

Testimony Before the Committee on House Administration
Remarks by Committee on Ethics Ranking Member Susan Wild
March 1, 2023

Good morning Chairman Steil, Ranking Member Morelle, and members of the Committee. Thank you for this opportunity to speak with you about the Ethics Committee's ongoing work and our funding request for the 118th Congress.

I am pleased to be here this morning with Chairman Guest. Though we are relatively new to our respective roles as Chair and Ranking Member, this will be our third Congress serving together on the Ethics Committee. I look forward to continuing our work together in the same spirit of bipartisanship and collegiality that has traditionally prevailed on our Committee.

You invited us here this morning to discuss our budget, which as you know is one of the smallest of any House committee.

I expect that other Committee Chairs and Ranking Members who have appeared before you have likely asked for more funding. As you consider our Committee's request for a modest budget increase, I would urge you to consider how investments in the Ethics Committee can return great dividends for both the House community and the public.

As the Chairman discussed, the Ethics Committee is unique, not only for its evenly divided membership and nonpartisan professional staff, but also for the critical role we play in interpreting congressional ethics rules and administering the Code of Official Conduct.

While the Committee's investigative work often attracts press attention and news headlines, our advisory staff's guidance and training helps House Members and staff avoid those headlines and fulfill their ethical responsibilities. This outreach is particularly important with respect to the 78 new Members who are serving their first term in the House this Congress. This past November, our Committee was pleased to partner with yours, as we regularly do, to provide ethics training to incoming Members at New Member Orientation.

Looking ahead to the 118th Congress, we plan to build on our existing advice and education efforts through: continued improvements to – and investments in – our website; further updates to our Ethics Manual; and the creation of more specialized, accessible, and interactive training opportunities.

Our Committee's most valuable resource – our nonpartisan professional staff – is core to these efforts. Last Congress, the Committee spent about 90 percent of its budget on staff salaries. Staff hiring and retention

remains a challenge, particularly as we compete with the private sector and executive branch for attorneys with the specialized knowledge and experience we require.

When any of our colleagues or employees call the Committee seeking help on an urgent advice question, we want to guarantee they continue to receive the best and timeliest advice possible from our roster of Advice and Education attorneys.

Likewise, we must be able to recruit and retain talented and experienced investigative attorneys, so that we can resolve investigations thoroughly, fairly, and quickly, and maintain the House's and the public's confidence in our ability to self-regulate inquiries into alleged ethical violations.

Across Congresses, the Committee has consistently provided high-caliber service to the House community, even as our responsibilities have steadily increased. Our professional staff who are not attorneys play vital roles supporting all of this work.

In the 116th Congress, the House charged our Committee with developing new rules governing what positions Members and senior staff could hold with entities outside the House. I was pleased to chair the working group

that, with the nonpartisan staff's invaluable assistance, developed those outside position regulations.

Last Congress, the Committee was tasked with considering appeals from various fines imposed by the Sergeant at Arms—a responsibility that added significantly to our investigative team's workload.

Despite our Committee being short-staffed for much of 2021, the Committee's nonpartisan professional staff handled our increased workload with excellence and professionalism.

In the coming Congress, we look forward continuing our work helping the House community fulfill their ethical responsibilities. Already this Congress, the Committee has ensured that every new Member of the House has received ethics training. There have been 9 live ethics training sessions, with live ethics training provided to over 340 House employees.

The Committee has received nearly 60 requests for formal advisory opinions and has issued almost 50 formal advisory opinions. It has received almost 260 requests to accept privately sponsored travel and issued almost 160 letters approving that travel.

And finally, Committee staff have fielded more than 2,500 informal telephone calls, emails, and in-person requests for guidance on ethics issues.

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

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