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July 15, 2014

Mr. W. Neil Eggleston
Counsel to the President
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. Eggleston:

The Clinton White House, Bush White House, and other administrations before them have all faced congressional oversight of political activity supported by taxpayer funds. Under this Administration, like previous Administrations, members of President Obama's cabinet have committed violations of the Hatch Act, which draws a line between campaign and official business.

Today, my staff received a briefing from White House staff regarding the activities of the White House Office of Political Strategy and Outreach (OPSO) as well as Hatch Act compliance. White House officials provided this briefing to Committee staff nearly four months after I initially wrote to the White House on March 18, 2014, requesting documents and information related to the reopening of the White House Office of Political Affairs (OPA), as well as a briefing.¹ Despite having multiple opportunities before now to provide requested documents and a briefing to Committee staff, the White House only offered a briefing after I subpoenaed testimony from David Simas, the Director of the White House OPSO, at tomorrow's full Committee hearing regarding OPSO.² The briefing provided to Committee staff today, while helpful and appreciated, did not answer all questions and did not put the White House on the record about changes made to its political office.

During the briefing, White House staff declined our request to discuss compliance with the Committee's document requests or to even describe the process and identify relevant officials involved in the decision to reopen the White House political office. While they took issue with some media characterizations of the office, they were unable to say whether or not the White House pursued corrections.

¹ Letter from Hon. Darrell E. Issa, Chairman, H. Comm. on Oversight & Gov't Reform, to Denis McDonough, Chief of Staff, The White House (Mar. 18, 2014).

² Hearing Invitation from Hon. Darrell E. Issa, Chairman, H. Comm. on Oversight & Gov't Reform, to David Simas, Director, Office of Political Strategy & Outreach, The White House (July 3, 2014).

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In prior administrations, White House political officials have encountered difficulties squaring their activities with the prohibitions on political or campaign-related activities of federal officials outlined in the Hatch Act. It strains credulity that this Administration has, in contrast to its predecessors, uniquely resolved all concerns about political activity and should not be subject to the same level of congressional oversight requests for testimony and documents as previous administrations.

The Committee has outstanding questions for Mr. Simas, who did not take part in the briefing, and it is necessary for him to appear at tomorrow's hearing. Mr. Simas is still under subpoena and is expected to appear at tomorrow's hearing. I believe his on-the-record testimony will provide valuable insight into White House efforts to ensure appropriate use of taxpayer funds.

If you have any questions, please contact Committee staff at (202) 225-5074. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Darrell Issa".

Darrell Issa
Chairman

cc: The Honorable Elijah E. Cummings, Ranking Minority Member