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ONE HUNDRED THIRTEENTH CONGRESS

U.S. House of Representatives

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STATEMENT OF THE CHAIRMAN AND RANKING MEMBER OF THE COMMITTEE ON ETHICS REGARDING ALLEGATIONS ABOUT PRIVATELY-SPONSORED TRAVEL PAID FOR BY THE TURKISH COALITION OF AMERICA

Pursuant to Committee Rule 7(g), the Committee on Ethics (Committee) determined on July 26, 2013, to release the following statement:

Beginning in the last Congress, the Committee undertook a review of a multi-day, privately-sponsored trip to Turkey in August 2008 that was paid for, in part, by the Turkish Coalition of America (TCA). Five House employees sought and received Committee approval to participate in the trip. However, the Committee later learned that at the time of the travel, TCA employed or retained a federally-registered lobbyist, making it ineligible to sponsor a multi-day trip under the House's privately-sponsored travel rules.

The Committee's review found that the employees who traveled acted in good faith, relied on the Committee's review and approval of the trip, and had no knowledge that TCA employed or retained a lobbyist. Further, the Committee found that there were no prohibitions on this trip outside of the Committee's waiver authority, such as impermissible expenses paid by foreign governments. The Committee therefore determined that no investigation or further action was necessary.

After concluding its review, the Committee received three referrals from the Office of Congressional Ethics (OCE) regarding the same matter on June 13, 2013. The two other House employees who participated in the travel left House employment before OCE initiated its review. One of the three remaining employees left House employment after OCE voted to refer the matter to the Committee, but before OCE transmitted the referral. In its referrals, OCE also determined that the remaining employees acted in good faith, were not aware that TCA employed a lobbyist, and thus did not knowingly accept an impermissible gift.

Accordingly, after careful consideration, the Committee has unanimously voted to dismiss the matters referred by OCE, determined that no further action is required, and agreed to end its review of this matter with the publication of the attached Committee Report, which includes materials referred to the Committee by the OCE relating to current employees of the House.

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