

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

November 14, 2013

**Helping the Victims of the Philippines Typhoon**

Dear Colleague:

Several offices have contacted the Committee on House Administration, the Commission on Congressional Mailing Standards (the Franking Commission), and the Committee on Ethics to inquire about the extent to which official resources may be used to help those impacted by Typhoon Haiyan, which struck the Philippines on November 8, 2013. We would like to take this opportunity to provide a review of the applicable rules, regulations, and procedures.

There are many international, federal, state, and local government agencies and departments responsible for providing or coordinating the delivery of U.S. aid and participation in the relief efforts in the Philippines. Telephone numbers and other contact information for several of the key agencies, departments, and organizations can be found at the following Web sites:

**U.S. Department of State**  
<http://www.state.gov/index.htm>

**U.S. Embassy in the Philippines**  
<http://manila.usembassy.gov/>

**United Nations**  
<http://www.un.org/en/>

**U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)**  
<http://www.usaid.gov/haiyan>

In addition, to assist those seeking to locate individuals in the Philippines, Google has established a "Person Finder" page at <http://google.org/personfinder/2013-yolanda/>. If you are concerned about the welfare of an American citizen in the Philippines, you may call the Department of State's Overseas Citizens Services (OCS) toll-free hotline at (888) 407-4747 during the hours 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. (EST) Monday through Friday. As you might expect, communications to or within the Philippines remain limited at this time.

All of the above information may be communicated to your constituents via the usual and customary official communication tools, including your congressional frank, subject to applicable statutes and House rules and regulations. In addition, Members may post on their official Web sites, channels, and pages a directory of and/or links to third-party organizations that are germane to the content of the Member's official postings. However, rules of the House prohibit referrals to organizations or links to sites whose primary purpose is the solicitation of goods, funds, or services on behalf of individuals or organizations.

In addition, Members have asked to what extent they may use their official resources to solicit or collect donations of goods, funds, or services on behalf of charities and other private organizations involved in such efforts. We understand the good intentions of those making such inquiries, but the rules of the House preclude Members from using official resources for any purpose other than in support of the conduct of the Member's official and representational duties on behalf of the district the Member currently represents. This rule has been interpreted to mean that charitable solicitations using official resources are not permitted.

However, it would be permissible for Members to link to official government Web sites that give details about the delivery of relief aid, including information about how Members' constituents may provide aid and assistance during a crisis. With respect to the emergency in the Philippines, it would be permissible to provide links to any of the Web sites noted above, including to the official State Department Web page regarding the typhoon (<http://www.state.gov/p/eap/ci/rp/typhoon/index.htm>), or to the USAID's page on the crisis (<http://www.usaid.gov/haiyan>). It would also be permissible to notify constituents about the existence of these Web sites, provided the franking regulations are followed.

While official resources may not be used to solicit contributions for charitable organizations or to imply that such organizations or purposes have been endorsed by the House of Representatives, Members and staff may solicit in their personal capacities on behalf of organizations that are qualified under § 170(c) of the Internal Revenue Code – including, for example, § 501(c)(3) charitable organizations such as the Red Cross or Team Rubicon – without first obtaining Ethics Committee approval. These personal efforts may not use official resources (including official staff time; office telephones, e-mail, and equipment; and official mailing lists). Other restrictions also apply. Solicitations on behalf of non-qualified entities or individuals are decided on a case-by-case basis through the submission to the Ethics Committee of a written request for permission to make such solicitations. For example, solicitations of donations directly for individuals suffering as a result of the crisis, as opposed to § 501(c)(3) charities assisting sufferers, would need prior Ethics Committee approval. For more information about solicitations for § 501(c)(3) or other entities, please review pages 347-49 of the *2008 House Ethics Manual* or contact the Ethics Committee at 5-7103.

We understand that Members of the House may wish to assist during this time of tragedy in the Philippines, and we hope this information proves helpful to you in informing your constituency of our nation's response, the aid and resources supporting the relief efforts, and the status of the Philippines' recovery in the aftermath of this devastating storm. If you have any questions regarding the use of your:

1. Official resources in general, please contact the Committee on House Administration at 5-8281 (majority) or 5-2061 (minority);
2. Communications resources, please contact the Franking Commission at 6-0647 (majority) or 5-9337 (minority); or

3. Personal or campaign resources, or the loan of your name and title to private solicitations or initiatives in support of the relief efforts, please contact the Ethics Committee at 5-7103.

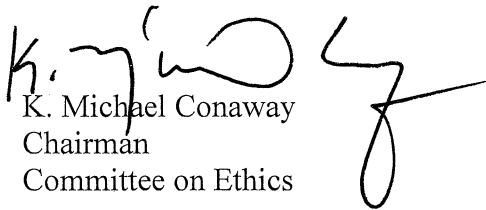
Sincerely,



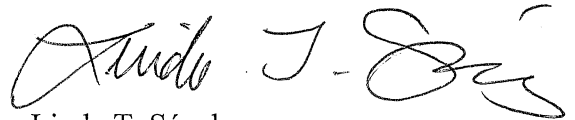
Candice Miller  
Chairman  
Committee on House Administration



Robert A. Brady  
Ranking Member  
Committee on House Administration



K. Michael Conaway  
Chairman  
Committee on Ethics



Linda T. Sánchez  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Ethics