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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

REPORT
119–756

IN THE MATTER OF ALLEGATIONS RELATING TO REPRESENTATIVE CHUCK EDWARDS

R E P O R T

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON ETHICS



AUGUST 3, 2026.—Referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed

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LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON ETHICS,
Washington, DC, August 3, 2026.

Hon. KEVIN F. MCCUMBER,
Clerk, House of Representatives,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. MCCUMBER: Pursuant to clauses 3(a)(2) and 3(b) of Rule XI of the Rules of the House of Representatives, we herewith transmit the attached report, "In the Matter of Allegations Relating to Representative Chuck Edwards."

Sincerely,

MICHAEL GUEST,
Chairman.
MARK DESAULNIER,
Ranking Member.

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House Calendar No. 87

119TH CONGRESS *2d Session* | HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES | REPORT 119–756

IN THE MATTER OF ALLEGATIONS RELATING TO REPRESENTATIVE CHUCK EDWARDS

AUGUST 3, 2026.—Referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed

Mr. GUEST, from the Committee on Ethics, submitted the following

R E P O R T

[To accompany H. Res. 1498]

In accordance with House rule XI, clauses 3(a)(2) and 3(b), the Committee on Ethics (Committee) hereby submits the following Report to the House of Representatives:

I. INTRODUCTION

The Committee has reviewed allegations that Representative Chuck Edwards may have created or fostered a hostile work environment and engaged in sexual harassment in violation of House Rules, laws, or other standards of conduct. As discussed further below, the Committee found that Representative Edwards violated the House Code of Official Conduct by failing to adhere to the spirit of rules prohibiting sexual harassment of and unwanted advances to House staffers.

Specifically, the Committee found that Representative Edwards engaged in persistent unprofessional and inappropriate conduct towards two young female staffers. While Representative Edwards denied that any of his conduct was intended as a sexual or romantic advance, his pattern of behavior would lead a reasonable observer to interpret it as such, including providing the young women with lavish and recurrent gifts, making comments regarding their appearance and dress, inviting them to intimate dinners and vacations, sending notes regarding his effusive affection, and inviting them to other activities as a way to spend time together. The Committee found no evidence that Representative Edwards engaged in sexual activity with or explicitly propositioned any individual under his employ. Representative Edwards was aware, however,

that his excessive attention toward the young women had led to rumors and innuendo in the office. Both women were uncomfortable with his behavior (which they attempted to communicate) but were put in an untenable position by virtue of his status as their boss and a Member of Congress. Representative Edwards was at minimum blind to that reality, and at worst, dismissive of the impact his inappropriate conduct had on the careers and wellbeing of two women on his staff.

As discussed further below, Representative Edwards' conduct was inappropriate and implicated the laws and rules prohibiting sexual harassment and unwanted advances by a Member towards a subordinate employee. The Committee has previously said that it "takes allegations of sexual harassment and discrimination and other violations of workplace rights extremely seriously."[1] In another matter concerning a Member's inappropriate comments, the Committee found it "concerning that in the year 2014 it has to remind a Member that such comments show poor judgment."[2] Since then, the Committee's concern has not diminished and it has consistently made clear that Members should act in a manner that avoids even the appearance of impropriety. Amid the ongoing conversations concerning sexual misconduct in Congress, Members must remain vigilant in creating a culture of professionalism and maintaining fair, safe work environments.

Members are prohibited from engaging in sexual harassment or making unwanted advances towards their subordinates. Representative Edwards violated the Code of Official Conduct by failing to adhere to the letter and spirit of those prohibitions, and by failing to act in a manner that reflects creditably upon the House. Representative Edwards acknowledged at least some of the behavior at issue could be viewed as inappropriate. However, he has not acknowledged or taken responsibility for the harm he caused. Accordingly, on July 22, 2026, the Committee voted to issue this Report detailing its findings regarding Representative Edwards' conduct. Representative Edwards cooperated with the Committee's investigation and has agreed to waive the processes required for the Committee to recommend a House floor sanction. The Committee has determined to recommend the House censure Representative Edwards for his conduct.

II. PROCEDURAL HISTORY

On April 20, 2026, the Committee released a public statement encouraging anyone with information about sexual misconduct by a House Member or staffer to contact the Committee or other relevant House offices.[3] Shortly after that announcement, the Committee was informed of allegations regarding Representative Edwards' conduct towards women in his office and began confidentially reviewing the allegations. At the direction of the Chairman

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[1] Comm. on Ethics, Statement of the Chairwoman and Ranking Member of the Committee on Ethics (Feb. 6, 2018), https://ethics.house.gov/press-releases/statement-chairwoman-and-ranking-member-committee-ethics-0; *see also* Comm. on Ethics, Statement of the Committee on Ethics Regarding Sexual Misconduct and Workplace Rights (Apr. 20, 2026), https://ethics.house.gov/press-releases/statement-of-the-committee-on-ethics-regarding-sexual-misconduct-and-workplace-rights (hereinafter April 20, 2026 Committee Statement).

[2] Comm. on Standards of Official Conduct, *In the Matter of Representative Alcee L. Hastings*, H. Rept. 113–663, 113th Cong. 2d Sess. 16 (2014) (hereinafter *Hastings*).

[3] *See* April 20, 2026 Committee Statement.

and the Ranking Member, Committee staff (who are trained in trauma-informed interviewing) reached out to relevant witnesses to discuss their experiences and concerns. As explained in the Committee's April 20th statement, the Committee prioritizes witness confidentiality and safety, and thus "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."[4] After public reporting about Representative Edwards' conduct, the Committee announced it was investigating allegations that Representative Edwards may have created or fostered a hostile work environment and engaged in sexual harassment.

As part of its investigation, the Committee sought documentary evidence from multiple sources, including Representative Edwards, conducted 16 witness interviews, including of Representative Edwards, and reviewed nearly 1,500 pages of documentary evidence. On July 22, 2026, the Committee voted to adopt this Report with respect to Representative Edwards. Representative Edwards agreed to waive the otherwise necessary procedures for the Committee to recommend a House floor sanction and submitted his Response to the Report.

III. FACTUAL BACKGROUND

Representative Edwards has represented the 11th District of North Carolina since 2023. Prior to becoming a Member of Congress, Representative Edwards was a businessman and served as a North Carolina State Senator. When he transitioned from the State Senate to the House of Representatives, Representative Edwards delegated most of his hiring to his Chief of Staff but brought three young women who had worked with him in the State Senate to continue working with him in the House, including a woman who was still in college (Staffer 1), and another in her early 20s (Staffer 2). As discussed below, both young women were subject to increasingly unusual attention from the Congressman while they worked for him, creating an environment where both they and their coworkers felt uncomfortable.

A. REPRESENTATIVE EDWARDS' CONDUCT TOWARDS STAFFER 1 AND STAFFER 2 DURING THEIR EMPLOYMENT IN HIS CONGRESSIONAL OFFICE

Staffer 1 was 19 years old when she first interned with Representative Edwards in the State Senate. Although she had not yet finished college when he was sworn into Congress, Representative Edwards insisted on hiring her to be his Scheduler, despite the difficulties of performing such a demanding role while also being a full-time student.[5] After graduating five months later, Staffer 1 moved to Washington, D.C. Staffer 1 remained in Representative Edwards' congressional office for approximately three years.

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[4] *Id.*

[5] The former Chief of Staff opposed this arrangement, but Representative Edwards was "insistent." 18(a) Interview of Staffer 4. Representative Edwards acknowledged that Staffer 1 only working part-time as Scheduler in the beginning was "difficult" but explained he knew he wanted Staffer 1 to work with him in Washington, D.C. and he had "made her that offer when she agreed to work on my campaign." 18(a) Interview of Representative Chuck Edwards.

Staffer 2, who had also worked with Representative Edwards when he was a State Senator, became a legislative staffer in the congressional office. Staffer 2 remained in Representative Edwards' congressional office for approximately two and a half years.

Although Representative Edwards testified that he did not treat these two young women he directly hired differently than the rest of the staff, most of the current and former staffers that the Committee spoke with felt that Staffer 1 and Staffer 2 were in fact treated differently. Throughout his testimony, Representative Edwards described his relationship to those staffers as close, but professional—specifically asserting that they had "a deeper working relationship," "a longstanding working friendly relationship," "a close working relationship," and "[i]ncredibly professional" and "truly platonic" "friendships'" that were "built on trust and respect and a real concern for one another."[6] While many witnesses, including the two staffers themselves, also characterized the relationship as "close," several felt that it was far from professional.

An example of Representative Edwards' unprofessional conduct was commenting on the two women's appearance in the congressional office, telling them when they looked "pretty" or "breathtaking," and even remarking on one staffer's weight.[7] Representative Edwards acknowledged he made comments such as "that's a great looking dress, I like that color, I like that texture" and that with the culture on Capitol Hill "it's almost an insult if you don't make some comment about [one another's clothing]."[8] He further testified, "I wrote sexual harassment policy [in the corporate world]. I [ ] investigated sexual harassment many, many times. I lived a very cautious life. I know that commenting on clothing without associating that with any other body part or feature is common acceptable practice in the workplace."[9]

Representative Edwards also went beyond norms of professional behavior by giving both women lavish gifts. Both women received numerous gifts from Representative Edwards, including jewelry totaling over $1,000, designer purses, guns, shoes, flowers, a laptop and cell phone, KitchenAid mixer, robotic vacuum, vacations, tickets to performances, and one-on-one dinners.[10] Several gifts were for specific occasions, such as Christmas or birthdays, but others were not; for example, Representative Edwards paid for Staffer 2 and her friend to visit New York City, including tickets to Hamilton, after she had gone through a breakup.[11] Staffer 1 said she did not feel obligated to wear the purse or jewelry Representative Edwards gave her, but Staffer 2 felt "obligated to wear" a necklace he bought her and when she stopped wearing it, "he made a comment about . . . how disappointed he is that I'm not willing to [ ] wear what he got me."[12] While Representative Edwards testified that both Staffer 1 and Staffer 2 also purchased gifts for him "all the time," the Committee found evidence of far fewer instances, but

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[6] *Id.*
[7] 18(a) Interview of Staffer 1; 18(a) Interview of Staffer 2.
[8] 18(a) Interview of Representative Chuck Edwards.
[9] *Id.*
[10] 18(a) Interview of Representative Chuck Edwards (also stating several times in his testimony that he gifted Staffer 1 phone chargers); 18(a) Interview of Staffer 1; 18(a) Interview of Staffer 2.
[11] *See* 18(a) Interview of Staffer 2.
[12] 18(a) Interview of Staffer 1; 18(a) Interview of Staffer 2.

did find that they provided him with a custom Miami Dolphins jersey for Christmas.[13]

The Committee identified numerous specific instances in which Representative Edwards engaged in conduct towards Staffer 1 or Staffer 2 that was highly unprofessional, made the women feel uncomfortable, and/or gave the appearance of a sexual or romantic advance. The Committee's record is thorough and includes not only significant testimony from multiple witnesses, but also contemporaneous text messages. The Committee has carefully reviewed the full record and provided Representative Edwards with an opportunity to address many examples of specific conduct. Consistent with the Committee's policy of minimizing the disclosure of information that may be traumatizing or otherwise harmful to witnesses or victims, the Committee has included only a representative summary of that conduct in the bullets below. The Committee received evidence that Representative Edwards:

- Brought Staffer 1 to a holiday event at the White House, hid the details from other staffers, bought her flowers, and texted her in advance that he was "so excited about tonight" and wanted the evening to be "perfect."[14] Staffer 1 testified that Representative Edwards attempted to pressure her to continue the evening with him after the event and insisted on having her travel to and from the event in his car, with his driver.[15] When asked about this, Representative Edwards said he could not recall suggesting they continue their evening, and that he accompanied her in the car out to her home in Virginia because he "felt uncomfortable dumping a young lady on the street."[16]
- Brought Staffer 1 on political trips, including a trip to New York City, where they stayed an extra day for the Congressman's birthday, for which he had planned a helicopter ride, dinner, and Broadway show.[17] Although Representative Edwards testified that Staffer 1 asked to go on the trip, the Committee received evidence that it was his idea for her to attend the trip and that he sought to "surprise" her with the personal activities during the extra day.[18]
- Left early from an event attended by congressional Members and staff and later told Staffer 1 it was because she had brought a date. When asked about this, Representative Edwards testified to the Committee that he told Staffer 1 that he did not want to be "in the way or something to that effect."[19]
- Talked to Staffer 1 and other staffers about going to strip clubs in Washington, D.C.[20]

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[13] 18(a) Interview of Representative Chuck Edwards.

[14] Exhibit 1; Exhibit 2. When Representative Edwards messaged Staffer 1 to ask her preferred flowers, she responded "I'm okay without flowers thank you though!" He got her flowers anyway. Exhibit 2.

[15] Staffer 1 testified that one instance where she felt there was some sort of "expectation" was after the White House Christmas party, and that "[A]ter [ ] I was like [ ] I want to go home. And he kept on just being, like, "Well, I have the car for the night," [ ] "let's just go and do something . . . . [W]hen I got into the car he had made sure to have alcohol." Ultimately, Staffer 1 and Representative Edwards were driven by his driver to her apartment, and she got out of the car alone. 18(a) Interview of Staffer 1.

[16] 18(a) Interview of Representative Chuck Edwards.

[17] *See* 18(a) Interview of Staffer 1.

[18] *Id.*

[19] 18(a) Interview of Representative Chuck Edwards.

[20] *See* 18(a) Interview of Staffer 1; 18(a) Interview of Staffer 3; 18(a) Interview of Staffer 4; 18(a) Interview of Staffer 6.

• Invited Staffer 1 and Staffer 2 to private dinners, in at least one instance noting to Staffer 2 that she should not have the scheduler put it on his calendar.[21]

• Sent Staffer 1 and Staffer 2 personal texts late in the evenings, including messages planning or following activities together and expressing personal sentiments.[22]

• Went to Staffer 2's house to perform chores like yardwork, pick her up and drop her off for events and activities with his driver, and decorate her Christmas tree together (for which he skipped votes in the House that evening).[23]

• Booked and paid for massages or other spa treatments for Staffer 2.[24]

• Took Staffer 2 to the casino, bought her drinks, and paid for her to gamble. Staffer 2 texted Representative Edwards after one such outing to thank him for a fun night; several months later, he printed the text message, drew a heart next to the message and hand-wrote "Perhaps my proudest personal moment!" [25]

• Wrote poems for Staffer 2, including one that he read at her going away party in the congressional office accompanied by a slideshow, during which he cried. Several staffers present testified that they felt uncomfortable, and Representative Edwards acknowledged in his own testimony that he could tell the staff felt uncomfortable.[26]

• Planned elaborate full-day outings with Staffer 1 and/or Staffer 2. On one occasion he suggested to Staffer 2 that they could "go to Annapolis for lunch, meditate by its water, stroll about town, find a day spa, see a movie, or wipe out the casino" and that he was "over thinking . . . but I really want you to enjoy our time together nearly as much as I know [I] will [ ]." [27] The following day, he texted photographs to her with a note that he would "cherish every moment of our time these last couple of days." [28]

• Arranged for a singer to go to Staffer 2's birthday party to sing Ed Sheeran's *Hills of Aberfeldy* and say that it was "from a special someone." [29] The Committee received evidence that Staffer 2 told a friend this led her to believe that the Congressman did not view her as "just a daughter figure" and that she was "scared lowkey."

Although Representative Edwards voluntarily produced some of his communications with Staffer 1 and Staffer 2 to the Committee, many relevant messages were omitted and/or seemingly deleted

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[21] *See* Exhibit 3 (not produced by Representative Edwards).

[22] *See id.* (sent at 10:41 p.m.); Exhibit 4 (text sent at 9:06 p.m.); Exhibit 5 (sent at and after 10:09 p.m. and 1:29 a.m.); Exhibit 6 (sent at 1:14 a.m.); Exhibit 7 (sent at 9:34 p.m., 11:35 p.m., and 9:40 p.m.); *see also* Exhibit 8 (sent at approximately 11:39 p.m.).

[23] *See* 18(a) Interview of Staffer 2; 18(a) Interview of Representative Chuck Edwards; Exhibit 9 (offering the day before he came over to "skip votes and help you decorate your tree once you get home tomorrow" to "give [Representative Edwards] the opportunity to spend a little more time with [Staffer 2].") (not produced by Representative Edwards).

[24] *See* 18(a) Interview of Staffer 2.

[25] Exhibit 10; *see also* 18(a) Interview of Staffer 2; 18(a) Interview of Representative Chuck Edwards.

[26] *See, e.g.,*18(a) Interview of Staffer 1; 18(a) Interview of Staffer 2; 18(a) Interview of Staffer 3; 18(a) Interview of Staffer 6; 18(a) Interview of Staffer 7.

[27] Exhibit 6 (not produced by Representative Edwards).

[28] *Id.*

[29] 18(a) Interview of Staffer 2. Representative Edwards testified that this was Staffer 2's favorite song. 18(a) Interview of Representative Chuck Edwards. The song's lyrics include, *e.g.*, "I long for you to be the one I'm holding . . . . Yet I know that I have never told you, Darling, we could fall in love 'neath the hills of Aberfeldy . . . . I know that you will never find another heart that wants you more than mine."

from his phone. These missing messages contained sentiments that were central to the Committee's investigation. For example, one series of messages produced by Representative Edwards included only the staffer's text messages stating that she went to a restaurant recommended by the Congressman, and Representative Edwards failed to produce his response, which read, in part, "I'm burning with jealousy because I wanted to be the person to introduce you to it."[30] As another example, Representative Edwards produced a message from Staffer 2 thanking him for taking her to a work event, but not his response: "You're so fun to be with, so easy to talk to, and I love listening to you. By all means—let's explore more of DC together. We seem to have a fondness for many of the same things. Even where we do not, I'll enjoy the adventure alongside you!"[31] In another instance, Representative Edwards seemingly deleted a photograph from Staffer 2 of approximately 30 different types of ice cream that he had delivered to her house, along with her reply message, "Thank you, but this seems a bit excessive," to which Representative Edwards replied, "You looked like you needed a lot of cheering up! My heart was breaking seeing you like that."[32] When asked about the missing text messages, he testified that he would delete messages "at a whim" and that "a number of people use my phone and if there was anything that might have been interpreted in a way that it wasn't intended or that someone may be resentful of, I would occasionally[33] delete it."[34] He also attributed missing messages to "using different phones at different times, and different backup methods";[35] however, the missing messages came from the same phone number as the produced messages, and were nearly always part of ongoing text chains.

