

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNMENT REFORM

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April 26, 2017

The Honorable Jason Chaffetz
Chairman
Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

We have been asking for the past six weeks that you allow our Committee Members to vote on a bill that would require President Donald Trump and all future presidents to disclose their tax returns to the American people. Although last year you urged then-candidate Trump to “open up your kimono” and disclose his tax returns, you have declined to allow us to vote on legislation that would require President Trump to make his tax returns public.

On March 13, 2017, all Democratic Members of the Committee wrote to request that you place H.R. 305, the Presidential Tax Transparency Act, on the agenda for the Committee’s business meeting on March 16. Alternatively, if you chose not to allow a vote on March 16, we asked that you schedule the bill “at our next regularly scheduled business meeting.”¹ The Committee held business meetings on March 16 and March 28, but you declined to place H.R. 305 on the agenda for either day or to schedule it for any future business meetings.

Since we wrote to you in March, bipartisan support for H.R. 305 has grown. Republican Committee Member Mark Sanford had already co-sponsored the bill on January 30, and Republican Committee Member Justin Amash also co-sponsored the bill on March 24. Republican Members outside our Committee have also joined, including Rep. Ted Yoho, who co-sponsored the bill on April 14, and Rep. Walter Jones, who co-sponsored the bill on April 20.

In addition, since we wrote to you, the Committee heard testimony on March 23 from Richard Painter, the chief ethics counsel to former President George W. Bush, who strongly endorsed H.R. 305 and urged us “to pass that bill as soon as possible.”²

¹ Letter from Ranking Member Elijah E. Cummings et al., to Chairman Jason Chaffetz, House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform (Mar. 13, 2016).

² House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, Testimony of Richard W. Painter, *Hearing on Legislative Proposals for Fostering Transparency* (Mar. 23, 2017).

Mr. Painter cited numerous reasons why Congress and the American people should obtain access to the information in President Trump's tax returns. He testified:

First and foremost, as I mentioned, we need to know about any financial relationships between the President of the United States and foreign powers, whether it is a foreign power that spied on Americans, conducted espionage here in the United States, apparently with the assistance of Americans who may have been working for the Trump campaign.

Mr. Painter continued:

The President is also conducting trade negotiations with foreign countries, including China, where he has many trademarks that he has just received. We have a right to know how much money is coming under the table to the President while he's conducting trade negotiations that affect American jobs. So this is important to our national security. It's important to our stance on trade.

Mr. Painter concluded:

Last, we have the right to know whether our President is in debt to people inside or outside the United States. How much is he in debt? How much does he depend on the banks who may very well be deregulated when the administration proposes the repeal of Dodd-Frank? All of this is information the American people have a right to.

Our staff asked for feedback to identify any technical changes that you may deem necessary to allow a vote on H.R. 305, but the only proposal offered was to delay the bill's effective date to 2024.

Of course, we support requiring future presidents to disclose their tax returns, but exempting President Trump from this requirement makes no sense at all—especially since every previous president for the past four decades has voluntarily disclosed his tax returns.

As Members of Congress, we have the ability and duty to legislate in order to promote government transparency, combat conflicts of interest, and ensure compliance with the Constitution. H.R. 305 has bipartisan support both on and off our Committee, and we believe Members should be allowed to vote on this bill.

We understand that you are now considering scheduling another business meeting for May 2. Given all the developments that have occurred since we wrote to you in March, we respectfully request that you add H.R. 305 to the agenda for this markup.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



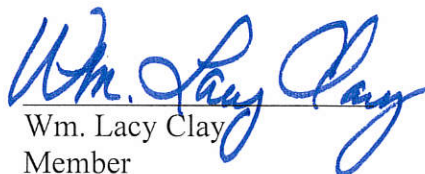
Elijah E. Cummings
Ranking Member



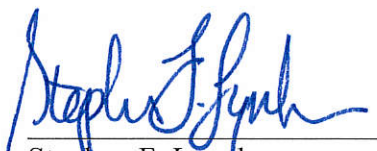
Carolyn B. Maloney
Member



Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member



Wm. Lacy Clay
Member



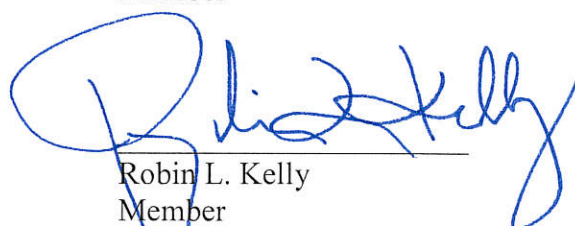
Stephen F. Lynch
Member



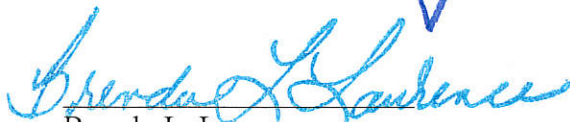
Jim Cooper
Member



Gerald E. Connolly
Vice Ranking Member



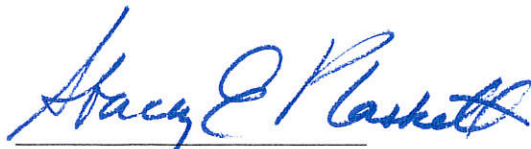
Robin L. Kelly
Member



Brenda L. Lawrence
Member



Bonnie Watson Coleman
Member



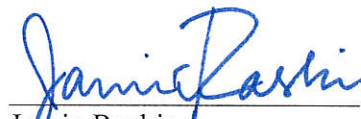
Stacey E. Plaskett
Member



Val Butler Demings
Member



Raja Krishnamoorthi
Member



Jamie Raskin
Member

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Peter Welch
Member

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Matt Cartwright
Member

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Mark DeSaulnier
Member

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John Sarbanes
Member