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ONE HUNDRED NINETEENTH CONGRESS

**U.S. House of Representatives**  
COMMITTEE ON ETHICS

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**STATEMENT OF THE COMMITTEE ON ETHICS REGARDING SEXUAL  
MISCONDUCT AND WORKPLACE RIGHTS**

The Committee on Ethics (Committee) is dedicated to maintaining a congressional workplace free from sexual misconduct and ensuring that any individuals responsible for misconduct are held responsible for their behavior. There should be zero tolerance for sexual misconduct, harassment, or discrimination in the halls of Congress, or in any employment setting.

The Committee is also dedicated to providing transparency for the American public. The Committee has a long history of investigating allegations of sexual misconduct by Members of the House, ranging from criminal sexual activity to behavior implicating civil employment discrimination laws and more general standards of conduct. The Committee has always made public its findings whenever allegations of sexual misconduct were substantiated.

The Committee does *not* handle sexual harassment lawsuits or have any involvement in settlements of such claims. In 2018, the Committee championed the passage of the CAA Reform Act, which required automatic referrals to this Committee of Member reimbursement of sexual harassment awards or settlements paid out of a U.S. Treasury fund and publication of such awards or settlements ([here](#)). Since the enactment of that legislation, the Committee has not been notified of any awards or settlements relating to allegations of sexual harassment by a Member. Civil claims of sexual harassment can be filed with the Office of Congressional Workplace Rights (OCWR) ([here](#)), and the Office of Employee Advocacy (OEA) can assist House staffers in filing such claims and seeking restitution ([here](#)).

Regardless of whether a claim is brought through formal channels, individuals who have been the victim of or who are otherwise aware of any sexual misconduct, regardless of whether they are a House employee, can submit a complaint with the Committee at any time through the Committee's website ([here](#)). **The Committee strongly encourages anyone who may have experienced sexual misconduct by a House Member or staffer, or who has knowledge of such conduct, to contact the Committee, OCWR, or OEA.**

On numerous occasions, the Committee has reviewed allegations of sexual misconduct involving potential violations of applicable federal and state criminal laws, as well as House Rules. The Committee was established in 1967; the first instance in the Committee's records where a Member's misconduct related to sexual activity was investigated by the Committee was fifty years ago. Representative Wayne L. Hays was the first Member to resign before the Committee

completed its investigation into allegations of his sexual misconduct, removing him from the Committee's jurisdiction. In the first 40 years of its existence, the Committee investigated more than a dozen matters involving allegations of sexual misconduct by a Member. It issued public reports in most of those matters; in others, it lost jurisdiction before concluding its review.

Over the last decade, the Committee has adopted a more aggressive and robust approach to allegations of sexual misconduct. Since 2017, the Committee has initiated investigations in 20 matters involving allegations of sexual misconduct by a Member. The Committee has also investigated several Members for their handling of allegations of sexual misconduct by their senior staff. Whenever the Committee found a Member to have engaged in or fostered an environment where sexual misconduct took place, the Committee released its findings. The Committee has taken the position that conduct that falls short of legal definitions of sexual harassment or assault under federal or state statutes can still be a violation of the Code of Official Conduct, which imposes a higher standard on Members of the House. The Committee has also consistently publicly announced its investigations into publicly reported allegations of sexual misconduct and has announced any findings in those matters. Enclosed is a historical chart of the Committee's public precedent relating to sexual misconduct by Members.

Some sexual misconduct matters that the Committee may have otherwise reviewed were removed from the Committee's jurisdiction by the subject's resignation, retirement, or departure from House employment. Moreover, unfortunately, there likely exist matters never reported to the Committee. As the Committee has repeatedly asserted to the House community, through investigative matters and other actions, it treats allegations of sexual misconduct with the utmost seriousness.

The greatest hurdle the Committee faces in evaluating allegations of sexual misconduct is in convincing the most vulnerable witnesses to share their stories. Accordingly, the Committee's practice has been to release only the information that is necessary to hold Members accountable for misconduct and address public reporting that impacts the integrity of the House. The Committee does not release transcripts of its interviews or share the source of allegations. The Committee will continue to prioritize witness confidentiality and safety, so that those witnesses feel comfortable coming forward and providing the Committee the opportunity to hold wrongdoers accountable. Where the Committee finds evidence of sexual misconduct, it will continue to publicly release its findings and seek appropriate sanctions.

The Committee reminds the House community and the public that multiple avenues of reporting misconduct exist including, but not limited to, the Committee on Ethics, the Office of Congressional Workplace Rights (OCWR), and the Office of Employee Assistance (OEA). The Committee will continue to provide accountability and transparency on these – and all its other – matters.

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