Representative Edwards knew or had reason to know that Staffer 1 and Staffer 2 were uncomfortable with his conduct at least as early as May 2025. At that time, a senior staffer spoke to Representative Edwards on behalf of both women. The senior staffer testified that Representative Edwards "got very angry" and said she "didn't understand the unique relationship" he had with them.[36] Representative Edwards testified that the senior staffer "said that some of the staff were resentful over my relationship with [Staffer 1] and [Staffer 2] because we exchanged gifts and because I did not ask [them] questions in our staff meeting like I asked other members of the team."[37] Following the conversation, he said he was "more aware of how the staff might be reacting to my relationship with [them]" but did not appreciate that the senior staffer was expressing discomfort felt by the two women themselves and continued his behavior.[38] Instead, the Committee re-

[30] *Compare* Exhibit 11 *with* Exhibit 12. The Committee did not find Representative Edwards' testimony that he was jealous "towards the restaurant" credible. 18(a) Interview of Representative Chuck Edwards.
[31] *Compare* Exhibit 13 *with* Exhibit 8.
[32] *Compare* Exhibit 14 *with* Exhibit 15.
[33] Representative Edwards' production excluded over 400 text messages between himself and Staffer 2 that were not related to official business, in addition to a nine-month period for which he produced no messages but during which time at least another 400 messages were exchanged.
[34] 18(a) Interview of Representative Chuck Edwards.
[35] *Id.*
[36] 18(a) Interview of Staffer 6.
[37] 18(a) Interview of Representative Chuck Edwards.
[38] *Id.*

ceived evidence that Representative Edwards blamed other staffers for "getting in the way" of his relationships with the two women, and that he would attempt to "guilt trip" the women when they attempted to draw boundaries.[39] Both Staffer 1 and Staffer 2 left the congressional office due to the conduct described above, although they provided other explanations to the Congressman.

Staffer 1 left the office less than a year after learning of rumors that she and the Congressman were having an affair.[40]

Staffer 2 considered leaving the congressional office approximately a month and a half before she actually left. After she informed Representative Edwards of another job offer, he texted her, "I don't cry often, but I have today. It caught me off guard. And I sure don't ever admit it to anyone. Just being honest with you."[41] Over the next several days, Representative Edwards repeatedly asked Staffer 2 to dinner. Around this time, Staffer 2 was contacted by a friend who asked about rumors of an affair between Representative Edwards and a staffer; following this, she told Representative Edwards, "I don't think dinner is a great idea."[42] He responded:

> It's disappointing to feel something that used to be easy has gotten complicated. Whether we were talking about cat poop, crime plots, or thoughts more meaningful—I've always valued the time we shared, and the money we won :) and I thought you might too. I didn't expect outside chatter to change that. Still, I understand. You get to set the boundaries, and I get to respect them. If you ever feel easy again, I hope you'll give me the signal.[43]

Representative Edwards testified that he "suppose[d]" his response could seem intended to make someone feel guilty, but that was not his intent.[44] He elaborated, "That was my way of saying—I ain't asking again because part of harassment is, when an interaction is not wanted and repetitive, and I was just trying to set the groundwork for 'I'm going [ ] to respect that.'"[45] Representative Edwards pointed to this response as "the best illustration" that Staffer 1 and Staffer 2 were both able to ask him to change his behavior towards them without consequence, summarizing his intended message as being, "I understand, you set the boundaries."[46] However, the Committee received evidence that Staffer 1 and Staffer 2 did not always feel free to reject Representative Edwards' attentions without fear of professional consequences.[47]

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[39] *See, e.g.,*18(a) Interview of Staffer 1; 18(a) Interview of Staffer 2; 18(a) Interview of Staffer 3; 18(a) Interview of Representative Chuck Edwards.

[40] One staffer testified that some people in the congressional office "would make comments that they thought that the Congressman was sleeping with [Staffer 1]." 18(a) Interview of Staffer 3. Rumors were also circulated outside the congressional office. *See* 18(a) Interview of Staffer 1; 18(a) Interview of Staffer 2.

[41] Exhibit 7 (not produced by Representative Edwards).

[42] 18(a) Interview of Representative Chuck Edwards.

[43] *Id.*

[44] *Id.*

[45] *Id.*

[46] *Id.*

[47] *See* 18(a) Interview of Staffer 1 (testifying that she "did not know how to say no" and that "[Staffer 2 and I] were both very young . . . and [ ] we were just taught that we needed to be grateful And as we got older we started realizing that maybe this isn't normal, [ ] the way he is speaking [with us], the way that he would isolate us . . . ."); 18(a) Interview of Staffer 2 (testifying that she was "in too deep" and that she told other staffers she was concerned Representative Edwards would have an "adverse reaction" if she set boundaries; also testifying how even

B. REPRESENTATIVE EDWARDS' CONDUCT TOWARDS STAFFER 1 AND STAFFER 2 AFTER THEY LEFT THE CONGRESSIONAL OFFICE

After Staffer 1 left the office, she had little contact with Representative Edwards. After press reporting about allegations of the Congressman's misconduct came to light, he reached out to her and considered attending an event sponsored by her employer, but ultimately did not do so, at least in part following his own recognition that it would not be a "good idea" to attend if Staffer 1 was there in light of the allegations.[48]

Representative Edwards helped Staffer 2 move back to North Carolina after she left his office. Staffer 2 sent a message expressing thanks for his help and for his support in her transition to a new role. Representative Edwards' response read, in part:

> I'm so so SO happy for you but I can't pretend this doesn't sting—deeply. Your absence leaves a space no one else can fill—professionally or personally. Even at my loss, I promise you will never find anyone that wishes for your happiness more than me. NEVER, ANYONE![49]

Not long after, he sent a handwritten letter in which he stated she was "the most amazing woman," she had "written a complex chapter in my heart that I will never stop reading," that he "only wish[ed] I could express the joy and meaning to me for the time we spent together at the office—but especially away from it," and that he became "more than I could have become otherwise . . . as long as you were with me."[50] When asked if this letter was meant to be romantic, Representative Edwards responded: "No . . . . it was only to imply that we had a relationship on so many different levels—on a congressional level, on a professional level, on a friendship level, on a helping-one-another-out-with-our-chores-and-responsibility level."[51] After she left the congressional office, Representative Edwards sent her additional gifts and continued to invite her to events and dinners. One such event was an Adam Sandler comedy show, for which Representative Edwards mailed Staffer 2 a jigsaw puzzle with a handwritten invitation to "dinner beforehand, or a drink or dessert afterwards."[52]

In November 2025, Staffer 2 met Representative Edwards in Las Vegas.[53] Representative Edwards testified that he would "never" have made the suggestion for Staffer 2 to travel with him if she was still a staffer, but also that the Las Vegas trip's origin was him "jokingly" suggesting it when he took her to the casino and that Staffer 2 had responded, "Just tell me when."[54] In September 2025, Representative Edwards and Staffer 2 went to dinner, after which Representative Edwards sent a text message that read, "I hope you were serious about us going to Vegas together. We could have such a great time!"[55] Staffer 2 testified that she ultimately

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after she left the congressional office, she felt she had to say yes to the Las Vegas trip because she "did not think that having a Member of Congress against me would benefit my career.").

[48] 18(a) Interview of Representative Chuck Edwards.

[49] Exhibit 16 (not produced by Representative Edwards).

[50] Exhibit 17.

[51] 18(a) Interview of Representative Chuck Edwards.

[52] Exhibit 18.

[53] *See* Exhibit 19 (excerpted texts; not produced by Representative Edwards).

[54] 18(a) Interview of Representative Chuck Edwards; *see also* 18(a) Interview of Staffer 2.

[55] Exhibit 19.

felt pressured to go in part because of his persistence and in part because Representative Edwards continued to have influence over her career in another public service role.[56]

Over the following weeks, they continued to discuss logistics of the trip. Representative Edwards paid for their flights, two rooms at the Bellagio, and a show at the Sphere. Upon arrival in Las Vegas, Staffer 2 received a bouquet of flowers. She texted Representative Edwards, "I'm almost ready and just got the flowers—they're very pretty. Thank you! I did want to flag that the message made me uncomfortable. Just want to make sure this trip isn't meant to be anything it's not?"[57] He responded, "Understood, and agree. I'm sorry it made you uncomfortable. Nothing was meant by it, other than what was intended to be a cute play on the name of the arrangement."[58] Staffer 2 apologized and said she did not mean to sound "accusatory."[59]

Although the trip was scheduled to go from November 9 through 11, Representative Edwards was called back to Washington, D.C. on the morning of November 10 for votes in the House to end the government shutdown. In preparing for the return flight, Staffer 2 offered to "change your flight for you . . . so [Scheduler] doesn't have to worry about it or ask why you're in Vegas."[60] Representative Edwards' testimony also indicated that he did not want his Scheduler to be aware of who he was with, not for the first time, as "[i]t would have looked suspicious" because "rumors swirled around" and "it's not any of [his staff's] business."[61]

Representative Edwards spoke with Staffer 2 after public reporting about their Las Vegas trip. He testified that he "reminded her that we were there for a short period of time and that a good portion of the trip to Vegas was a stop before she went to see her sister in Los Angeles," which he felt was "relevant to the story of she and I being in Las Vegas together."[62] However, Staffer 2's testimony and contemporaneous text messages confirm that Staffer 2's visit to her sister was "an unexpected treat" because Representative Edwards had to return early to Washington, D.C.[63]

C. IMPACT OF REPRESENTATIVE EDWARDS' CONDUCT ON THE CONGRESSIONAL OFFICE ENVIRONMENT

Representative Edwards' treatment of Staffer 1 and Staffer 2 also impacted others in the office. Multiple staffers testified that Representative Edwards gave these women preferential treatment, which negatively impacted morale in the office.[64] For example, one senior staffer complained to another that the Congressman "lashes

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[56] *See* 18(a) Interview of Staffer 2 ("I said no pretty frequently. It became clear that he was going to continue to provide alternative dates and encourage me to go if I didn't [] already agree"). *See also* Exhibit 19. Representative Edwards testified Staffer 2 did not feel pressured because "she seemed very excited when I asked her." 18(a) Interview of Representative Chuck Edwards.

[57] Exhibit 19.

[58] *Id.*

[59] *Id.* Representative Edwards sent text messages that caused both Staffer 1 and Staffer 2 to apologize for their responses (or lack thereof) on several occasions. One former staffer testified that Staffer 2 was generally concerned about turning down the Congressman because of his temper and was "very careful about using her words correctly." 18(a) Interview of Staffer 5.

[60] Exhibit 19.

[61] 18(a) Interview of Representative Chuck Edwards.

[62] *Id.*

[63] 18(a) Interview of Staffer 2; Exhibit 19.

[64] *See, e.g.,* 18(a) Interview of Staffer 1; 18(a) Interview of Staffer 2; 18(a) Interview of Staffer 3; 18(a) Interview of Staffer 4; 18(a) Interview of Staffer 5; 18(a) Interview of Staffer 6.

out at everyone on the team except [Staffer 1] and [Staffer 2]."[65] When asked if he ever yelled at staff, Representative Edwards responded, "No."[66] Another senior staffer stated that she informed Representative Edwards that other staffers felt an "unfair standard existed" and Representative Edwards responded that "other people in the office were jealous."[67] In his interview with the Committee, Representative Edwards was dismissive of any concerns that his conduct created an unfair work environment for the other staffers.[68]

Several staffers felt there was preferential treatment when Staffer 1 was promoted to Deputy Chief of Staff at the end of 2024. She testified she was given the role because "[Representative Edwards] wanted someone that he could trust [ ] to be at a higher-level position."[69] In contrast, Representative Edwards testified that "she is so brilliant," "expressed [ ] an interest in being a chief of staff," and was "the clear leader in the group [of candidates]."[70] According to several individuals, Representative Edwards had previously told a senior male staffer who had expressed interest in becoming his Deputy Chief of Staff that he would never have a Deputy Chief of Staff because he did not believe that position served a purpose, although Representative Edwards denied ever having that conversation. There was a general consensus among the staff in the office that Staffer 1's promotion was not merited; in contrast, the senior male staffer had nearly a decade of experience on Capitol Hill and was consistently described a strong performer.

IV. RELEVANT LAWS, RULES, AND OTHER APPLICABLE STANDARDS OF CONDUCT AND COMMITTEE PRECEDENT

Sexual harassment and other forms of employment discrimination are prohibited in the House by both federal statute and House Rules. The Congressional Accountability Act (CAA) prohibits discrimination based on sex, including sexual harassment, and it also prohibits intimidation, reprisal, or other discrimination against a person for opposing sex discrimination.[71] The House has prohibited discrimination with respect to an individual's sex since 1975, when what is now clause 9 of House rule XXIII (the Code of Official Conduct) was adopted, mirroring federal employment discrimination laws.

House rule XXIII , clause 9, states that "[a] Member . . . may not discharge and may not refuse to hire an individual, or otherwise discriminate against an individual with respect to compensation, terms, conditions, or privileges of employment, because of the race, color, religion, sex (including marital or parental status), disability, age, or national origin of such individual, including by committing an act of sexual harassment against such individual, but may take into consideration the domicile or political affiliation of

[65] 18(a) Interview of Staffer 6; *see also* 18(a) Interview of Staffer 3.
[66] 18(a) Interview of Representative Chuck Edwards.
[67] 18(a) Interview of Staffer 6.
[68] *See* 18(a) Interview of Representative Chuck Edwards (when asked about this issue, the Congressman testified that "fair" is a subjective standard and that there would be "resentment between any group of employees.").
[69] 18(a) Interview of Staffer 1.
[70] 18(a) Interview of Representative Chuck Edwards.
[71] *See* 2 U.S.C. §§ 1311 *et seq.*

such individual." The Committee has stressed that clause 9 tracks the language of Title VII of the Civil Right Law of 1964 and should be interpreted in light of judicial and administrative decisions construing the law.[72] Under federal law, "[u]nwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitute sexual harassment when (1) submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment, (2) submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment decisions affecting such individual, or (3) such conduct has the purpose or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's work performance or creating an intimidating, hostile, or offensive working environment."[73]

Not every instance of unwelcome "sexual advances" or "verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature" amounts to discrimination under federal law.[74] When determining whether unwelcome sexual advances rise to a level to allow for legal remedies, courts focus on whether the advances were premised on a *quid pro quo* exchange, *i.e.*, "that a tangible job benefit or privilege is conditioned on an employee's submission to sexual black-mail and that adverse consequences follow from the employee's refusal,"[75] or whether the sexual advances were "sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the conditions of the victim's employment and create an abusive working environment."[76]

House rule XXIII, clause 18(a) prohibits Members from "engag[ing] in a sexual relationship with any employee of the House who works under the supervision of the Member" and clause 18(b) prohibits a Member from "engag[ing] in unwelcome sexual advances or conduct towards . . . [an] employee of the House."

Additionally, House rule XXIII, clauses 1 and 2, provide that a Member "shall behave at all times in a manner that shall reflect creditably on the House," and "shall adhere to the spirit and the letter of the Rules of the House." In enforcing clause 1, the Committee has noted that "Clause 1 is a purposely subjective standard designed to 'have a deterrent effect against improper conduct,' and provide 'the ability to deal with any given act or accumulation of acts which, in the judgment of the [C]ommittee, are severe enough to reflect discredit on the Congress.'"[77] The provision serves "as a safeguard for the House as a whole."[78]

The Committee has also noted that the standards of conduct governing the ethical behavior of the House community are not crimi-

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[72] *See* Comm. on Standards of Official Conduct, *In the Matter of Representative Jim Bates*, H. Rept. 101–293, 101st Cong. 1st. Sess. 1 (1989) (hereinafter *Bates*).

[73] 29 C.F.R. § 1604.11(a) (1999); *Meritor Sav. Bank, FSB v. Vinson*, 477 U.S. 57, 65 (1986) (citing the quoted provision of the Code of Federal Regulations and explaining that the quoted provision "describe[s] the kinds of workplace conduct that may be actionable under Title VII.").

[74] 29 C.F.R. § 1604.11(a); *Faragher v. City of Boca Raton*, 524 U.S. 775, 787–88 (1998) (explaining that courts should look at circumstances such as the "frequency of discriminatory conduct; its severity; whether it is physically threatening or humiliating, or a mere offensive utterance; and whether it unreasonably interferes with an employee's work performance" to determine "whether an environment is sufficiently hostile or abusive" to allow for legal recourse) (citations omitted).

[75] *Gary v. Long*, 59 F.3d 1391, 1395 (D.C. Cir. 1995) (citations omitted).

[76] *Meritor*, 477 U.S. at 67; *see also Ayissi-Etoh v. Fannie Mae*, 712 F.3d 572, 577 (D.C. Cir. 2013) (per curiam); *Harris v. Forklift Sys., Inc.*, 510 U.S. 17, 21 (1993).

[77] Comm. on Ethics, *In the Matter of Allegations Relating to Representative Matt Gaetz*, H. Rept. 116–479, 116th Cong. 2d Sess. 9 (2020).

