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} HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES {

REPORT

119—__

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
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**119TH CONGRESS, 2D SESSION
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON ETHICS**

**IN THE MATTER OF ALLEGATIONS RELATING TO
REPRESENTATIVE CHUCK EDWARDS**

August 3, 2026

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

REPORT

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LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

August 3, 2026

The Honorable Kevin F. McCumber
Clerk, House of Representatives
H-154, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

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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AUGUST 3, 2026

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

R E P O R T

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 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

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.

⁴ *Id.*

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.

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

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.

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 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:

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.

¹³ 18(a) Interview of Representative Chuck 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
- 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

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]fter [] 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.

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.).

- 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 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,

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."

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 occasionally³³ 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 received 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.

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.*

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.

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

B. Representative Edwards’ conduct towards Staffer 1 and Staffer 2 after they left the congressional office.

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 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.”).

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 felt pressured to go in part because of his persistence and in

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.

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

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.

Congressman “lashes 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 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

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.*

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*).

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 criminal 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

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 like 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).

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 official 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

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.

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*).

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 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

⁸⁸ *Id.* at 19.

⁸⁹ *Id.* at 14.

⁹⁰ *Id.* at 2.

⁹¹ *Id.*

⁹² *See Hastings.*

⁹³ *Id.* at 2.

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 Representative 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

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>.

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 reproof. 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 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

⁹⁸ See *Kihuen* at 4.

⁹⁹ *Id.* at 6.

¹⁰⁰ *Id.*

¹⁰¹ *Id.*

¹⁰² *Bates* at 12.

¹⁰³ *Gary*, 59 F.3d at 1395.

¹⁰⁴ *Meritor*, 477 U.S. at 67.

¹⁰⁵ *Faragher*, 524 U.S. at 787.

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 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

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.”).

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

¹¹⁰ See, e.g., *Kihuen* (issuing a reproof 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 reproof 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).

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.

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

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).

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.”).

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 reprimanded 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 reprimanded 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 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

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.

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.

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 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.

¹¹⁸ *Hastings* at 16.