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ONE HUNDRED FIFTEENTH CONGRESS

U.S. House of Representatives

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STATEMENT OF THE CHAIRWOMAN AND RANKING MEMBER OF THE COMMITTEE ON ETHICS REGARDING REPRESENTATIVE THOMAS GARRETT

Pursuant to Committee Rule 7(g), the Chairwoman and Ranking Member of the Committee on Ethics (Committee) determined to release the following statement:

On June 8, 2018, the Committee authorized an investigation, pursuant to Committee Rule 18(a), into allegations that Representative Thomas Garrett may have improperly required, requested, or allowed members of his official staff to perform unofficial tasks for his and/or his wife's personal benefit. Subsequently, the Office of Congressional Ethics (OCE) also began an investigation. OCE transmitted a referral regarding similar allegations to the Committee on September 5, 2018, which the Committee published on December 4, 2018, with an announcement that it was already investigating and would continue to review the matter.

Representative Garrett did not seek re-election to the House in the 116th Congress and the Committee will therefore lose jurisdiction over him on January 3, 2019. Given Representative Garrett's impending departure from the House, the Committee worked expeditiously to investigate the allegations. Over the course of the Committee's investigation, Committee staff interviewed eleven witnesses, including Representative Garrett, and reviewed over 1,500 pages of documents. In addition, the Committee authorized the issuance of four subpoenas. The investigation was slowed by several factors, including lack of full cooperation from Representative Garrett's wife, as well as several current and former members of his congressional staff.

The Committee will lose jurisdiction over this matter before it can issue a Report to the House regarding the allegations involving Representative Garrett. However, we believe the entire House community would benefit from further guidance with respect to these allegations. For that reason we have opted to release this statement and the attached report prepared by the Committee's nonpartisan, professional staff.

As explained in the Staff Report, not all of the allegations discussed in OCE's referral or news reports involved tasks that were improper for Representative Garrett's congressional staff to

perform. There were, however, many tasks that Representative Garrett's staff were required, requested, or allowed to perform that were unambiguously unofficial and therefore impermissible uses of official staff time, or improper gifts if performed on staff's personal time and not compensated. It was apparent from the evidence gathered by the Committee that Representative Garrett did not understand or appreciate the limits on when and how he could call upon his congressional staff to assist him with respect to tasks that were not in direct support of his official representational duties. The Committee has a longstanding practice of requiring that Members reimburse the U.S. Treasury for the impermissible use of official funds and requiring that Members repay the value of impermissible gifts that they receive. If the Committee had not lost jurisdiction here, those requirements could have been imposed as part of the resolution of the matter.

It is our intention that the attached Staff Report serve as a reminder to all House offices that (1) official resources, including congressional staff time, are for official work, and may not be used for personal services beyond incidental use that is negligible in nature, frequency, time consumed, and expense, and (2) congressional staff must be compensated for any personal services provided to their employing Member, even on their own time, because otherwise such services are an impermissible gift to that Member. We also hope that the Staff Report will provide some clarity on the appropriate role of Members' spouses in congressional offices, as well as Members' responsibilities with respect to their spouses' roles.

The issues discussed in the Staff Report are vital to the integrity of the House. Public office is a public trust, and when Members convert their office to personal use it undermines the trust in our institutions. The resources of the House should be used judiciously and with primary regard toward serving the needs of the constituents Members are elected to serve, not the personal needs of Members or their spouses.

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