[78] Comm. on Standards of Official Conduct, *Inquiry Into the Operation of the Bank of the Sergeant-At-Arms of the House of Representatives*, H. Rept. 102–452, 102nd Cong. 2d Sess. 22 (1992).

nal statutes to be construed strictly, but rather—under clause 2 of House rule XXIII—must be read to prohibit violations not only of the letter of the rules, but of the spirit of the rules. The standard "provide[s] the House the means to deal with infractions that rise to trouble it without burdening it with defining specific charges that would be difficult to state with precision."[79] The practical effect of clause 2 is to allow the Committee to construe the ethical rules broadly and prohibit Members from doing indirectly what they would be barred from doing directly. The *Ethics Manual* states that "a narrow technical reading of a House [R]ule should not overcome its 'spirit' and the intent of the House in adopting that and other rules of conduct."[80] Similarly, the Committee has found that conduct that does not strictly meet each of the elements of a federal statute may nonetheless violate the Code of Official Conduct.[81]

The Committee first articulated the principle that sexual harassment is a violation of House Rules in its 1989 report in the matter of Representative Jim Bates. In that matter, the Committee received two complaints from former female employees alleging that they had been sexually harassed by the Congressman during their employment.[82] These complaints, which were contained in sworn letters to other Members of Congress, alleged that the harassment involved unwanted advances and threatening behavior, as well as inappropriate touching and comments.[83] In interviews during the Committee's investigation, staffers described sexual misconduct by the Congressman, including him running "his finger across [a staffer's] buttocks during a committee meeting," referring to "his state of erectness" when requesting hugs, and mentioning during phone calls that he was naked.[84] Following staff interviews, the Committee opened a Preliminary Inquiry. The Committee found that, while Representative Bates' conduct toward the complainants gave them "reasonable grounds to allege sexual harassment" and was a violation of House Rules, Representative Bates had already "taken steps to prevent recurrence of this situation," such as seeking professional guidance "to assist him in conforming his personal conduct to acceptable standards" and establishing a written office policy concerning sexual harassment, and so it was not necessary to seek a House sanction.[85] Instead, in a vote of 12 to 0, the Committee "determined that the better course [was] to formally and publicly reprove Representative Bates for his violations with an explicit direction that he apologize to [the complainants] for his inappropriate conduct."[86]

Around the same time as the *Bates* matter, the Committee initiated a Preliminary Inquiry into allegations of sexual harassment against Representative Gus Savage, who was alleged to have made unwanted advances towards a Peace Corps volunteer during an of-

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[79] 114 Cong. Rec. 8778 (Apr. 3, 1968) (Statement of Representative Price).
[80] *House Ethics Manual* (2022) (hereinafter *Ethics Manual*) at 16–17 (citing House Select Comm. on Ethics, *Advisory Opinion No. 4*, H. Rept. 95–1837, 95th Cong. 2d Sess. 62 (1979)).
[81] *See* Comm. on Ethics, *In the Matter of Allegations Relating to Representative Ruben Kihuen*, H. Rept. 115–1041, 115th Cong. 2d Sess. (2018) (hereinafter *Kihuen*) (noting that conduct that may not meet the technical requirements of applicable sexual harassment laws may nevertheless be a violation of the Code of Official Conduct).
[82] *See Bates* at 1.
[83] *See id.*
[84] *Id.* at 6.
[85] *Id.* at 7–8.
[86] *Id.* at 14.

ficial congressional trip to Zaire, including forcing her to kiss him and trying to persuade her to have sex with him.[87] Representative Savage generally denied that he acted improperly, but later sent a letter to the Peace Corps volunteer stating, "While in Zaire earlier this year, if you felt personally offended by any words or actions of mine, I apologize, because I never intended to offend and was not aware that you felt offended at that time."[88] The Committee found that Representative Savage's actions were contrary to clause 1 of the Code of Official Conduct and stated that it "clearly disapproves" of his conduct.[89] The Committee unanimously voted to release a public report describing Representative Savage's behavior and determined that no further action was warranted, as "his self-initiated letter of apology . . . rendered unnecessary a Committee direction that he do so."[90] The Committee noted that it had not focused on such similar conduct in prior reports, and so it used the *Savage* Report to "place other Members on notice" that, in the future, additional action may be pursued against Members who engage in similar conduct.[91] In 2018, clause 9 of the Code of Official Conduct was updated to explicitly list "sexual harassment" as a prohibited employment practice.

In 2011, the Committee initiated a review into sexual harassment allegations involving Representative Alcee Hastings, following a referral from the Office of Congressional Conduct (OCC, formerly the Office of Congressional Ethics). The allegations were also public knowledge because they were the subject of an ongoing civil litigation. The Committee conducted a thorough review into the allegations involving Representative Hastings, interviewing 8 witnesses, including the Member and the complainant. In 2014, after the conclusion of the civil litigation, the Committee released a report summarizing its findings.[92] While the Committee determined to take no further action in the matter, the report included a warning for Representative Hastings and the broader House community:

> Importantly, while the most serious allegations in this case were not supported by the evidence, Representative Hastings has admitted to certain conduct that is less than professional. That conduct, as well as the Committee's explanation for concluding that it does not rise to the level of a violation of House Rules, laws, regulations, or other standards of conduct, is described below. We hope that this description serves as a necessary corrective for Representative Hastings in the future, and a reminder to all Members of the importance of these issues. Sexual harassment in the workplace is an extremely serious problem, in part because it is often perpetrated by very powerful people—supervisors, managers, owners, etc.—against people with significantly less power, such as subordinate employees. This power imbalance surely could exist in the relationship between a Member and his employees, and Members must

[87] *See* Comm. on Standards of Official Conduct, *In the Matter of Representative Gus Savage*, H. Rept. 101–397, 101st Cong. 2d. Sess. 1 (1990) (hereinafter *Savage*).
[88] *Id.* at 19.
[89] *Id.* at 14.
[90] *Id.* at 2.
[91] *Id.*
[92] *See Hastings.*

> be held to account if they abuse that imbalance of power, especially in a fashion that discriminates on the basis of gender. In cases where such discrimination can be proven, this Committee will hold those who engage in such misconduct accountable.[93]

The Committee's report also highlighted two comments that Representative Hastings made in the presence of the complainant: one about not being able to sleep after sex, and another about female Members of Congress wearing the same underwear all day.[94] The report noted that "such comments show poor judgment," and expressed the Committee's "fervent[ ] hope[ ]" that Members, "charged as they are with the duty of upholding the honor of this august institution, would be an example for how workplaces should function professionally in the modern world."[95]

A month after the Committee released the *Hastings* report, OCC opened a review into allegations of sexual harassment involving Representative Blake Farenthold and in June 2015, OCC transmitted a referral recommending dismissal of the allegations. The Committee did *not* dismiss the allegations but instead continued to review the matter pursuant to Committee Rule 18(a). As required under House and Committee Rules when the Committee continues review of an OCC referral, the Committee announced its investigation and explained its decision to continue review by citing an ongoing civil litigation regarding the same allegations.[96] A few months after the Committee's announcement, the civil matter against the office of Representative Farenthold was settled for $84,000. The Committee continued to review the allegations pursuant to Committee Rule 18(a), interviewing several witnesses and collecting a substantial number of documents, including discovery materials from the civil litigation, and eventually voted to impanel an investigative subcommittee (ISC) to complete the review of Representative Farenthold. The ISC scheduled a vote on potential charges in the matter, which would have enabled the Committee to seek a House sanction, but Representative Farenthold resigned after being informed the vote was scheduled. The Committee lost jurisdiction over the matter following his resignation.

In November 2017, around the same time as the *Farenthold* matter was nearing resolution, the press reported that Representative John Conyers had been the subject of a sexual harassment lawsuit in 2015, brought by a former staffer that was settled for $27,000.[97] Additionally, the article reported on affidavits from three other staff members that outlined a pattern of behavior by Representative Conyers that included touching the woman in a sexual manner and growing angry when she brought her husband around. On November 21, 2017, the Chairman and Ranking Member publicly announced an investigation into the allegations regarding Represent-

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[93] *Id.* at 2.
[94] *See id.* at 5.
[95] *Id.* at 16.
[96] *See* Comm. on Ethics, Statement of the Chairman and Ranking Member of the Committee on Ethics Regarding Representative Blake Farenthold (Sept. 28, 2015), https://ethics.house.gov/press-release/statement-chairman-and-ranking-member-committee-ethics-regarding-representative-blake.
[97] *See* Paul McLeod and Lissandra Villa, *She Said A Powerful Congressman Harassed Her. Here's Why You Didn't Hear Her Story,* BUZZFEED NEWS (Nov. 21, 2017), https://www.buzzfeednews.com/article/paulmcleod/she-complained-that-a-powerful-congressman-harassed-her.

ative Conyers. Representative Conyers resigned from the House soon thereafter, and the Committee lost jurisdiction over the matter.

Very shortly thereafter, the Committee was made aware of allegations of sexual misconduct involving Representative Trent Franks, Representative Ruben Kihuen, and Representative Patrick Meehan. In each instance, the Committee immediately announced a review of the allegations and ultimately impaneled an ISC in each matter. Although Representative Franks and Representative Meehan resigned shortly after the Committee impaneled an ISC, causing the Committee to lose jurisdiction, Representative Kihuen announced he would remain in office but not seek reelection. Prior to Representative Kihuen's retirement, the Committee was able to complete its review of the allegations that he made unwanted advances to a lobbyist, a campaign staffer, and a campaign consultant. Adopting the recommendations of the ISC, the Committee found Representative Kihuen acted in violation of clause 1 of the Code of Official Conduct, by failing to act at all times in a manner that reflects creditably on the House, as well as clause 2, by acting in a manner contrary to the spirit of the House Rule prohibiting sexual harassment.[98]

Although the Committee recognized that Representative Kihuen had ultimately shown remorse for his misconduct, it determined to sanction him through a Committee reproval. In doing so, the Committee noted that the matter should serve to make all Members aware of the possible consequences of their behavior towards those who interact with them as Members, "whether as employees or not."[99] In its report, the Committee also stated "[s]ervice as an elected official involves power imbalances that Members must be careful not to exploit."[100] The Committee emphasized that "each of the complainants had potential career opportunities affected," and cautioned other Members that the *Kihuen* report should serve to make them cognizant of "possible unintended consequences of their actions."[101]

V. FINDINGS

A. REPRESENTATIVE EDWARDS' CONDUCT IMPLICATES PROHIBITIONS RELATED TO SEXUAL HARASSMENT

The Committee has long held "that sexual harassment is a form of sex discrimination" and that such behavior violates the House Code of Official Conduct.[102] Under Title VII and applicable federal laws, victims of sexual harassment may bring a private lawsuit. To sustain a viable legal claim, victims must generally prove either (1) unwelcome sexual advances premised on a *quid pro quo* exchange, *i.e.*, "that a tangible job benefit of privilege is conditioned on an employee's submission to sexual black-mail and that adverse consequences follow from the employee's refusal,"[103] or (2) an abusive

[98] *See Kihuen* at 4.
[99] *Id.* at 6.
[100] *Id.*
[101] *Id.*
[102] *Bates* at 12.
[103] *Gary*, 59 F.3d at 1395.

work that is "sufficiently severe or pervasive to alter the conditions of the victim's employment." [104]

The allegations in this matter do not implicate *quid pro quo* sexual harassment, but rather that Representative Edwards' comments and behavior created a hostile work environment. Under federal employment law, a hostile work environment must be "both objectively and subjectively offensive, one that a reasonable person would find hostile or abusive, and one that the victim in fact did perceive to be so." [105] Determining whether an employee was subject to such an environment depends on the totality of the circumstances, including the frequency, severity, and offensiveness of the conduct at issue.[106] In considering hostile work environment claims, courts have long cautioned that Title VII is not intended to create a "general civility code for the American workplace." [107]

Taken individually, many of Representative Edwards' actions were at minimum inappropriate; a Member of Congress should not single out a staffer and isolate them from other staff, make frequent comments regarding that person's appearance and weight, send messages in the middle of the night, text staff deeply personal and seemingly romantic thoughts, intrude on personal occasions without invitation, pay for personal vacations, and spend thousands of dollars on gifts for staffers. That Representative Edwards did all these things to two young staffers, repeatedly over a sustained period, was beyond inappropriate. In his interview with the Committee, the Congressman repeatedly asserted that he knows well what constitutes "sexual harassment," and seemed to believe that by avoiding inappropriate physical touch, explicitly sexual comments, and occasionally telling the staffers that they were free to put up boundaries with him, he had immunized himself from such a charge. That is not the case. Despite the absence of an explicit proposition, a reasonable person could interpret Representative Edwards' intimate and effusive attentions, where he prioritized the personal over the professional, as thinly veiled advances. There is also contemporaneous evidence and testimony that Staffer 1 and Staffer 2 perceived the conduct as abusive. Even under the exacting standards of federal employment law, Representative Edwards' conduct at minimum exposed his office to the litigation risk of a viable sexual harassment lawsuit.[108]

Members of Congress are held to a higher standard than just strict compliance with federal law. Even if discriminatory conduct

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[104] *Meritor*, 477 U.S. at 67.

[105] *Faragher*, 524 U.S. at 787.

[106] *See Richard v. Bell Atlantic Corp.*, 209 F.Supp.2d 23, 35 (D.D.C. 2002). *See also Stewart v. Evans*, 275, F.3d 1126, 1134 (D.C. Cir. 2002) ("Even a few isolated instances of offensive conduct do not amount to actionable harassment."); *Harris*, 510 U.S. at 22–23 ("[W]hether an environment is 'hostile' or 'abusive' can be determined only by looking at all the circumstances. These may include the frequency of the discriminatory conduct; its severity; whether it is physically threatening or humiliating, or a mere offensive utterance; and whether it unreasonably interferes with an employee's work performance. The effect on the employee's psychological well-being is, of course, relevant to determining whether the plaintiff actually found the environment abusive. But while psychological harm, like any other relevant factor, may be taken into account, no single factor is required.")

[107] *Oncale v. Sundowner Offshore Services, Inc.*, 522 U.S. 75, 80 (1998).

[108] *See, e.g., Rorie v. United Parcel Serv., Inc.*, 151 F.3d 757, 762 (8th Cir. 1998) ("While we concede that the facts of this case are on the borderline of those sufficient to support a claim of sexual harassment, we cannot say that a supervisor who pats a female employee on the back, brushes up against her, and tells her she smells good does not constitute sexual harassment as a matter of law."); *Ellison v. Brady*, 924 F.2d 872, 878 (9th Cir. 1991) ("The required showing of severity or seriousness of the harassing conduct varies inversely with the pervasiveness or frequency of the conduct.").

is not sufficiently severe or pervasive to meet the elements of sexual harassment, it may nonetheless run afoul of House rule XXIII, clauses 1 and 2. Clause 1 provides that Members and employees of the House "shall behave at all times in a manner that shall reflect creditably on the House." It is a "purposefully . . . subjective" standard.[109] The Committee has previously found a Member's unwelcome sexual advances to be contrary to the standard of conduct expressed in clause 1.[110] Clause 2 requires adherence to "the spirit and the letter" of House Rules. While conduct may not violate the "letter" of federal sexual harassment law (and thus, clause 9, which incorporates that law), it may still be contrary to the spirit of the prohibition on discriminatory conduct. Clause 2 is a "genteel rule"[111] meant to emphasize "the importance of the precedents of decorum and consideration that have evolved in the House over the years."[112]

There is substantial evidence, as described above, that Representative Edwards violated the spirit of the House's prohibition on sexual harassment and unwanted advances through his conduct towards Staffer 1 and Staffer 2.

Representative Edwards' contention that he had "professional boss-subordinate relationships" and "friendships" with both women is undermined by his intentionally deleting messages to these women that were particularly inappropriate. Representative Edwards himself acknowledged that one reason he deleted messages was a concern they "might have been interpreted in a way that it wasn't intended or that someone may be resentful of." His decision to delete the messages identified by the Committee indicates he was aware that their content was cause for concern.

Often, the text messages produced by Representative Edwards omitted messages in such a way to create the appearance that the women were initiating contact, he was not responding, or they were expressing greater interest in conversing with him than he was with them. While it is accurate that both Staffer 1 and Staffer 2 sent messages expressing gratitude and an interest in spending time with Representative Edwards outside of the office, their relationships with Representative Edwards evolved over time into something that made them uncomfortable but that they did not know how to handle.

In February 2018, the House adopted rule XXIII, clause 18(a), which prohibits even consensual sexual relationships between a Member and their subordinate. While the Committee did not find that such a relationship existed in this instance, the 2018 addition to the Code of Official Conduct reflects the House's clear position that in this unique working environment, even behavior that is consensual can be unethical. The House similarly adopted clause 18(b), prohibiting all "unwanted sexual advances or conduct," even when not rising to the level of sexual harassment, precisely because of the power dynamics at play.

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[109] 114 Cong. Reg. 8778 (Apr. 3, 1968) (Statement of Representative Price).

[110] *See, e.g., Kihuen* (issuing a reproval for violations of House Rule XXIII, clauses 1 and 2); Comm. on Ethics, *In the Matter of Allegations Relating to Representative Mark Meadows*, H. Rept. 115 1042, 115th Cong. 2d Sess. (2018) (issuing a reproval for violations of House Rule XXIII, clauses 1 and 2); *Savage* (finding a violation of then-Rule XLIII, clause 1, which reflects the same language now codified at Rule XXIII, clause 1).

[111] *Ethics Manual*, at 17.

[112] Comm. on Standards of Official Conduct, *Report under the Authority of H. Res. 418*, H. Rept. 1176, 90th Cong. 2d Sess. 17 (1968).

As the heads of their offices, when Members interact with their staff, they act in their capacity not only as employers, but as public officials. Given the power imbalance between Members and their staff, Members must be sensitive to the potential for discrimination and for creating awkward, uncomfortable conditions for staff.[113] This is not to say that a Member cannot joke with staff or show interest in their personal lives. There is ample room for humor and friendly conversations in House offices, but Representative Edwards' comments and conduct went far beyond this. Although both women had considered working for Congress longer, they each made the difficult decision to leave the House because of Representative Edwards' actions. Not only did his conduct impact Staffer 1 and Staffer 2, but it created the perception that he gave them preferential treatment, causing resentment and isolation from other staffers. For both women, and several other staffers, the congressional office was a hostile work environment.

The Committee has considered other matters where a Member has crossed the line from collegial relationships to being overly-familiar with staff. For example, in the matter of Representative Tom Garrett, the Member engaged in "overly-familiar and unprofessional" conduct in an effort to be "friends" with his staff.[114] Representative Edwards conduct was far more serious than Representative Garrett's; he was not trying to befriend all of his staffers but rather engaged in targeted actions towards two young women. His conduct was also more than "overly-familiar"—it was deeply uncomfortable and led to widespread rumors he was sleeping with his staff.

Eight years ago, in the matter of Representative Kihuen, the Committee reproved the Member for his actions towards women who were required to work with him (but were not directly employed on his congressional staff). In the *Kihuen* matter, an ISC found the Member engaged in persistent unwanted advances that ranged from inappropriate statements to "overt sexual aggression."[115] However, the Committee has evolved since its earlier precedent on matters of sexual misconduct. Indeed, the conduct that led Representative Bates to be reproved in 1989 would lead to a far more serious sanction today. Similarly, the Committee does not agree that Representative Savage's conduct in forcing a young woman to kiss him did not merit sanction simply because he wrote an apology letter to the woman. Times have changed, and the Committee has made clear that there should be zero tolerance for sexual misconduct, harassment, or discrimination in the halls of Congress.

