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ONE HUNDRED NINTH CONGRESS

# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM

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January 23, 2006

The Honorable Tom Davis  
Chairman  
Committee on Government Reform  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Davis:

Earlier this month former lobbyist Jack Abramoff pled guilty to a number of counts related to what appears to be a widespread corruption scandal involving conspiracy to bribe public officials.<sup>1</sup> Facing evidence of close ties between the Bush White House and Mr. Abramoff, the White House promised a “thorough report” to the public regarding Mr. Abramoff’s White House contacts.<sup>2</sup> Yet days later the White House reversed this pledge, and is now refusing to provide basic accountability on this issue.<sup>3</sup>

As the primary oversight committee for the House of Representatives, the Government Reform Committee is responsible for ensuring public confidence that the White House is operating appropriately and without taint of corruption. Therefore, I am writing to request that this Committee seek from the White House information essential to understanding the nature of Mr. Abramoff’s relationship and influence with the White House.

Reports continue to mount indicating substantial connections between Mr. Abramoff and the White House. For example:

- According to the *Associated Press*, which examined billing records of Mr. Abramoff’s lobbying firm, Mr. Abramoff and his lobbying team had “nearly 200 contacts” with the Administration during the first ten months of the Bush Administration, including meetings with policy advisers to the Vice President and the White House intergovernmental affairs chief, among others.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Abramoff Pleads Guilty to 3 Counts*, Washington Post (Jan. 4, 2006).

<sup>2</sup> *The White House, Press Briefing by Scott McClellan* (Jan. 5, 2006).

<sup>3</sup> *White House Silent on Abramoff Meetings*, Associated Press (Jan. 17, 2006).

<sup>4</sup> *Lobbyist Now Under Investigation Had Close Contact with Bush Team*, Associated Press (May 5, 2006).

- According to a September 2005 statement by the President's nominee to be deputy attorney general, Mr. Abramoff bragged in 2003 that he "had contact with Mr. Karl Rove," senior advisor to the President, on behalf of Tyco International Ltd.<sup>5</sup> In addition, Mr. Abramoff's lobbying disclosure statements "cited 'Executive Office of the President' as one of his lobbying targets" on the tax and contracts issues of concern to Tyco, and records Mr. Abramoff's firm submitted to Tyco "describe specific contacts with the White House legislative office."<sup>6</sup>
- At the beginning of the Bush Administration, Mr. Abramoff's personal assistant moved over to serve as "gatekeeper" for senior advisor to the President Karl Rove,<sup>7</sup> a position that she reportedly just recently left.<sup>8</sup>
- Mr. Abramoff's relationship with President Bush's aides reportedly dates "as far back as 1997," the year in which "Abramoff charged the Marianas for getting then-Texas Gov. George W. Bush to write a letter expressing support for the Pacific territory's school choice proposal."<sup>9</sup>
- Just yesterday, *Time* reported it had seen "five photographs of Abramoff and the President that suggest a level of contact between them that Bush's aides have downplayed."<sup>10</sup>

As you know, this Committee devoted extraordinary resources investigating contacts between the Clinton White House and individuals with alleged inappropriate influence with or access to the White House — regardless of whether these individuals had been indicted for any wrongdoing.<sup>11</sup> In 1997, the Committee Chairman announced that the Committee would "look

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<sup>5</sup> *Tyco Exec: Abramoff Claimed Ties to the Administration*, Washington Post (Sept. 23, 2005).

<sup>6</sup> *Tyco Exec: Abramoff Claimed Ties to the Administration*, Washington Post (Sept. 23, 2005).

<sup>7</sup> *A Lobbyist in Full*, New York Times (May 1, 2005).

<sup>8</sup> *Is Ralston Still at the White House?*, Phillipine News.com (Dec. 7, 2005).

<sup>9</sup> *Lobbyist Now Under Investigation Had Close Contact with Bush Team*, Associated Press (May 5, 2006).

<sup>10</sup> *When George Met Jack*, Time (Jan. 22, 2006).

<sup>11</sup> For a summary of the types of information this Committee and others sought from the Clinton Administration, as well as a description of the costs of these investigations, see Minority Staff, House Committee on Government Reform, *Congressional Oversight of the Clinton Administration* (Jan. 17, 2006).

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into every area where there's a possibility of illegal activity as far as influence-peddling" including "possible involvement of White House personnel and things like that."<sup>12</sup>


Toward this end, the Committee issued a broad subpoena to the White House for all records — including photographs — relating to a long list of dozens of specific individuals and entities thought to have been in contact with the Clinton White House.<sup>13</sup> This subpoena also requested information including:

- All records of White House social secretaries regarding scheduling of White House events, including "ceremonies, residence visits, overnight stays at the White House, Kennedy Center tickets, Camp David visits, private dinners, guests at White House movie showings, and official delegation trips abroad";
- All records of attendees at White House movies;
- All records of attendees at Presidential radio address spots,
- All records of guests at Camp David;
- All records of who had White House mess privileges;
- All records relating to use of the Presidential box at the Kennedy Center;
- All records of Air Force I and Air Force II passenger manifests and all records of reimbursements for Air Force I and/or Air Force II expenses for non-staff passengers; and
- All records relating to official delegation trips abroad, among many other items.

The request I am making today is far more narrowly tailored than this Committee's past demands to the Clinton White House to explore the extent of lobbyist and fundraiser influence. Specifically, I ask that the Committee require the White House to turn over to the Committee all records, including photographs, relating to contacts between the White House and Mr. Abramoff or members of his lobbying team acting under his direction since the beginning of the Bush Administration.

I hope we can work together on this important oversight issue.

Sincerely,



Henry A. Waxman

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<sup>12</sup> *Meet the Press*, NBC (Feb. 16, 1997).

<sup>13</sup> *See* House Committee on Government Reform, Subpoena Ducus Tecum to the Executive Office of the President (Mar. 4, 1997).