAFFER B: Correct.

4 MR. BROWN: Okay.

5 FORMER STAFFER B: Correct. And that
6 was the only item that he cared about that was
7 ordered for his office. As far as furniture, we
8 had free range to order what we felt, you know,
9 would make the office look nice. That was the
10 only thing that he requested and --

11 MR. BROWN: Why did -- why did the
12 Congressman move the office from Biloxi to
13 Gulfport?

14 FORMER STAFFER B: Nobody really
15 knows. The -- the individual that owned that --
16 the building we were in was kind of, I guess you
17 can call it, a slumlord. But some of it was more
18 nitpicking, but there was things that needed to
19 be repaired that only a landlord of that building
20 would.

21 And, actually, I had gotten involved
22 in that and asked him like, Hey, we have been