Representative Edwards' own account of his interactions with these women demonstrates a disregard for the higher level of decorum that should be expected in the offices of Members of the House. Nonetheless, Representative Edwards has continued to deny any wrongdoing publicly and to the Committee. He has also refused to acknowledge the reality of the power imbalance between

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[113] *See Kihuen* at 41 ("Members must be sensitive to the power imbalance that exists between themselves and others and must not make individuals interacting with them as part of their professional responsibilities feel uncomfortable due to unwanted advances.").

[114] Comm. on Ethics, Staff Report in the Matter of Allegations Relating to Representative Thomas Garrett, 115th Cong. 2d Sess. 37 (2019).

[115] *Kihuen* at 11.

a Member of Congress and young staffers,[116] even as his former staffers have been put through this difficult and emotional process with serious repercussions on their personal and professional lives. This shows a lack of self-awareness and accountability. One of the staffers echoed this concern, testifying that Representative Edwards' conduct gave the impression that "he was completely ignoring the fact that [the staffer was] a young female in politics and that [her] image is everything. And while he can navigate rumors like those that are circulating now without concern, because he is, I guess, a male in politics, he had no regard for how something like this could impact my career." [117]

Accordingly, the Committee found that Representative Edwards' conduct towards these two young staffers in his congressional office was a violation of the spirit of the House's prohibitions on sexual harassment and unwanted advances, as well as the requirement to act in a manner that reflects credibly upon the House.

VI. CONCLUSION

The Committee takes allegations of sexual harassment and discrimination extremely seriously. To an extent, a Member's management style and office environment are not within the Committee's purview. But there are limits and expectations; more than a decade ago, the Committee explained that it "fervently hopes that [House Members, as] employers, charged as they are with the duty of upholding the honor of this august institution, would be an example for how workplaces should function professionally in the modern world." [118] The expectations for workplace conduct have evolved since then, as have the Committee's, from a "fervent hope," to a zero-tolerance demand. This Report should not only hold Representative Edwards accountable for his poor judgment and unbecoming conduct but also serve as a caution to all Members that sexual harassment and discrimination will not be tolerated in the House.

The Committee is concerned that the House regrettably lost two staffers because of Representative Edwards' conduct. In this environment, where Members of Congress hold substantial influence, many individuals are reluctant to report misconduct when balancing the fear of reprisal against the potential for accountability. The Committee is committed to providing a safe and respectful place where wrongdoing can be reported and duly examined and addressed.

The Committee hereby adopts this Report in this matter and recommends Representative Edwards be censured for his conduct. The Committee further recommends that the House adopt a resolution in the following form:

HOUSE RESOLUTION

Resolved, That (1) the House adopt the Report of the Committee on Ethics dated July 22, 2026, In the Matter of Allegations Relating to Representative Chuck Edwards; (2) Representative Edwards

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[116] *See* 18(a) Interview of Representative Chuck Edwards (testifying "I'm going to say no" when asked whether he should have acted differently towards these young women under his employ).

[117] 18(a) Interview of Staffer 2.

[118] *Hastings* at 16.

of North Carolina be censured; (3) Representative Edwards forthwith present himself in the well of the House for pronouncement of the censure; and (4) Representative Edwards be censured with the public reading of this resolution by the Speaker.

VII. STATEMENT UNDER HOUSE RULE XIII CLAUSE 3(c)

The Committee made no special oversight findings in this Report. No budget statement is submitted. No funding is authorized by any measure in this Report.

APPENDIX A

EXHIBIT 1

Messages in chronological order (times are shown in GMT -05:00)

[redacted]

[redacted] Staffer 1 [redacted]3 <[redacted]> ► 12/8/2024, 10:45 AM

I'm okay without flowers thank you though!!

Receipts · Chuck Edwards <[redacted]> [R 12/8/2024, 10:46 AM]

CONFIDENTIAL — Produced to the U.S. House Committee on Ethics pursuant to its request dated April 24, 2026. Confidential treatment requested.

Messages in chronological order (times are shown in GMT -05:00)

[redacted]

CE **Chuck Edwards** <[redacted]> ◄ 12/9/2024, 2:07 PM
Hi there. I'm so excited about tonight! Please ignore the email about our coats. We might choose to take them in, but f we want we can leave them in the car since it is ours for the evening.

> [redacted] Staffer 1 [redacted]3 <[redacted]> ► 12/9/2024, 5:19 PM
Perfect!

Receipts • Chuck Edwards <[redacted]> [R: 12/9/2024, 5:19 PM]

>> [redacted] Staffer 1 [redacted]3 <[redacted]> ► 12/9/2024, 5:49 PM
Are you on the way?

Receipts • Chuck Edwards <[redacted]> [R: 12/9/2024, 5:50 PM]

>>> **Chuck Edwards** <[redacted]> ◄ 12/9/2024, 5:50 PM
CE Yes!! Leaving the hotel in five minutes.

>>>> **Chuck Edwards** <[redacted]> ◄ 12/9/2024, 9:58 PM
CE Here's a good photo of you. The photo of the two of us didn't turn out well at all.

*File **"7c21bb08-141b-4f75-a740-540d7d343183"** is missing.*
Attachment: 17cd49b3-3279-4918-b629-c345fc6836f7

>>>>> **Chuck Edwards** <[redacted]> ◄ 12/9/2024, 9:58 PM
CE IMG_6719.HEIC
https://p33-content.icloud.com/MYDFAB65BCB10C8946B3A1B5C58083296EAD051176291240A784373AB888324395.21F788CE698EE1A9.C01USN00

>>>>> [redacted] Staffer 1 [redacted]3 <[redacted]> ► 12/9/2024, 10:07 PM
[redacted] Love it! Thank you for a great night

Receipts • Chuck Edwards <[redacted]> [R: 12/9/2024, 10:07 PM]

CONFIDENTIAL — Produced to the U.S. House Committee on Ethics pursuant to its request dated April 24, 2026. Confidential treatment requested.

EXHIBIT 2

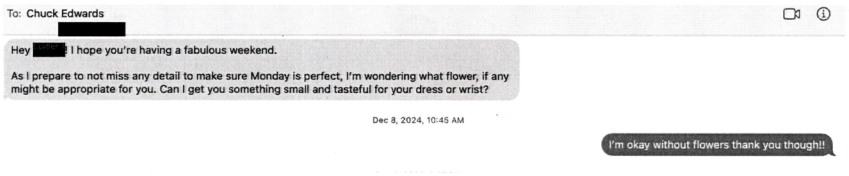

To: Chuck Edwards
Hey [redacted] I hope you're having a fabulous weekend.
As I prepare to not miss any detail to make sure Monday is perfect, I'm wondering what flower, if any might be appropriate for you. Can I get you something small and tasteful for your dress or wrist?
Dec 8, 2024, 10:45 AM
I'm okay without flowers thank you though!!

EXHIBIT 3

with it?

Thanks for checking. I'm here editing it now.

Jun 27, 2024 at 8:01 AM

I have your binder at your spot in the markup when you arrive!

[redacted]

Our THUD projects were fully funded!

👏👏👏👏

I remember in Raleigh I could walk in your office and flop back on the chair in front of your desk and just chat with you. We can't do that here. I miss it.

I miss it too. I'll try to do that more often in your office!

Jun 27, 2024 at 10:41 PM

Or you could have dinner with me from time to time.

[redacted]

That would be really nice, let's do that soon!

Absolutely!

I'll talk to your scheduler so we can get something on the books :)

Let's let me handle that.

Jun 28, 2024 at 8:19 AM

Okay, yes sir!

Jun 28, 2024 at 9:41 AM

You look so nice today! I love the pink!

Jun 29, 2024 at 12:19 PM

And so did you! I loved the black! The hair! And the glasses!

Jul 8, 2024 at 7:09 PM

Table for 2 people
Tuesday, July 9 at 6:30 PM
You're invited! Tap to accept.

I'm looking forward to try this place out with you tomorrow!

I am as well!

Staffer 2 has accepted the invitation.

Jul 10, 2024 at 9:29 AM

More on the sexual risk avoidance program: It's an education program that teaches youth to voluntarily refrain from sexual activity. The program discusses the risks of young sexual activity such as early pregnancy, STDs, etc, and promotes abstinence as the best way to mitigate risks

EXHIBIT 4

Messages in chronological order (times are shown in GMT -05:00)

+[redacted]

CE **Chuck Edwards** <[redacted]> ◄ 11/20/2024, 7:43 AM

Good morning!

There are some things in your office for [redacted] shower. Is there any chance someone could go to my hotel room and pick up the others? I could not bring them all in this morning. My key is on your desk.

> [redacted] Staffer 1 [redacted]3 <[redacted]> ► 11/20/2024, 7:44 AM

Of course!

Receipts · Chuck Edwards <[redacted]> [R 11/20/2024, 8:00 AM]

>> CE **Chuck Edwards** <[redacted]> ◄ 11/20/2024, 8:02 AM

Thanks! They are on the foot stool with 2 coats. Please bring the coats too.

>>> [redacted] Staffer 1 [redacted]3 <[redacted]> ► 11/20/2024, 1:54 PM

Just a reminder that you will have to leave at 2:20 from SFOPS. The staff there is aware

Receipts · Chuck Edwards <[redacted]> [R 11/20/2024, 5:28 PM]

>>>> CE **Chuck Edwards** <[redacted]> ◄ 11/20/2024, 9:06 PM

Hi, Please feel no pressure at all, but if you have any interest in experiencing more in Miami here are a few things I found that you might consider.

Boat tour
Parasailing
Gator tour in the Everglades by airboat
Walking South Beach area
Walking Little Havana
Comedy club after dinner
You can hang out in the sun at the pool or beach, and I'll find something to do.
Anything else that interests you

Again, we don't have to do anything, but many of these things will require us making reservations.

CONFIDENTIAL — Produced to the U.S. House Committee on Ethics pursuant to its request dated April 24, 2026. Confidential treatment requested.

EXHIBIT 5

Do you think lunch would be provided in the Budget committee room?

Yes sir

No rush at all, please let me know when you make back to the committee room.

Feb 13, 2025 at 2:39 PM

Running back to the office to meet our potential new fellow, I'll be right back!

Let me know if you need anything in the meantime.

Feb 13, 2025 at 6:09 PM

Dinner is ready in the budget anteroom for you!

Thanks. Please put your phone down, have a relaxing evening, and don't worry about us.

Just got to the show!

Feb 13, 2025 at 8:47 PM

How's budget going?

We've heard 32 Dem. amendments. Now 2 Republican amendments. Next we vote. Dems refuse to vote in blocks. This will take a while.

How's the show?

Wow, they are really trying to make Republicans hate their lives... roll call votes for all 32?

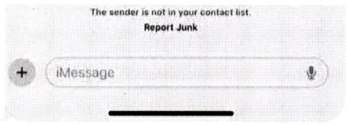
It's going well! Just got to the good part, & now we're at intermission!

Feb 13, 2025 at 10:09 PM

Show just ended, it was very good. Thank you again! [redacted]


You're most welcome! I'm glad you enjoyed it. Were you still thinking about going to the casino or have you made other plans?
Are you finished with votes?
Yes. We just wrapped up.
Let's do it!
Excellent! I will plan to meet you there.
Sounds good!
Just about back to dc and then on my way
Sounds really good! I am waiting in the lobby just inside the main casino entrance.
What is the main casino entrance? I'm inside the casino area, near the bar
I had to park in the parking garage.
I'm on my way in there now to look for you
Feb 14, 2025 at 1:29 AM
Just got home!
Thanks again for a fun evening! Even though it didn't go as originally planned, it was still fun to go back to the casino together!
Thank you for letting me know you made it home safe. I had a great time with you tonight!!
Hopefully I'm the first to wish you, Happy Valentine's Day!
You are! Happy Valentine's Day to you too :) a fantastic

EXHIBIT 6



Mar 21, 2025 at 1:14 AM

I had the best time tonight!

Mar 21, 2025 at 7:13 AM

I had so much fun too!!

Thank you!

That said, what are the odds I can play hooky today, as I'm still intoxicated and cannot drive right now.

Odds are pretty good. I hope you feel better soon!

Mar 21, 2025 at 3:22 PM

Hi! How are you feeling? Do think you might still be up for otters and orangutans tomorrow, or should we change any of our plans? No pressure, just wanting to be sure I have drivers lined up to make sure you have a good time.

I'll have a great time either way bc we get to hang out! I'll be all good for everything tomorrow. And I'm happy to drive us so you don't have to worry about a driver!

Reacted 🖤 to "I'll have a great time either way bc we get to hang out! I'll be all good for everything tomorrow. And I'm happy to drive us so you don't have to worry about a driver!"

Okay! I'm excited. I really want to make it easier going and a fun time for you so let me treat you to being driven.

I'll give you a call a bit later so maybe we can discuss our options how the day might flow.

Mar 21, 2025 at 6:50 PM

Hiiiii [redacted] :)

I'm thinking we may have a better time tomorrow if I don't over plan. Let me throw out some ideas - and we can be as spontaneous or as calculating as you want. No matter what, I WILL HAVE A BLAST. I just want you to feel relaxed, and let your happiness meter max out!

Of course we have otters at 9:30, dinner at 6:00, and showtime is 7:00.

Here are some things we might consider to fill that time gap. Or I can take you home and come back for you. We can spend as much time as you want at the zoo, go to Annapolis for lunch, meditate by its water, stroll about town, find a day spa, see a movie, or wipe out the casino. Whatever you might like, I'm in. We can decide any of this on the fly.

I may have been presumptuous that you might prefer a driver. I was just thinking you might be more relaxed if you didn't have to worry about driving. I already have Oji lined up to help us out. But if you feel more comfortable having your own car, I'm good with that too. You make the call.

I'm probably over thinking being impulsive but I really want you to enjoy our time together nearly as much as I know will I.

Can I pick you up at 7:15?

Hi! I'm good with any of that! Don't stress about me having a good time, it's going to be fun! And 7:15 sounds good to me :)

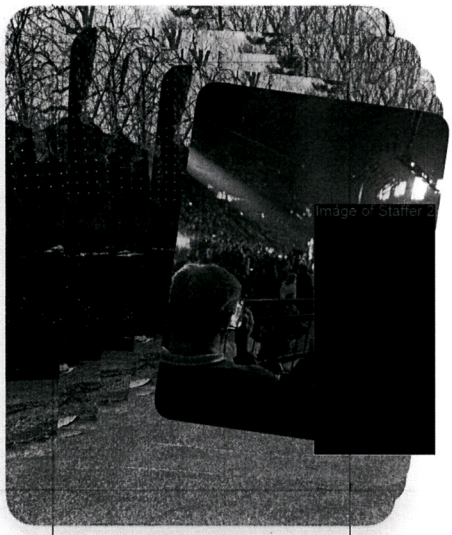
Most excellent!

Mar 22, 2025 at 7:14 AM

I think I am about five minutes away.

Mar 23, 2025 at 11:04 AM

[redacted]



Hi! I'll always cherish every moment of our time these last couple of days. Thank you! Here are a few of my keepsakes in case you may want them too.

Mar 24, 2025 at 6:51 PM

I emailed you the teletown hall opening remarks but for some reason our printer kept giving me an error so I wasn't able to place a copy in your a-box. I'm connecting with [redacted] in the morning to figure out what's wrong and will make sure you have a printed version asap tomorrow.

Thank you!

Mar 25, 2025 at 2:04 PM

Just a flag, you will be the only member in attendance when you arrive.

Others are supposedly coming, but for now it'd just be you.

[redacted]

EXHIBIT 7

Yes, I'm on my way there now.

Apr 25, 2025 at 6:47 PM

Fill them full of warm milk and turkey and put them to bed!

Apr 29, 2025 at 9:34 PM

I am over the top excited about going to this podcast with you!

I'm excited you're coming too! It's going to be so fun! I'm sorry I didn't bring it up sooner. I saw the Budget dinner and assumed you had another obligation come up so I didn't want to make you feel bad if you weren't able to attend anymore. I would've understood fully.

Apr 30, 2025 at 8:23 PM

Hey! Do you think you can get out of the office about 5:00 tomorrow? Would it helped if I created a reason to get you out?

If you're out, we're all out at 5 since it's a fly out day!

Aa! I'm looking forward to a great dinner, and solving some crimes!!

May 1, 2025 at 4:55 PM

You take your time, I am about to head out front to meet our driver.

Heading down now, sorry!

No problem! See you shortly.

May 1, 2025 at 11:35 PM

Are you ok?

Oops, yes sir! I made it home safely. [redacted]

Thanks. Good to know!

May 2, 2025 at 4:23 PM

Thanks again for going with me yesterday! I had fun!

May 2, 2025 at 9:40 PM

[redacted] it is I that owes you a great big thanks!

There are scores of people you could have invited, and there are millions that would have loved to go with you - yet it was me you asked to go. I was thrilled.

It was fun!! I enjoyed getting acquainted with that podcast that caught your attention, and getting to hang out with you for a few extra hours meant a lot to me.

After we dropped you off I was hit hard with the thought that we don't have anything else currently planned. For the last few months I've liked having something on the calendar with you that I could be looking forward to. I hope we can find something again soon!

Reacted 🖤 to "Thanks again for going with me yesterday! I had fun!"

May 6, 2025 at 6:49 AM

How'd you get out of this 7 am zoo tour? 👀

I thought I'd use the time to prep for FSGG today, but I don't have the briefing materials I thought [redacted] was preparing.

Oh no, I'm so sorry! I didn't realize the binder wasn't in your A-box. [redacted] mentioned she has the materials on her desk, but not in the binder yet. I'm having her email them to you for your review while we're at the zoo.

May 7, 2025 at 1:14 PM

The TCJA reduced federal tax rates for households across every income level, while increasing the share of [redacted]

across every income level, while increasing the share of taxes paid by the top 1%.

The percentage decrease in effective tax rates was about 5 percent for the highest-income group, and 16 percent for the half of Americans whose income is BELOW the median.

Essentially meaning high income Americans paid a larger share of all taxes post-TCJA than pre-TCJA, and middle and low-income Americans paid a smaller share than before the TCJA.

May 8, 2025 at 4:11 PM

Would you like to cosponsor the Fiscal Commission Act? It creates a Fiscal Commission that will propose recommendations to improve our nation's long-term fiscal health and the bill requires that Congress vote on the recommendations. It's a Huizenga bill.

