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ONE HUNDRED FOURTEENTH CONGRESS

U.S. House of Representatives

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STATEMENT OF THE CHAIRMAN AND RANKING MEMBER OF THE COMMITTEE ON ETHICS REGARDING OFFICIALLY-CONNECTED TRAVEL TO AZERBAIJAN IN 2013

The Committee on Ethics (Committee) has been reviewing allegations relating to officially-connected travel by Members and staff of the House to Azerbaijan in May 2013. Today the Committee filed a Report to the House announcing its conclusions. The Committee unanimously voted to adopt the attached Report and its findings. As described in the Report, the Committee found no evidence that the Members and staff who participated in the trip knowingly violated any House Rule, law, regulation, or other standard of conduct.

The Committee conducted an extensive investigation. It issued 12 subpoenas and 18 voluntary requests for information, and collected nearly 190,000 pages of materials, including approximately 10,000 pages of supplemental materials provided to the Committee by the Office of Congressional Ethics (OCE). The Committee also interviewed ten witnesses.

All of the Members and staff who went on the trips did so only after getting Committee approval to accept the trips. Neither the Committee nor OCE found any evidence of any knowing violation by any Member or House staffer. In addition, all Members and staff fully cooperated with the Committee's review.

However, both the Committee and OCE found evidence suggesting that a number of parties outside the House may have affirmatively lied to and/or withheld information from both the Committee and the House Members and staff who were invited.

The Committee is referring the matter of third parties apparently engaging in a criminal conspiracy to lie to Congress to the Department of Justice for such further action as it deems appropriate. So as not to interfere with or undermine any criminal investigation, the Committee will provide materials from the nearly 190,000 pages of documents it acquired, including bank records, to the Department of Justice confidentially.

During the Committee's investigation, materials transmitted by OCE to the Committee were disclosed to a newspaper. This unauthorized public disclosure impeded the Committee's ongoing investigation, and prevented it from gathering information critical to its investigation. Following this unauthorized public disclosure, a central witness to most of the substantive allegations in question invoked his Fifth Amendment right to refuse to testify and refused to

comply with a subpoena for documents issued to him by the Committee. Foreign entities outside of the Committee's jurisdiction to compel cooperation also subsequently declined to cooperate with the Committee's investigation.

Because the House travelers acted in good faith, and the evidence was inconclusive as to the true source of funds for the travel, the Committee concluded that the trips did not constitute an impermissible gift of travel, and decided that no further action is required regarding the House travelers' acceptance of any trip expenses.

Separately from the travel expenses, House travelers also received tangible gifts during the trips. These gifts may have been permissible under the gift rule, but the relevant provisions would require knowledge of the true identity of the donor to make that determination. Given the lack of cooperation from third parties, the Committee was not able to make that determination, so it has directed the travelers to take remedial action. All of the Members who went on the trip have already taken that remedial action or committed to do so.

The Committee intends to take no further action regarding this matter and thus considers it closed. This Report constitutes a final resolution of this matter under House Rule XI, clause 3(r).

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