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August 22, 2014

Mr. Denis McDonough
Chief of Staff
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. McDonough:

The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform has been seeking answers to questions about the purpose and function of the White House Office of Political Strategy and Outreach (OPSO) for more than five months. I have attempted to obtain the information that the Committee needs in a number of different ways—from asking the White House to produce documents voluntarily, to requesting a briefing from OPSO officials, to inviting OPSO Director David Simas to appear voluntarily at a hearing, and finally, to subpoenaing Mr. Simas to testify before the Committee. It was not until the eve of Mr. Simas's second required appearance before the Committee—after he ignored his legal obligation to comply with the subpoena the first time—that the White House signaled a desire to work with the Committee to find a mutually agreeable resolution through the accommodations process.

On July 28, 2014, our staffs met at the White House to discuss a way forward. My staff made a number of proposals that would allow the Committee to get the information we need. For instance, to accommodate the White House's stated concerns about having Mr. Simas testify publicly, my staff proposed that the Committee question Mr. Simas in a deposition setting. I also made that request in a letter dated July 24, 2014. To accommodate the White House's stated concerns about producing documents that implicate the presidential communications privilege, my staff proposed a more narrow production of documents that would exclude communications between the President and his advisers. Indeed, I narrowed my original document request in a letter dated August 12, 2014.

The White House has acknowledged that the dialogue has been constructive and that progress has been made. Unfortunately, these characterizations represent the total sum of what the White House has provided in response to my good faith proposals to address the White House's separation of powers concerns. The White House has not produced any additional documents, nor has the White House stated if or when the Committee will hear from Mr. Simas. In short, the accommodations process, which the White House itself characterized as constructive, has netted the Committee absolutely nothing.

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To advance the process, I am left with no alternative but to issue a subpoena to compel you to produce the narrow set of documents that I requested on August 12, 2014. In the event that a responsive document is withheld on the basis of the presidential communications privilege, provide a privilege log containing the following information concerning any such document: (a) the type of document; and (b) the date, author and addressee.

Please contact my staff at (202) 225-5074 with any questions. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Darrell Issa", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Darrell Issa
Chairman

Enclosure

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