Yes.

May 13, 2025 at 10:17 PM

I don't cry often, but I have today. It caught me off guard. And I sure don't ever admit it to anyone. Just being honest with you. The folks at Harris Teeter didn't know how to deal with me :)

I'm so sorry to have upset you. I felt like I needed to make a decision sooner than later so I didn't leave anyone hanging, but maybe I rushed it? I'm going to think it through the next few days. I hope you were able to find the coffee you were looking for at Harris Teeter, and the associates didn't judge you too much :)

Please dont feel sorry. You have a lot to work through. But please do let me know if there's anything I can say, do, or not do - to be helpful. Take all the time you need.

May 14, 2025 at 1:20 PM

Hello! It looks like our schedules won't cross today. Have

[redacted]

EXHIBIT 8

But it is a beautiful dress!!

I'm saddened to know how cold you are, but I really appreciate you being at that meeting.

Dec 6, 2024 at 9:32 AM

The meeting when super well! (For me at least, can't say the same for FEMA) feel free to give me a call and I can brief you on it!

Dec 6, 2024 at 5:42 PM

Excellent! I'm eager to hear all about it but I'll not bother you with that over the weekend.

Will you let me know when you've made it back home, please?

Yes sir! I'm actually home already. I got here about an hour or so ago.

Glad to know you're back home safe, and hopefully now warm! I just got a glimpse of you on the 6:00 news.

Dec 10, 2024 at 6:14 PM

I am going to head out front and call an Uber. Please join me when you can.

On my way now!

Dec 10, 2024 at 11:39 PM

Hi! Thank you again for asking me to join you for tonight's dinner. I had a blast with you! Tonight was a great reminder for me that not many people get the opportunity to work in our nation's capitol, so I should get out and explore DC more often. I look forward to whenever we get to do it next!

Well hello! Thank you for accepting. You turned what would have been a mundane laborious evening event into

[redacted]

an absolute pleasure! You're so fun to be with, so easy to talk to, and I love listening to you. By all means - let's explore more of DC together. We seem to have a fondness for many of the same things. Even where we do not, I'll enjoy the adventure alongside you!

Dec 11, 2024 at 10:52 AM

If no other members show up, you'll be after Mr. Smucker, so fingers crossed everyone stays away



Would you like cava for lunch? If so, what would you like?

[redacted] is making an order & picking it up around noon!

Thanks! I don't know the menu very well. Something hot and hearty, please.

We ordered you cava which is getting picked up around noon, but if you'd like something before then, committee has lunch available in the anteroom

Is Blake Moore still ahead of me?

Dec 11, 2024 at 3:56 PM

3287 M St NW, Washington, DC 20007

Dec 11, 2024 at 5:46 PM

All 3 voted for the veto overturn

Oh also, I'm giving you your Christmas present tonight! Don't let me forget again

Dec 12, 2024 at 11:47 AM

I just realized I forgot to give you the card to go along with [redacted]

EXHIBIT 9

I would love to have seen it!!

Dec 15, 2024 at 8:35 AM

Good Morning!

I'm really excited to work on your lawn and set up your Christmas tree tomorrow!

Here's another offer I hope you'll take me up on, unless of course you've made other arrangements. What if I skip votes and help you decorate your tree once you get home tomorrow?

I don't want to overstay my welcome, but this might help you enjoy your tree being fully decorated a little longer, and give me the opportunity to spend a little more time with you.

But of course I'm okay if you're planning a time with other friends to decorate.

Dec 15, 2024 at 11:38 AM

I would love to decorate the tree with you! But are you sure about skipping votes? We could plan for it another evening this week?

Dec 15, 2024 at 1:11 PM

I am beyond thrilled that you'll let me help you, I can hardly contain myself!!

And Yes, I'm sure about skipping votes - so you'll get to enjoy your tree a bit longer. The only thing that might get in the way is, the Lumbee recognition bill will be brought to the floor this week under suspension. [redacted] is trying to find out if it might be tomorrow. I can't miss that one.

Thanks for the rain check. I'll happily accept it but I hope I won't need to!

If all goes well I'll be at your house about noon tomorrow. Just let me know where I can find your key and your tree. I'll take care of the rest.

[redacted]

EXHIBIT 10

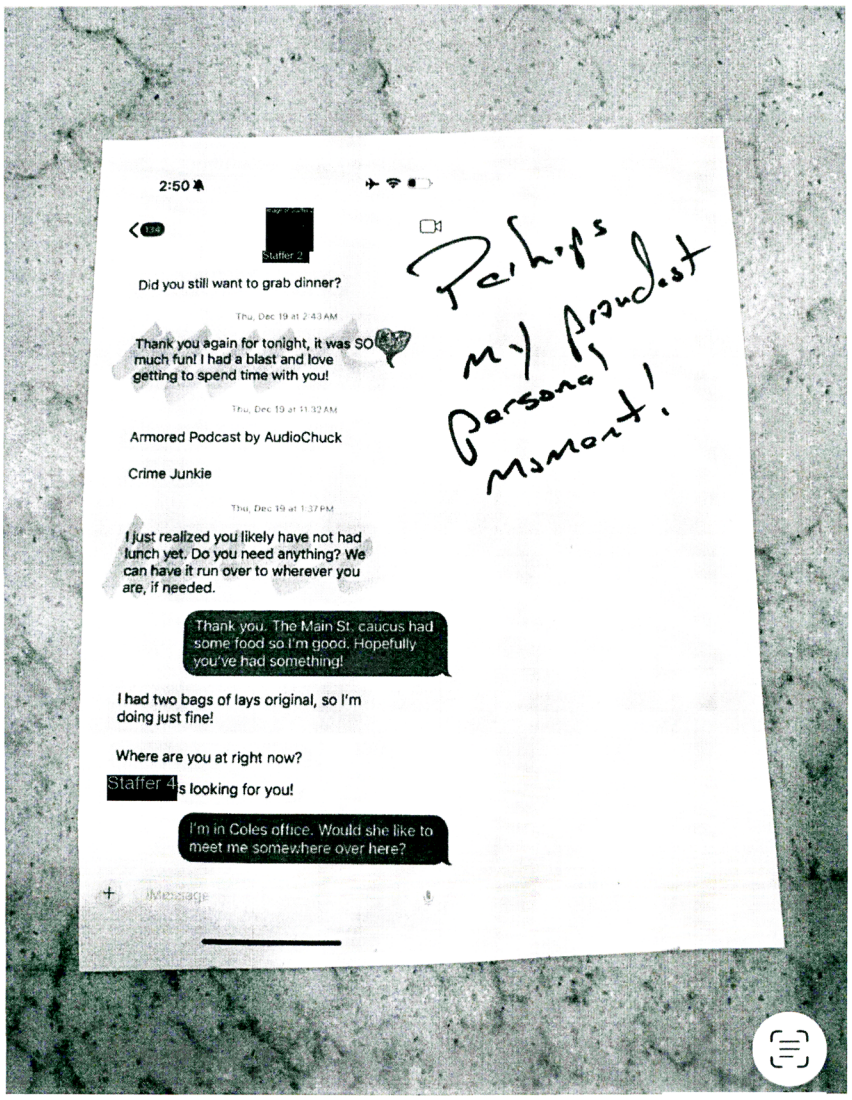

2:50
Staffer 2
Did you still want to grab dinner?
Thu, Dec 19 at 2:43 AM
Thank you again for tonight, it was SO much fun! I had a blast and love getting to spend time with you!
Thu, Dec 19 at 11:32 AM
Armored Podcast by AudioChuck
Crime Junkie
Thu, Dec 19 at 1:37 PM
I just realized you likely have not had lunch yet. Do you need anything? We can have it run over to wherever you are, if needed.
Thank you. The Main St. caucus had some food so I'm good. Hopefully you've had something!
I had two bags of lays original, so I'm doing just fine!
Where are you at right now?
Staffer 4 is looking for you!
I'm in Coles office. Would she like to meet me somewhere over here?
iMessage
Perhaps my proudest Parsons Moment!

EXHIBIT 11

Messages in chronological order (times are shown in GMT -05:00)

+[redacted]

U **UNSPECIFIED_PARTICIPANT** ► 2/6/2025, 4:29 PM
This message has been deleted

>[redacted] [redacted] ► 2/6/2025, 4:29 PM
Two votes -

1) NO - Petersen amendment to delay enactment of the bill until the Secretary of HHS & AG each certify the bill will lead to a reduction in overdose deaths

2) YES - HALT Fentanyl Act

Receipts • Chuck Edwards [redacted] [R:2/6/2025, 4:30 PM]

>> U **UNSPECIFIED_PARTICIPANT** ► 2/6/2025, 4:31 PM
This message has been deleted

>>> **Chuck Edwards** [redacted] ◄ 2/6/2025, 4:31 PM
CE Got it. Thank you!

>>>> **UNSPECIFIED_PARTICIPANT** ► 2/6/2025, 8:24 PM
U This message has been deleted

>>>>> [redacted] ► 2/6/2025, 8:24 PM
[redacted] Just tried Filomena's for the first time - you were right. It's great!

Receipts • Chuck Edwards [redacted] [R:2/6/2025, 8:24 PM]

>>>>> **UNSPECIFIED_PARTICIPANT** ► 2/6/2025, 9:25 PM
> U This message has been deleted

>>>>> [redacted] ► 2/6/2025, 9:25 PM
>>[redacted] It looks like I'll have to go again, because we forgot about the cheesecake!

Receipts • Chuck Edwards [redacted] [R:2/6/2025, 9:32 PM]

EXHIBIT 12

outside Capitol Hill club?

Yes sir, I'm walking up to it now

I'm waiting inside since it's cold out.

Feb 6, 2025 at 4:28 PM

Two votes -

1) NO - Petersen amendment to delay enactment of the bill until the Secretary of HHS & AG each certify the bill will lead to a reduction in overdose deaths

2) YES - HALT Fentanyl Act

Got it. Thank you!

Feb 6, 2025 at 8:24 PM

Just tried Filomena's for the first time - you were right. It's great!

I knew you would love it! I'm burning with jealousy because I wanted to be the person to introduce you to it. But I'm glad you made it there, and hope you tried the cheesecake.

It looks like I'll have to go again, because we forgot about the cheesecake!

Alright - I'll step up my game - and hopefully get to introduce you to the cheesecake!

Feb 8, 2025 at 9:43 AM

I know you have a personal day on the calendar, but Budget has scheduled another member call today at 4 pm. I'm adding it to your calendar for your awareness & in case you're able to join

[redacted]

EXHIBIT 13

Messages in chronological order (times are shown in GMT -05:00)

+[redacted]

U **UNSPECIFIED_PARTICIPANT** ▶ 12/10/2024, 6:14 PM
This message has been deleted

> CE **Chuck Edwards** <[redacted]> ◀ 12/10/2024, 6:14 PM
I am going to head out front and call an Uber. Please join me when you can.

>> U **UNSPECIFIED_PARTICIPANT** ▶ 12/10/2024, 6:20 PM
This message has been deleted

>>> [redacted] ▶ 12/10/2024, 6:20 PM
On my way now!

Receipts · Chuck Edwards <[redacted]> [R:12/10/2024, 6:20 PM]

>>>> **UNSPECIFIED_PARTICIPANT** ▶ 12/10/2024, 11:39 PM
U This message has been deleted

>>>>> [redacted] ▶ 12/10/2024, 11:39 PM
Hi! Thank you again for asking me to join you for tonight's dinner. I had a blast with you! Tonight was a great reminder for me that not many people get the opportunity to work in our nation's capitol, so I should get out and explore DC more often. I look forward to whenever we get to do it next!

Receipts · Chuck Edwards <[redacted]> [R:12/10/2024, 11:42 PM]

EXHIBIT 14

Messages in chronological order (times are shown in GMT -04:00)

+[redacted]

CE **Chuck Edwards** <[redacted]> ◄ 6/14/2024, 1:14 PM
Will you be going home tonight?

> CE **Chuck Edwards** <[redacted]> ◄ 6/14/2024, 1:14 PM
Your Maryland home?

>> [redacted] Staffer 2 <[redacted]> ► 6/14/2024, 1:17 PM
Yes sir

Receipts · Chuck Edwards <[redacted]> [R 6/14/2024, 1:17 PM]

>>> **Chuck Edwards** <[redacted]> ◄ 6/14/2024, 1:45 PM
CE I'm having a little something dropped off for you that I once heard might help cheer one up. I hope it helps.

>>>> Staffer 2 <[redacted]> ► 6/14/2024, 2:06 PM
[redacted] Oh that's so kind of you, you don't have to do that. Thank you

Receipts · Chuck Edwards <[redacted]> [R 6/14/2024, 2:06 PM]

>>>>> Staffer 2 <[redacted]> ► 6/14/2024, 8:40 PM
[redacted] This definitely helped, thank you again!

Receipts · Chuck Edwards <[redacted]> [R 6/14/2024, 9:51 PM]

>>>>> **Chuck Edwards** <[redacted]> ◄ 6/14/2024, 10:19 PM
> CE I hope you see it as my twisted comical attempt to say I hope you can cheer up soon. I wish I could do more. Sending ice cream and being here to listen if you need me is all I can think of.

>>>>> Staffer 2 <[redacted]> ► 6/14/2024, 11:07 PM
>> [redacted] Loved " I hope you see it as my twisted comical attempt t..."

Receipts · Chuck Edwards <[redacted]> [R 6/14/2024, 11:07 PM]

EXHIBIT 15

was your bet for most likely to crash first.

I did not authorize that transport. I need you back here in DC.

Jun 14, 2024 at 1:13 PM

Will you be going home tonight?

Your Maryland home?

Yes sir

I'm having a little something dropped off for you that I once heard might help cheer one up. I hope it helps.

Oh that's so kind of you, you don't have to do that. Thank you

Jun 14, 2024 at 8:27 PM



Thank you, but this seems a bit excessive 😂

You looked like you needed a lot of cheering up! My heart was breaking seeing you like that.

This definitely helped, thank you again!

Jun 14, 2024 at 10:19 PM

[redacted]

EXHIBIT 16

Jun 29, 2025 at 9:16 PM

Hi! You are welcome!! I'd do it again a thousand times over. It made me happy you allowed me a role in helping you get off to a smoother new start. I hope now your first day at work might be void of some of that first day stress that comes with living in a new home. And in a weird sort of way, it postponed our separation by a few hours so I was happy about that. Your kind text makes it even more rewarding.

I'm so so SO happy for you but I can't pretend this doesn't sting- deeply. Your absence leaves a space no one else can fill- professionally or personally. Even at my loss, I promise you will never find anyone that wishes for your happiness more than me. NEVER, ANYONE! I appreciate you noticing and acknowledging my being supportive. If there's ever anything I can do for you personally, the answer is yes. Just let me know.

You have made profound impacts on the world so far. I look forward to watch you continue to make your mark on NC.

Go get 'em!

Jun 30, 2025 at 7:34 AM

Good morning! At the risk of overfilling your inbox I couldn't help but wishing you all the best on your first day!

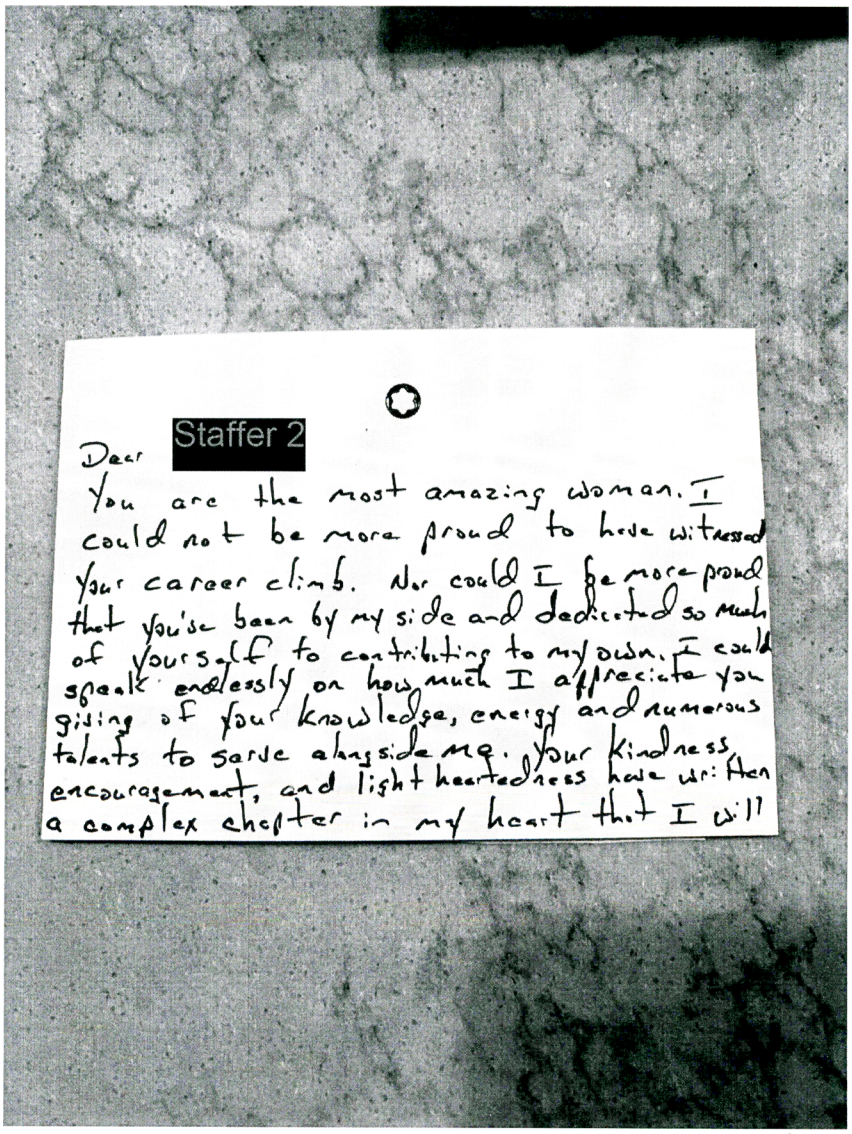
I know you're going to shine. Trust your instincts, bring your brilliance, and enjoy every step of this exciting new chapter. They're lucky to have you—go make your mark!

