

**Testimony before the Committee on House Administration  
Committee on Ethics  
Remarks by Ranking Member Linda T. Sánchez  
March 6, 2013**

Good afternoon Chairman Miller, Ranking Member Brady, and members of the Committee. Thank you for the chance to talk about the work of the Ethics Committee and its budget needs.

As the Chairman indicated, we both want to continue to find ways to improve the Committee's response times to Members and staff. Whether someone is seeking advice or is the subject of an investigation, we recognize that these are all important matters.

I want to thank the Chairman for his commitment – which I share. Our staff shares this commitment, too.

I would like to discuss how our need for increased staff is based, not only, on our own desire to be more efficient, but also on several significant developments that affect the Committee's work.

We believe that we will need to increase our staff to be able to meet new requirements in the manner the House and the public expect and deserve.

One of these evolving challenges is privately sponsored travel. In 2007, the House mandated that the Committee review and approve all requests for privately sponsored travel. Since then, the requests have increased significantly. The reviews by our staff have also grown more comprehensive and thorough.

In the last Congress, the Committee received more than 3,500 requests to accept privately sponsored travel. Just two months into this Congress, we have received more than 430 requests. Assuming typical patterns continue, this week, the Committee will break the 10,000 mark for private travel requests since the current private travel rules took effect in 2007.

Each travel request involves a thorough review and approval process. In the past, Members and staff have faced significant consequences if private travel sponsors gave false and misleading information, or if a trip did not comply with House Rules. Verifying the information provided by the travelers and sponsors – as well as other public information – so the Committee can approve a proposed trip takes an extraordinary amount of time.

In 2008, the House created the Office of Congressional Ethics. Although the Committee continues to begin most investigative matters at its own initiative, OCE has contributed to an increase in the Committee's investigative work.

Our staffing authorization was increased accordingly to handle our increased workload. However, as the Chairman noted, we have not yet been able to fill all of these positions.

More recently, a new development created even more demands on our staff. Last year, the STOCK Act created a new financial reporting requirement for Members and senior staff. In addition to filing reports of certain transactions on an annual basis, filers must now file Periodic Transaction Reports throughout the year.

The Committee is required by law to certify compliance with the filing requirements for every report filed. So, we must check all the information we have in order to determine if amendments to any report are needed. For example, each time someone reports a sale of an asset on a PTR, our staff has to check that filer's previously filed PTRs and annual statements, until we can identify the previous ownership of that asset. As more reports are filed, more documents must be checked for each filer.

For context, in each of the last three Congresses the Committee reviewed more than 6,000 financial disclosure statements and amendments. Since the STOCK Act took effect less than one year ago, the Committee has received more than 850 PTRs reporting more than 9,000 transactions. Some PTRs list dozens of transactions.

From our brief experience, it is clear that without increased staffing, there will come a time when we simply will not be able to review and certify every transaction on every PTR.

These three major developments, each of which was mandated by the House, have contributed to a dramatic increase in the Committee's workload. Our funding level and our staff authorization have grown since 2007, and we are grateful for that. However, it is clear that we have not yet reached the staff level necessary to meet these obligations and provide the prompt and consistent service that the House and the public have a right to expect.

We appreciate the tough task your committee has before it. Whatever budget is allocated to the Ethics Committee, the Chairman and I can assure you the Members and staff of the Committee will continue to meet its responsibilities to the House. However, in light of the significant – and growing – obligations the Committee has under House rules and federal law, renewing the amount allocated to the Ethics Committee last year would greatly help the Committee meet its obligations.

Thank you again for the opportunity to appear here today. We look forward to your questions.

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