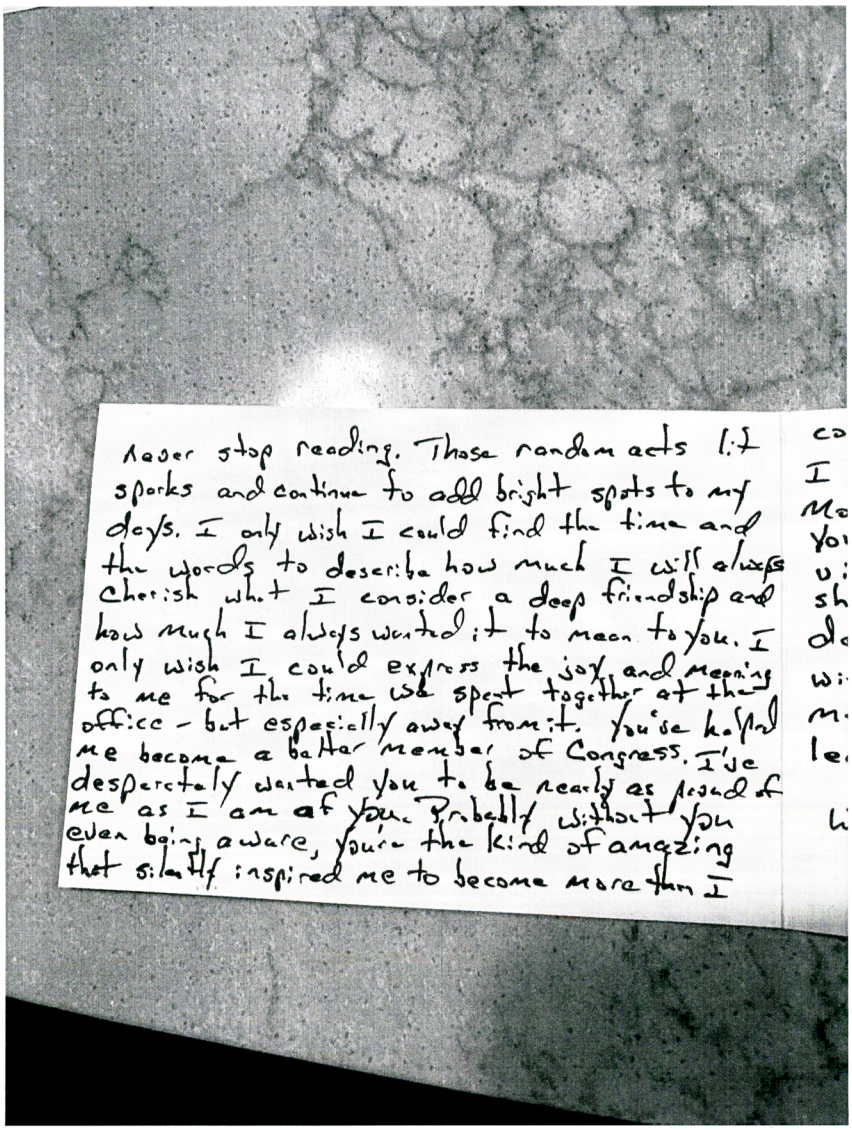
I bet you're not missing an hour this morning in Maryland/DC traffic :)

Jun 30, 2025 at 11:29 AM

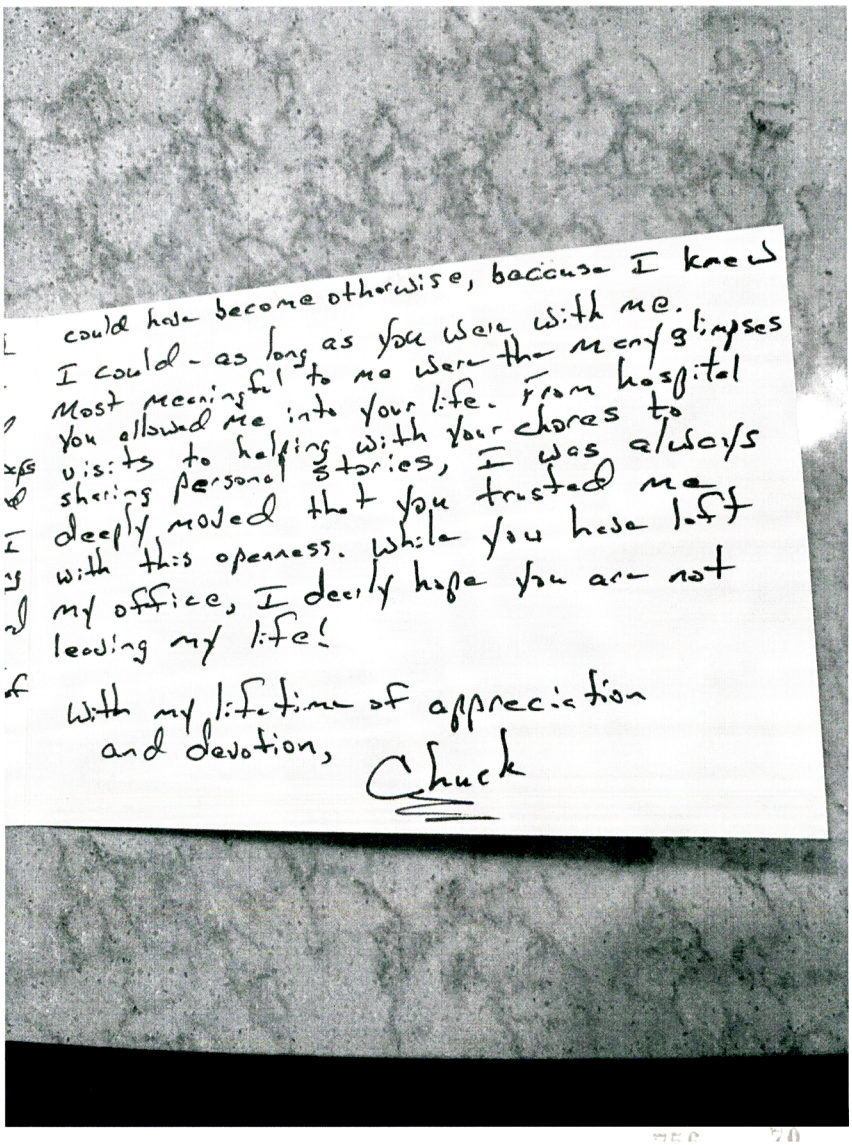
Thank you so much!! The drive is definitely easier than Maryland/DC but I'm already getting sent to Rocky Mount tomorrow, so it sounds like this new job will be quite a bit of traveling. I might not have escaped the long travel days

EXHIBIT 17


Dear Staffer 2
You are the most amazing woman. I could not be more proud to have witnessed your career climb. Nor could I be more proud that you've been by my side and dedicated so much of yourself to contributing to my own. I could speak endlessly on how much I appreciate you giving of your knowledge, energy and numerous talents to serve alongside me. Your kindness, encouragement, and lighthearedness have written a complex chapter in my heart that I will



never stop reading. Those random acts lit sparks and continue to add bright spots to my days. I only wish I could find the time and the words to describe how much I will always cherish what I consider a deep friendship and how much I always wanted it to mean to you. I only wish I could express the joy and meaning to me for the time we spent together at the office - but especially away from it. You've helped me become a better member of Congress. I've desperately wanted you to be nearly as proud of me as I am of you. Probably without you even being aware, you're the kind of amazing that silently inspired me to become more than I



could have become otherwise, because I knew I could - as long as you were with me.
Most meaningful to me were the many glimpses you allowed me into your life. From hospital visits to helping with your chores to sharing personal stories, I was always deeply moved that you trusted me with this openness. While you have left my office, I dearly hope you are not leading my life!

With my lifetime of appreciation and devotion,

Chuck

EXHIBIT 18

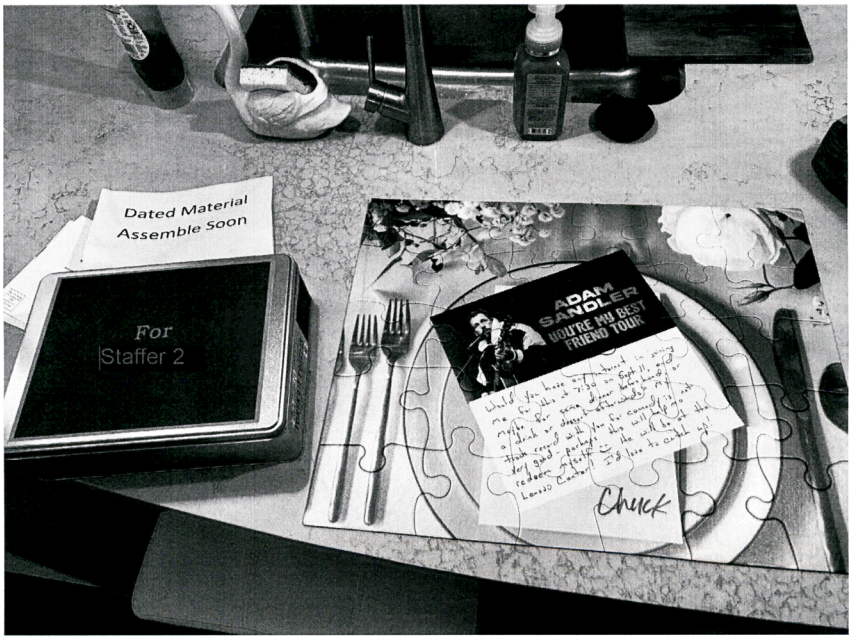

Dated Material
Assemble Soon
For
Staffer 2
ADAM
SANDLER
YOU'RE MY BEST
FRIEND TOUR
Chuck

EXHIBIT 19

Test

Hey you!

Mon, Sep 22 at 11:28 PM

Hi! An uber just showed up to the house asking for Chuck, any chance you accidentally ordered one?

Both me and the Uber driver were struggling, trying to add the next destination.

[redacted] I just can't tell you how much I enjoyed getting to spend some time with you tonight. It meant so much to me! I hope you were serious about us going to Vegas together. We could have such a great time! Enjoy your movie night.

Tue, Sep 23 at 8:07 AM

Thank you for dinner last night! It was such a fun evening. It was great getting to see you again!

Tue, Sep 23 at 10:46 AM

I was just thinking the same thing. I'm still smiling!!

Thu, Sep 25 at 2:23 PM

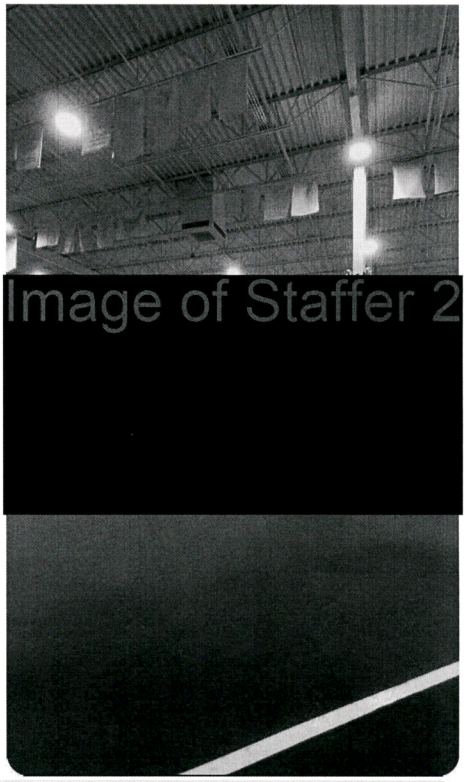
I was shocked on Tuesday morning when I wasn't hungover! I'm thinking I found my new favorite tequila haha - did you wake up and make your flight on time?

Thu, Sep 25 at 5:29 PM

Absolutely, we'll have to do it again sometime! I may have survived not being hungover, but I've since gotten sick - so I guess we're even cause we've both been down bad this week haha

Thu, Sep 25 at 10:30 PM





[redacted]

[redacted]

Sun, Oct 5 at 5:37 PM

Here are some windows I can get away. If they don't work for you, we can keep looking.

10/10 to 12 or 14
10/20 to Nov. 3

[redacted]

10/30 to Nov. 3
Nov. 8 to 16

I should be able to do 10/10 to the 13 or 14!

Omg! This will be so much fun!! I'll put a little thought into arrangements and be back in touch with you soon. What time can you get away on the 10th?

I have a hair appointment in Charlotte at 11 am but could probably get away anytime after that.

Sun, Oct 5 at 7:21 PM

I hope you don't mind Italian inspired luxury hotels with iconic fountains and botanical displays. Our rooms are booked at the Bellagio Oct. 10-13. I'll call you tomorrow about your travel preferences. Please be looking at shows you might be interest yo see.

Mon, Oct 6 at 8:26 AM

Can I call you around 1 o'clock today?

Absolutely! Also - the raiders football game may be fun to go to on Sunday!

I love that idea! I'm shopping for tickets now. Had you prefer the Tennessee side or the Las Vegas side?

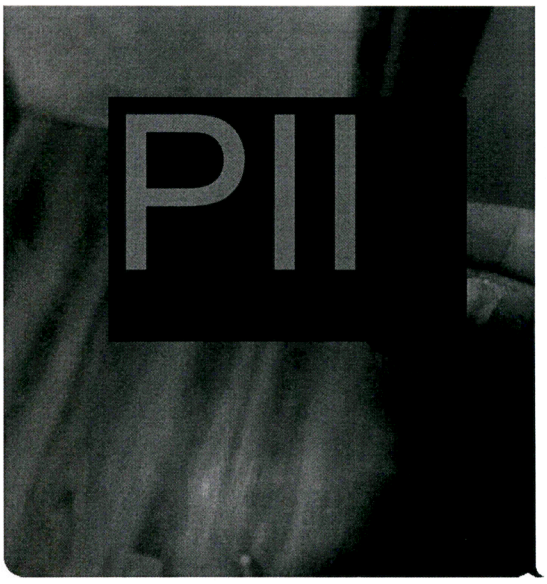
Raiders! When in Vegas, amirite?

Mon, Oct 6 at 12:10 PM

You are right!

Mon, Oct 6 at 1:51 PM





perfect. What is your TSA number.

[redacted]

Got it. Thanks. I'll be back with you soon.

Mon, Oct 6 at 4:52 PM

Do you have an American Airlines frequent flyer number?

Yes sir! [redacted]

We're all set! AA1474 Oct. 10 6:40PM from CLT to LAS 8:35PM Confirmation YMGWIF

Can't wait!! I booked my flight back to Raleigh as well. It leaves at 10:59 pm on Monday

[redacted]

Most stupendous! That should give us a full day Monday.

As an inexperienced Vegas tourist, what kind of outfits do you think I need to plan for?

Mon, Oct 6 at 6:52 PM

Hi, I'm so sorry to do this, I know we just got the hotel/ flights/etc, but I just got a call from my childhood best friend who I grew up with. Her grandpa, who was like a 2nd grandpa to me, passed away today and his funeral will be this weekend. Is there any way we can reschedule?

If you're going to lose anything then don't cancel, I will make it. I'd just love to attend the funeral if I can.

[redacted]

Of course, I completely understand. Please don't give it another thought — but know of my selfish disappointment. I'm glad you can be there for your friend. Being there for people we care about in moments like this really matters.

Thank you so much for being so understanding. The other two dates you sent over didn't work for me, but are there other days/months we can look at?

Tue, Oct 7 at 9:03 AM

Good morning! How would something in the neighborhood of Nov. 20-25 work for you? If not, I'll keep looking.

Thinking about your question on what to wear, I don't feel qualified to answer that but I can tell you what I think. I've never seen you look anything short of amazing! But a pair of jean shorts and a yellow blouse that you wore to a concert is baked into my memory, and a red dress you wore to a neighboring office event was a SHOW STOPPER!

But seriously, just be comfortable. It's Vegas! There are no rules. You'll be a standout no matter what. I'll wear

[redacted]

casual slacks and sport shirts, and maybe bring along a sport coat at night.

I hope you have a great rest of your week, under the circumstances.

Tue, Oct 7 at 11:51 AM

I'll have to confirm my family's week of Thanksgiving plans and get back to you on November 20-25! In the meantime, if you're interested, I'll be driving into Charlotte on Thursday night and have a free evening. If it's not too far or you're not busy, we could grab dinner again?

Tue, Oct 7 at 4:58 PM

I'm interested!! In fact, I just cancelled Thursday's Tele Town Hall so I can do it. What do you have in mind? Or, if you give me a time I'll be happy to plan it.

Wed, Oct 8 at 10:29 AM

Oh I didn't realize you had a teletown hall that night, I'm sorry! I didn't have anywhere specific in mind, but can look around and try to plan something

That was my choice! I had far rather have dinner with you. I've rescheduled the Tele Town to next week.

Wed, Oct 8 at 12:12 PM

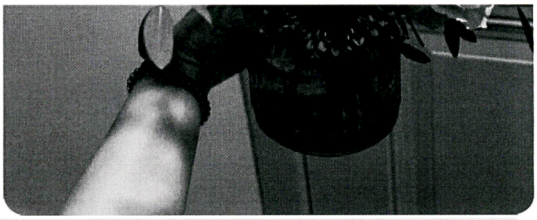
You tell me when and where and I'll be there!

Wed, Oct 8 at 5:08 PM

I'm not sure where, but maybe 8 pm? Is there anywhere you're a huge fan of?

I will be leaving straight from work at 5, maybe a little earlier if I can sneak out so it'll take me about 3 hours to get there if not longer

I'm really good with anything, just excited to get to spend [redacted]



Omg yes! I thought I send you this pic of them, thank you so much! They're gorgeous!

Hearing that you like them makes my day! Thanks!

Wed, Oct 15 at 1:54 PM

Nov. 8-17 is a window where I change anything.

Thu, Oct 16 at 1:49 PM

I could do the 9-11! I'd get in by 9 am and won't leave until 10 pm - would that work?

We'd essentially have 3 full days!

Thu, Oct 16 at 3:57 PM

Oh shucks yeah!

Would this be a good time for me to call you?

I'm leaving the office now and can chat!

Fri, Oct 17 at 8:15 AM

Good morning! I'm sorry I wasn't able to get back to you last night. Is there a good time I can call you today?

Good morning! No worries at all. I have a meeting at 11 and at 3, but can otherwise chat whenever. Feel free to call anytime!

Fri, Oct 17 at 10:10 AM

[redacted]

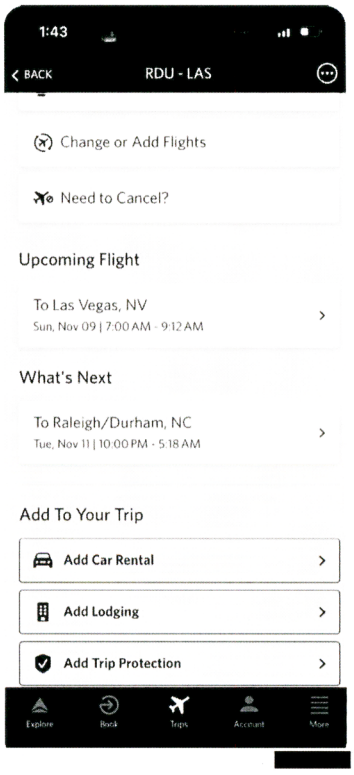
OK, thanks! I am loaded up with media interviews this morning so I will plan to call after lunch.

Fri, Oct 17 at 12:41 PM

Sounds good!

The Wizard of Oz at the Sphere looks super cool and like it would be a blast!

Done!



Can I pick you up around 6:40?

Sure!

Do you think jeans and a sweater will be fine? I'm thinking I'll get a workout in between work and dinner, and I don't think I want to put back on a dress after haha

Jeans and sweater will be just fine!!

Sat, Nov 8 at 10:22 AM

See you tomorrow!

Yes!! I'm practically bouncing off the walls thinking about it. 😀 It's going to be a great trip!

Sat, Nov 8 at 7:36 PM

If you'll give me your flight number I'll have a limo pick you up tomorrow.

It's DL2278!

Sat, Nov 8 at 9:47 PM

Your driver has your number and will pick you up at the baggage carousel tomorrow. He will have a placard with your name. I'll plan to meet you at the front of the hotel as he drops you off. Hope you have a smooth and carefree trip!

Sun, Nov 9 at 1:41 PM

I'm almost ready and just got the flowers - they're very pretty. Thank you! I did want to flag that the message made me uncomfortable. Just want to make sure this trip isn't meant to be anything it's not?

Understood, and agree. I'm sorry it made you uncomfortable. Nothing was meant by it, other than what was intended to be a cute play on the name of the arrangement.

[redacted]

I didn't realize that was the name of the arrangement 😅 I'm sorry! I hope I didn't sound accusatory or anything.

Think nothing of it. Let's just go enjoy exploring Vegas.

Meet in the lobby?

Sure. At the elevators.

Sun, Nov 9 at 11:10 PM

I simply can't understand this man 😅

Mon, Nov 10 at 10:03 AM

Feel free to order room service, or visit any of the restaurants and charge it to your room. I have a couple of conference calls later this morning so I will be a while.

Mon, Nov 10 at 11:14 AM

Would you like me to bring you any breakfast?

It is so nice of you to offer, but no thank you.

I must get back to DC ASAP😭

After seeing the Senate news this morning, I can't lie - I expected that. Well this was an us trip! If you go, I go! I'll look to change my flight and we can spend more time together otw to the airport and hanging out in the terminal :)

When do you think you'll be flying out? I can change your flight for you, if needed - so [redacted] doesn't have to worry about it or ask why you're in Vegas

My flight is at 1:30.

I'm CRUSHED!!

I'm still on a call with conference. I'll call you when it's [redacted]

I'm still on a call with conference. I'll call you when it's over.

Okay, sounds good! I just looked and can get on a Southwest around 3:50 to get home. My original flight was through Delta, but they don't have any early afternoon flights when I checked the app.

I'll have to purchase my ticket in person at the airport, but I'll pack up now!

Put it on my credit card.

Charles Edwards
AE [redacted]
[redacted]
[redacted]
Zip [redacted]

Mon, Nov 10 at 1:48 PM

A couple of things to consider.

Your AE card gets you access to the Centurion Club at the airport. It is way nicer than any other club out there.

When you cancel your AA flight be sure to request the refund in travel credit so you can use it for yourself some other time.

Mon, Nov 10 at 7:00 PM

I made it on my first flight, but we're still stuck on the tarmac. I'm gonna be cutting it close for the connection

Oh no! Thanks for letting me know.

Mon, Nov 10 at 8:14 PM

Just landed but still not off the plane, I'm not making my 5:30 connecting flight. I called my sister and she's going to pick me up for the night and I'll try again tomorrow!

[redacted] I am just so sick about this. I swear I wanted this

[redacted]

Heather I am just so sick about this. I swear I wanted this trip to be perfect for you. I hope it's a small consolation that you get to see your sister, that you'll continue to let me know how your travels are going- or if you need anything.

Tue, Nov 11 at 12:06 PM

Do not worry about it at all!! Seeing my sister is an unexpected treat that definitely serves as consolation. Please let me know how your travels back to DC go today!

Tue, Nov 11 at 4:36 PM

My plane to DC is now taxiing out on time.

Great to hear!

Wed, Nov 12 at 6:08 PM

Hey, just wanted to check in. You mentioned you'd keep me updated on your flights, so I wanted to make sure everything is okay.

Wed, Nov 12 at 7:36 PM

Hi so sorry, yes - I made it in at 7 this morning after a red eye with a layover in Baltimore. I ended up sleeping almost all day so I forgot to text

I'm really relieved to hear you made it home okay. Glad to know you caught up on some rest. Hopefully the rest of your week will go more smoothly.

Fri, Nov 14 at 4:10 PM

After session on Thursday Dec. 4, I will fly to NY for a dinner, then a breakfast on Friday Dec. 5. I'll be free after breakfast until Saturday at 1:00 when I have a lunch fundraiser, then I'll be free at 2:30 until I fly home on Sunday. Two Strangers is performing Dec. 4, 5, and 6– and there are plenty of other things to do and see.

Thu, Nov 20 at 11:18 AM

[redacted]

APPENDIX B

BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON ETHICS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
119th Congress, 2d Session

IN THE MATTER OF ALLEGATIONS RELATING TO REPRESENTATIVE CHUCK EDWARDS

August 3, 2026

RESPONSE OF REPRESENTATIVE CHUCK EDWARDS TO THE COMMITTEE REPORT

I. Introduction and Summary

Representative Chuck Edwards submits the following response to the Committee's Report[1] issued by the Committee on Ethics (Committee) to the House of Representatives:

At the outset, it is important to emphasize that the Committee's findings exonerate Representative Edwards under House Rules governing sexual misconduct or harassment. Specifically,

- the Committee concluded that Representative Edwards neither engaged in sexual activity with nor explicitly propositioned any individual staff member;[2]
- the Committee also concluded that the allegations in this matter do not implicate *quid pro quo* sexual harassment;[3]
- the Committee also concluded that Representative Edwards did not violate federal sexual harassment law;[4]
- the Committee also concluded that Representative Edwards cooperated with the investigation;[5]
- the Committee's recommendation of censure, an extraordinarily harsh and infrequent punishment, is based solely on vague standards requiring credible behavior and adherence to the spirit of the Rules of the House; the Committee's recommendation is *not* based on a direct violation of House rules addressing sexual misconduct;[6]

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[1] The Committee provided a Draft Report, *In the Matter of Allegations Relating to Representative Chuck Edwards* (hereinafter Report), to Representative Edwards' counsel on July 31, 2026. All page citations to the Report are to that draft.
[2] Report at 1.
[3] *Id.* at 16.
[4] *Id.* at 17-18.
[5] *Id.* at 2.
[6] *Id.* at 2, 20.

- Representative Edwards has been denied the opportunity to challenge the factual allegations guaranteed to him under House rules.[7]

The Committee — acting on unverified rumors of sexual misconduct reported in the media, in the absence of a complaint from any affected individual — initiated an investigation pursuant to Committee Rule 18(a). Surprisingly, the Report elides the fact that the Committee initiated this matter without receiving a complaint.[8] The Committee acknowledges that these scurrilous rumors of an affair or sexual misconduct were quickly disproved. However, the Committee continued its investigation into a long-standing working relationship and personal friendship between Representative Edwards and two female staffers which predated his tenure in the U.S. Congress. After conducting its inquiry, the Committee concluded that Representative Edwards' conduct violated the rules that a Member "shall behave at all times in a manner that shall reflect creditably on the House," and "shall adhere to the spirit and the letter of the Rules of the House."[9]

Despite its assertions to the contrary, the Committee has failed to demonstrate that either of the two staffers expressed discomfort to Representative Edwards regarding his conduct with them. Nonetheless, the Committee contends that "Representative Edwards knew or had reason to know that Staffer 1 and Staffer 2 were uncomfortable with his conduct at least as early as May 2025" when a senior staffer spoke to him about the issue.[10] The Committee fails to acknowledge, however, that it also received testimony that Representative Edwards sincerely believed that the staffers' discomfort emanated from false rumors reported in the media that he was having an affair with one of them. The effect of false rumors of misconduct on individuals is a far cry from evidence that Representative Edwards knew or should have known that the staffers did not welcome his conduct or otherwise felt uncomfortable. Moreover, while the Report credits evidence it received that the staffers "did not always feel free to reject Representative Edwards' attentions without fear of professional consequences,"[11] it dismisses both Representative Edwards' testimony to the contrary and documentary evidence where he expressly informed one of the staffers that she "set the boundaries, and I get to respect them."[12] As addressed later, the Committee also rejected documentary evidence indicating that Representative Edwards had a good faith reason in the months after May 2025 to believe that his conduct with Staffer 2 post-employment was welcomed.

Compounding its decision to cast aside exculpatory evidence produced by Representative Edwards and other witnesses, the Committee has trampled on its own rules and procedures and imposed the most severe punishment ever on a Member of Congress for conduct of a similar nature. Despite the Committee's acknowledgement that no sexual misconduct occurred[13] — a

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[7] *Id.* at 2-3.
[8] *E.g., id.* at 3 n.3 (citing April 20, 2026 Committee Statement without addressing use of Committee Rule 18(a) to initiate this investigation).
[9] *Id.* at 2.
[10] *Id.* at 7.
[11] *Id.* at 8.
[12] *Id.*
[13] *Id.* at 16-18.

conclusion which would normally militate for a resolution of this matter in a manner consistent with decades of House precedent (*i.e.,* resolution at the Committee-level rather than before the full House) — the Committee has recommended that the House adopt a resolution to censure Representative Edwards. Censure is a sanction that, based on counsel's extensive research, has never been imposed in a situation comparable to the findings stated in this Report.

Further, the Committee has reached this recommendation through a process which abandons the adjudicatory structure mandated by the Committee's own rules. The Committee's actions deny Representative Edwards any opportunity to examine the underlying evidence in the matter, present contrary evidence, or otherwise mount a defense to the charges — all actions normally guaranteed by House and Committee rules. While Representative Edwards sat for an interview conducted by Members of the Committee and Committee counsel, he testified blind to many of the allegations contained in this Report; nor was he provided a subsequent opportunity to address many of the factual claims and testimony contained herein.

Accordingly, this Response serves as Representative Edwards' only chance to counter these allegations along with the outcome-driven, truncated, and *ultra vires* proceedings deployed by the Committee. Set out below is a legal and factual defense to the charges leveled by the Committee.

* * *

From the start, Representative Edwards cooperated with the Committee-initiated Rule 18(a) review. He produced all responsive material in his possession, including documents, emails, texts, and telephone voice messages; he also provided a voluntary interview where he answered every question posed by Committee Members and Committee counsel. This Response does not attempt to relitigate every characterization in the lengthy Report which the Committee provided to Representative Edwards. Rather, it addresses the multitude of errors relating to 1) authority and proof contained in the Report, and 2) the Committee's investigative process leading to its unwarranted recommendation for censure.

Nothing in this Response should be read as an admission that any particular gift, message, or conversation described in the Report was intended as, or received as, an unwanted or romantic advance, or that Representative Edwards' actions created "a hostile work environment." Representative Edwards addresses several specific inferences where the record the Committee assembled is directly contradicted, refuted, or not supported by its findings; silence elsewhere in this Response does not concede any of the Report's characterizations.

The Committee's first error relates to its authority and process. Our understanding is that no complaint was ever filed relating to Representative Edwards' conduct. Rather, the Committee's recommendation that the House censure Representative Edwards is based on a Rule 18(a) Committee-initiated, information-gathering record; there has been no Investigative Subcommittee, no Statement of Alleged Violation (SAV), and none of the processes Committee Rules 19 to 24

require before a floor sanction may issue. Simply put, House rules do not authorize the Committee to recommend censure in this matter, and a respondent's coerced capitulation cannot supply the Committee with authority withheld from it by the rules.

The Committee's second error is one of proof. The Report's narrative rests, at several of its most consequential points, on inferences the record does not support, and in places affirmatively contradicts. The Report suggests that Representative Edwards "intentionally" deleted messages, on a record that shows that he produced hundreds of documents (after a costly and extensive search conducted by a reputable data retrieval service). It finds that Staffer 2 "felt pressured" into a trip without addressing evidence produced to the Committee that demonstrates that Representative Edwards believed the opposite. And it imports characterizations of his conduct from sources it does not identify and who possess no first-hand information about Representative Edwards' intent or knowledge.

Before proceeding with his response to the Report, Representative Edwards wishes to emphasize the following:

> Having reviewed the testimony and evidence assembled by the Committee and set out in the Report, Representative Edwards sincerely regrets that his behavior created discomfort in any way for Staffer 1 or Staffer 2. As the Report mentions, although it does not credit his statement, after Representative Edwards learned of the Staffers' concerns he acknowledged the issue and stated that he would respect all appropriate "boundaries." At no time did either staffer provide any indication to Representative Edwards that his general behavior made them uncomfortable or was unwelcome.

* * *

Six specific points are addressed through this Response:

One. Procedurally, a record developed under a self-generated investigation pursuant to Committee Rule 18(a) supports, at most, the disposition the Committee reached in the *Savage*[14] and *Hastings*[15] matters: a public report and a statement of the Committee's disapproval, without a floor sanction. Under applicable House Rules, a censure recommendation requires an Investigative Subcommittee and an adopted SAV, which in turn afford the respondent an opportunity to answer and participate in an adjudicatory hearing at which every count must be proved by clear and convincing evidence. This matter provides none of the required processes. No staffer identified in the Report filed a complaint for the Committee to adjudicate; rather, the review followed press reporting after the Committee's public statement inviting information. Representative Edwards

[14] Comm. on Standards of Official Conduct, *In the Matter of Representative Gus Savage*, H. Rept. 101-397, 101st Cong. 2d Sess. 1 (1990) (hereinafter *Savage*).
[15] Comm. on Ethics, *In the Matter of Representative Alcee L. Hastings*, H. Rept. 113-663, 113th Cong. 2d Sess. 16 (2014) (hereinafter *Hastings*).

has no SAV to answer, and no opportunity to examine the witnesses whose characterizations the Report adopts or the evidence gathered by the Committee.

Two. The Report does not find, and on this record cannot find, a violation of House Rule XXIII, clauses 9 or 18 relating to sexual harassment or misconduct. Its finding rests entirely on clauses 1 and 2 which require behavior "that shall reflect creditably on the House," and adhere to "the spirit and the letter of the Rules of the House."[16] The Committee's own precedent concedes that these standards are "far from paragons of clarity and precision."[17] The Committee's rules address that imprecision with a heightened burden of proof, tested through an adjudicatory hearing, not by dispensing with required elements to accelerate resolution. Further, the Report should say plainly that it does not find sexual harassment or discrimination, because "the spirit of the House's prohibitions on sexual harassment" invites a reader to make conclusions the Committee did not make. Even the Report's findings relating to the "spirit" of the law fail to give Representative Edwards (or any future Member subject to similar inquiry) notice of what actual conduct is prohibited under specific, applicable rules.

Three. House gift rules exempt gifts motivated by personal friendship,[18] and the record includes evidence that Representative Edwards extended comparable generosity — dinners, tickets, gifts — to numerous other staffers. Personnel decisions, including the promotion the Report treats as evidence of favoritism, are naturally committed to the Member's discretion as an employer; the "general consensus"[19] the Report cites in its place is not a legal standard, and derives in material part from witnesses with a personal stake in that decision or with no responsibility for making such personnel decisions.

Four. The Report's adverse inferences regarding message deletion and the Las Vegas trip are unsupported by, or contradicted by, the record the Committee compiled. A third inference — that a remark made by a singer sent for her birthday confirms that Staffer 2 did not see herself as a "daughter figure"[20] — rests on hearsay that the Report does not attribute to any statement or instruction by Representative Edwards.

Five. Conduct occurring after a staffer's House employment ended cannot support a finding under House Rule XXIII, clauses 9 or 18, which are premised on the employment relationship those clauses protect; such conduct should not be permitted to influence the Committee's analysis under clauses 1 and 2 either.

Six. The Committee's own precedent, and testimony regarding the effect of a now-refuted rumor campaign, counsel a public report without a floor sanction — not a harsher result than the

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[16] Report at 16-18.
[17] *Manual of Offenses and Procedures, Korean Influence Investigation,* Pursuant to House Resolution 252, House Comm. on Standards of Official Conduct, 95th Cong. 40 (Committee Print 1977).
[18] *See House Ethics Manual* (2022) (hereinafter *Ethics Manual*) at 40-41.
[19] Report at 11.
[20] *Id.* at 6.

Committee reached in *Savage* or *Hastings*. It is also clear that the numerous media reports which appear to have prompted the Committee's inquiry — and related leaks to the media which continued throughout the inquiry — emanate from some of these same sources. The Committee's reliance on these sources in its Report undermines significant aspects of its findings and further counsels against accepting the Committee's harsh censure recommendation.

II. A Committee-Generated House Rule 18(a) Proceeding Cannot Support a Censure Recommendation

Every path by which a report or a sanction recommendation reaches the House floor involves an Investigative Subcommittee, as established by Committee Rule 19. Rule 19(f) authorizes the adoption of a SAV only on a finding of "substantial reason to believe" that a violation occurred; Rule 19(g) addresses the report the subcommittee must file where no such Statement is adopted; Rule 21 establishes the Committee's reporting requirements once a subcommittee has acted; Rule 22 governs the respondent's answer to a SAV; Rule 23 governs the adjudicatory hearing, at which counts must be proved by clear and convincing evidence; and Rule 24 — the Committee's authority to recommend a sanction such as censure, or to issue a Letter of Reproval — is reachable only after an adjudicatory hearing under Rule 23 has produced a proved count.

Conversely, Rule 18(a) authorizes a completely different approach. That provision simply authorizes the Chair and Ranking Member to "jointly gather additional information concerning [an] alleged violation" and to "jointly take appropriate action consistent with Committee Rules to resolve the matter." The phrase "consistent with Committee Rules" incorporates the rules, it does not suspend them. Rule 18(a) permits the Committee to gather facts and to resolve a matter within the authority otherwise conferred by the rules. It does not permit the Committee to find that a Member violated the Code of Official Conduct and, on that finding, recommend the most serious sanction available, while bypassing the process every other rule makes a condition of that recommendation.

This is not simply a drafting quibble. Representative Edwards has been denied nearly all process that normally protects a respondent. No staffer identified in the Report filed a complaint with the Committee. Instead, the review began after the Committee's April 20, 2026 public statement inviting anyone with information to come forward — followed by press reporting based on leaks about the inquiry.[21] Representative Edwards was never presented with a SAV framing specific counts, never answered specific counts under Rule 22, and has not had a complete opportunity to address testimony from the witnesses whose characterizations the Report adopts or test their accounts against a hearing transcript. A recommendation of censure cannot rest on an information-gathering record measured against no evidentiary standard beyond the Committee's own view of an untested record. Despite the Committee's efforts to justify the procedure in this

[21] *Id.* at 2.

matter, Representative Edwards faced a Hobson's choice whether to waive his rights to the process guaranteed to him under Committee rules; this scenario cannot be transmuted into consent for a result expressly foreclosed by House rules.

The Committee could have chosen to proceed pursuant to its own rules. On a Rule 18(a) record, in matters the Report itself recounts, the Committee has issued a public report and a statement of disapproval and stopped there; *see, e.g., Savage* and *Hastings* reports (addressed in Part VI). If the Committee concluded that Representative Edwards' conduct warranted additional action, the rules inform its process: impanel a subcommittee and adopt a SAV, at which point Representative Edwards would answer specific counts and be heard through the processes provided by Rules 22 through 24. What the Committee is not authorized to do is impose a sanction *ultra vires* as it recommends in the Report.

III. The Report Finds No Violation of Clause 9 or Clause 18, and the "Spirit of the Rules" Cannot Substitute for Defined Elements

A. The Committee finds no clause 9 violation.

The Report states that "the allegations in this matter do not implicate *quid pro quo* sexual harassment."[22] Its hostile-environment discussion goes no further than to say the conduct "exposed his office to the litigation risk of a viable sexual harassment lawsuit."[23] Regardless of the accuracy of this highly speculative assertion, litigation risk is not a finding that the defined elements of sexual harassment have been met. The Report identifies no findings on this issue, including no finding that any employment decision turned on submission or rejection, and no finding of conduct severe or pervasive enough to satisfy the standards it recites. The Report should not use language implicating clause 9 that is unsupported by the Committee's own analysis.

B. The Committee finds no clause 18 violation.

Similarly, the Report states that "the Committee did not find that a [sexual] relationship existed" under clause 18(a), and it identifies no finding of unwelcome sexual advances under clause 18(b).[24] The Committee should not import clause 18(b)'s "unwelcome sexual advances" language into its discussions of clauses 1 and 2 in a manner that implies a finding the Committee declined to make.

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[22] *Id.* at 16.
[23] *Id.* at 17.
[24] *Id.* at 18.

C. The Report uses an indeterminate standard, but Committee Rules mandate proof of violations rather than inference.

What is left, after the Committee has disavowed clauses 9 and 18, is a finding under clauses 1 and 2 — that Representative Edwards failed to "behave . . . in a manner that shall reflect creditably on the House" and to "adhere to the spirit . . . of the Rules."[25] The Committee has described that standard candidly in its own precedent: it is a standard the Committee adopted to "deal with infractions that rise to trouble it without burdening it with defining specific charges that would be difficult to state with precision," and prior committees have emphasized that the resulting standards are "far from paragons of clarity and precision."[26]

That admission undermines the standard deployed in this Report. A standard the Committee itself concedes is imprecise is not a license to paper over gaps in the evidence with inference; it is the reason the Committee's own Rules condition any sanction on clear and convincing proof, tested through the adjudicatory hearing Rule 23 provides. The Manual's instruction that "a narrow technical reading of a House Rule should not overcome its 'spirit'" answers a different question — how to read a rule once a violation is established — and does not relieve the Committee of the obligation to establish one in the first place.[27] On a Rule 18(a) record, with no adjudicatory hearing and no proof standard applied, the Committee is using the "spirit" of clauses 1 and 2 to do the work the Rules reserve for a different process.

Representative Edwards does not ask the Committee to hold that friendship, concern for staff, or the giving of gifts can never implicate clause 1. He asks that if the Committee wishes to find that particular conduct fell short of the decorum clause 1 requires, it do so through the process that tests such a finding — Investigative Subcommittee, SAV, answer, and adjudicatory hearing — rather than through an information-gathering record that has not been defended in an adversarial proceeding.

Further, it is entirely inappropriate for the Committee to bootstrap a finding that alleged violations of clauses 1 and 2 implicate federal provisions governing sexual harassment or similar misconduct.[28] These laws, which were of course passed by the U.S. Congress, have specific meaning and elements. Representative Edwards does not contest that "Members of Congress are held to a higher standard than just strict compliance with federal law."[29] But utilizing well-defined federal prohibitions to justify a sanction pursuant to vague and amorphous rules governing credible behavior and adherence to the spirit of the rules is an end-run around Congress's own intent in passing those rules.

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[25] *Id.* at 1, 19-20.
[26] *Manual of Offenses and Procedures, Korean Influence Investigation*, Pursuant to House Resolution 252, House Comm. on Standards of Official Conduct, 95th Cong. 40 (Committee Print 1977).
[27] *Id.*
[28] Report at 16-18.
[29] *Id.* at 17.

D. Gifts motivated by personal friendship are not prohibited, and personnel decisions rest with the Member.

The House gift rule exempts gifts "based on a personal friendship" from its general prohibition.[30] The Report treats the volume and frequency of Representative Edwards' gifts to Staffer 1 and Staffer 2 as evidence of impropriety without addressing that exemption, or his record of similar generosity toward other staff. During his interview with the Chair, Ranking Member, and Committee Counsel, Representative Edwards detailed gifts, dinners, and tickets extended to many other named staffers and demonstrated that the practice was not confined to Staffers 1 and 2. To cite just one example, Representative Edwards testified that he recently gifted a handgun to a male staffer.

The same principle bears on the Deputy Chief of Staff promotion the Report treats as evidence of preferential treatment.[31] Personnel decisions — who is promoted, and on what basis — are committed to the Member's judgment as employer. Then-Supreme Court Chief Justice Burger explained the following in a dissent in a case addressing the unique nature of congressional employment:

> Congress has historically treated its employees differently from the arrangements for other Government employees. Historically, staffs of Members have been considered so intimately a part of the policymaking and political process that they are not subject to being selected, compensated, or tenured as others who serve the Government. The vulnerability of employment on congressional staffs derives not only from the hazards of elections but also from the imperative need for loyalty, confidentiality, and political compatibility — not simply to a political party, an institution, or an administration but to the individual Member.[32]

The "general consensus" among staff that the Report cites as contrary evidence is not a legal standard for evaluating a Member's personnel decision.[33] Representative Edwards submits that this account derived in material part from a witness who himself sought the position and was not selected. A personnel decision within the Member's discretion does not become evidence of harassment because a disappointed candidate, or those who credited his account, describe it that way.

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[30] *Ethics Manual* at 40-41.
[31] Report at 11.
[32] *Davis v. Passman*, 442 U.S. 228, 249 (1979) (Burger, C.J., dissenting).
[33] Report at 11.

IV. The Report's Central Factual Inferences Are Contradicted by, or Unsupported by, the Record

The Report is replete with factual inferences and assertions that are either unsupported by the facts in the Report or are unsupported by the entire record. The examples below highlight some of the most egregious errors or omissions.

A. The finding that Representative Edwards should have known Staffer 2 felt pressured into taking the Las Vegas trip should be reconciled with the full record.

The Report finds that Staffer 2 "ultimately felt pressured to go [to Las Vegas] in part because of his persistence and in part because Representative Edwards continued to have influence over her career in another public service role."[34] The Report quotes a September 2025 text in which Representative Edwards wrote, "I hope you were serious about us going to Vegas together. We could have such a great time!" as evidence of that persistence.[35] However, the Report ignores a voice message produced by Representative Edwards to the Committee demonstrating that, at the very least, he genuinely believed that Staffer 2 was "excited" to take the trip:

> Hey, Chuck, I wasn't calling for any particular reason, so don't worry about like needing to rush to give me a call back or anything. I was just calling to yap and check in, see how you were doing since it's been a few days and say that **I'm still so excited for Vegas. It's going to be so much fun**. You're right. It seems like it's forever away. But yeah, just wanted to call and check in and say hello. So one of those reasons, like one of those times where I'm just calling for no reason. Anyway, I hope you're having a good night. Talk to you later. Bye.[36]

The Report utilizes statements from Staffer 2's interview with the Committee as evidence that Representative Edwards should have known that he was causing discomfort without acknowledging directly contradictory evidence in its possession. This approach is patently improper for an entity in a prosecutorial posture and casts doubt on the Committee's assertion regarding Representative Edwards' knowledge and conduct. Of course, had the Committee followed its own procedural rules, Representative Edwards would have been afforded the opportunity to present this and other exculpatory material to an Investigative Subcommittee.

B. The "daughter figure" inference rests on hearsay from a source without first-hand knowledge of Representative Edwards' intent.

The Report states that a singer arranged to perform at Staffer 2's birthday party told her the song was "from a special someone," and that "the Committee received evidence that Staffer 2 told

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[34] *Id.* at 9-10.
[35] *Id.*
[36] Transcript of October 23, 2025 voice message from Staffer 2 to Representative Edwards (recording produced to the Committee by Representative Edwards) (emphasis added).

a friend this led her to believe that the Congressman did not view her as 'just a daughter figure'" and that she was "scared lowkey."[37] The Report offers this account — a friend's report of what Staffer 2 said she believed, prompted by a comment made by a singer, not by Representative Edwards — as evidence bearing on his intent. No witness with first-hand knowledge of what Representative Edwards intended supports that inference. Rather, the assertion emanates from the singer's choice of words, through Staffer 2's belief about it, to a friend's later account of that belief. Representative Edwards submits that the statement may have been made by the singer, but that he never requested such a statement. The Report should not rely on this exchange for any finding regarding Representative Edwards' state of mind.

C. Conduct after a staffer's House employment ended should not support a clause 9 or 18 finding, and should not drive the clause 1 and 2 analysis.

Clauses 9 and 18 are, by their terms, protections keyed to an existing employment relationship: clause 9 prohibits discrimination "with respect to compensation, terms, conditions, or privileges of employment," and clause 18(a) and (b) address a Member's conduct toward "an employee of the House" under the Member's supervision. Staffer 2 had left the congressional office before the November 2025 Las Vegas trip, before the handwritten letter the Report quotes, and before the Adam Sandler invitation. Whatever the Committee makes of that conduct, it did not occur within the type of employment relationship addressed by clauses 9 or 18, and it supplies no basis for a finding under either.

The Report nonetheless relies on that post-departure conduct — the letter's language, the trip itself — to inform its clauses 1 and 2 analysis.[38] Representative Edwards does not dispute that the trip occurred. He asks the Committee to recognize that conduct with a non-employee differs from conduct toward a subordinate, and that treating the two as identical risks extending clauses 1 and 2 well past the relationship those clauses were adopted to protect.

V. The Report's Account of Office Morale and the Staffers' Departures Omits Material Testimony in the Committee's Own Record

The Report attributes the departure of Staffers 1 and 2, and broader office discomfort, to Representative Edwards' conduct, and states that he "was aware . . . that his excessive attention toward the young women had led to rumors and innuendo in the office" without identifying the source of those rumors.[39] Representative Edwards submits that the Committee's record contains testimony from a witness interviewed by the Committee attributing rumors that Representative Edwards was having an affair with Staffer 1 — including rumors reaching reporters and the House Speaker's office — to a former staffer terminated from the office. At his own interview, Representative Edwards discussed his former staffer's motivation and involvement in spreading

[37] Report at 6.
[38] *Id.* at 8-10.
[39] *Id.* at 1.

the rumor. The Committee failed to engage with the witness testimony or Representative Edwards' own statements; nor did it acknowledge the effect of the rumors on Staffers 1 and 2. The Report repeatedly concedes that no conduct by Representative Edwards supports the spurious rumors. Once again, the Committee's choice to omit evidence undermining the Report casts doubt on the soundness of the Report's conclusions.

This omission matters because the Report repeatedly draws a causal line from Representative Edwards' conduct to the staffers' discomfort and departure, and from that discomfort to its conclusion regarding office-wide morale and the fairness of the promotion decision addressed in Part III.D. A Report that omits testimony tracing the source of that discomfort to a rumor campaign, rather than to the conduct the Report catalogs, has not weighed "the totality of the circumstances," the hostile-environment standard the Report itself invokes.[40] Representative Edwards does not ask the Committee to discount the Staffers' own accounts of their experiences; he simply asks the Committee to include, alongside those accounts, testimony in its possession describing events occurring in the office at the same time — including testimony that some of the same individuals who described a "long-term affair" to reporters were also witnesses the Committee relied upon in the Report.

VI. The Committee's Own Precedent Counsels a Public Report Without a Floor Sanction

The Report recounts the Committee's precedent at length. However, that same precedent undermines the Committee's sanction recommendation here.

The Committee's finding in *Savage* is a prime example. On conduct by Representative Savage described in the Report — unwanted advances toward a Peace Corps volunteer, including forcing her to kiss him[41] — the Committee issued a public report, found the conduct contrary to clause 1, stated that it "clearly disapproves," and determined that no further action was warranted.[42] Here, the Report expressly finds that Representative Edwards made no sexual proposition and engaged in no sexual activity.[43] His conduct is certainly less serious than the conduct the Committee declined to sanction in *Savage*. The Report's reply is that the Committee now "does not agree" with *Savage* and that "[t]imes have changed."[44] Representative Edwards does not contest that times have changed and that standards of conduct must as well. However, disagreement with precedent, announced as policy, is not a basis for a harsher result in this case or justification for abandoning procedural rules designed to ensure a fair process and full hearing.

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[40] *Id.* at 16.
[41] *Savage* at 5.
[42] *Id.* at 14.
[43] Report at 17.
[44] *Id.* at 19.

The Report also cites to the *Hastings* matter. There, the Committee reviewed sexual-harassment allegations, took no further action, and issued a report with a corrective reminder to the Member and the House.[45] The Report quotes *Hastings* for the proposition that Members must be held to account "in cases where such discrimination can be proven."[46] The Report does not purport to meet that condition here. Indeed, it declines to find clause 9 discrimination at all.

Finally, *Kihuen*[47] serves as the Report's closest analog for a sanction.[48] However, *Kihuen* reached the Committee through an Investigative Subcommittee that made findings the Committee then adopted, including conduct the Committee described as repeated unwanted advances, many of an overt sexual nature, including unwanted kissing and touching[49] — conduct materially more severe than anything found here, where the Report expressly finds no sexual activity and no explicit sexual proposition. *Kihuen* also confirms the point in Part II of this response, rather than the Report's finding. Specifically, *Kihuen* demonstrates that if the Committee wishes to reprove or sanction, it must use the subcommittee process, not that a Rule 18(a) record will support a sanction on less serious conduct.

Censure is a sanction the House has used sparingly in this context and directed only at matters of severe sexual misconduct. Application here would be literally unprecedented. Only two prior censures — Representative Gerry Studds, in 1983, for a sexual relationship with a minor House page, and Representative Daniel Crane, in 1983, for a sexual relationship with a minor House page — involved sexual misconduct.[50] Three more recent censures, of Paul Gosar in 2021 for posting a video depicting violence against a sitting Member,[51] of Adam Schiff in 2023 for statements made in his capacity as a committee chairman,[52] and of Rashida Tlaib in 2023 for statements made about Israel,[53] involved conduct unrelated to this matter and provide no support for censure here.

VII. Conclusion

Members of Congress operate in a meat grinder of public opinion driven by a highly partisan and polarized environment. Members face intensive media coverage often fueled by political operatives who choose to harm a specific Member or political party to advance their own interests. Certainly, the U.S. Congress, including the House Ethics Committee, is currently

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[45] *Hastings* at 2.
[46] Report at 14.
[47] Comm. on Ethics, *In the Matter of Allegations Relating to Representative Ruben Kihuen*, H. Rept. 115-1041, 115th Cong. 2d Sess. (2018) (hereinafter *Kihuen*).
[48] Report at 15-16.
[49] *Kihuen* at 3-6.
[50] Comm. on Standards of Official Conduct, *In the Matter of Representative Gerry E. Studds*, H. Rept. 98-295, 98th Cong. 1st Sess. (1983); Comm. on Standards of Official Conduct, *In the Matter of Representative Daniel Crane*, H. Rept. 98-296, 98th Cong. 1st Sess. (1983).
[51] H.R. Res. 789, 117th Cong. (2021) (enacted).
[52] H.R. Res. 521, 118th Cong. (2023) (enacted).
[53] H.R. Res. 845, 118th Cong. (2023) (enacted).

confronting this charged political environment along with rapidly shifting societal standards. As the Report notes repeatedly, times change and institutions must adapt.

However, some things remain inviolate even in the face of pressure and change. Reliance on legal precedent and compliance with procedural rules protecting notice and an opportunity for an accused to confront allegations of misconduct are hallmarks of the House ethics process.

In this matter, Representative Edwards cooperated with an investigation which he believed would provide him with the right to the standards and rules that had governed all previous matters. Instead, the Committee has chosen to circumvent those rules in pursuit of an expeditious and unfounded resolution. Members of Congress confronting this matter should be aware that these rights were developed to protect the entire body. When they are ignored, anyone subject to the Committee's jurisdiction is harmed.

Finally, Representative Edwards emphasizes that he has endeavored to comply with all applicable laws regarding his conduct during his time as a Member of Congress and before. Once more, he states his sincere regret if his conduct caused any staff member discomfort or was unwelcome.

Respectfully submitted,

Stanley M. Brand
Andrew D. Herman
Counsel for Representative Chuck Edwards

