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Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

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April 26, 2007

The Honorable Mike Johanns
Secretary
Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I am writing to request information about political briefings given by White House officials to federal agency officials.

On March 28, 2007, the Committee held a hearing during which Lurita Doan, the head of the General Services Administration, testified that White House officials in the Office of Political Affairs conducted a political briefing at GSA headquarters on January 26, 2007. The briefing slides, which the Committee reviewed, identified the Republican Party's top electoral targets in the 2008 elections. After the presentation, Lurita Doan asked her staff to discuss how GSA resources could be used to help "our candidates" in the next election.

An article in today's *Washington Post* reports that White House officials now confirm that, in the past year alone, at least 20 similar briefings were given to officials of at least 15 federal agencies, including the Interior Department, the Environmental Protection Agency, and the Commerce Department, among others.¹

To assist with the Committee's continuing investigation of this issue, I request that you provide information about any briefing mentioning elections or candidates provided to agency employees by officials in the White House between January 20, 2001, and April 26, 2007. Please provide the dates, times, attendees, and locations of these briefings, as well as any communications and documents relating to the briefings. Please provide these materials to the Committee by May 18, 2007.

I wrote to you earlier this month requesting that your agency preserve and inventory all e-mails sent between White House officials and agency employees through accounts controlled by

¹ *Political Briefings at Agencies Disclosed*, Washington Post (Apr. 26, 2007).

The Honorable Mike Johanns
April 26, 2007
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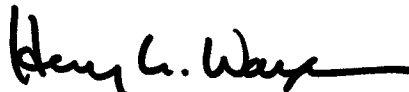
the Republican National Committee or other nongovernmental entities. At the request of the White House Counsel, I am postponing temporarily the deadline for responding to the Committee's request. This postponement will last for two weeks, extending the deadline for response to the letter to May 18, 2007. The Committee's postponement does not apply to the request that you take steps to preserve such e-mails.

Please note that you should not review or search the e-mails of the Office of the Inspector General in responding to the Committee's request regarding RNC and other nongovernmental e-mails. Such action would be inappropriate because it would impinge on the statutory independence of the Inspectors General and the confidentiality of investigative communications. All copies of documents previously collected from the Office of the Inspector General pursuant to the Committee's request should be returned to that office immediately.

The Committee on Oversight and Government Reform is the principal oversight committee in the House of Representatives and has broad oversight jurisdiction as set forth in House Rule X. An attachment to this letter provides additional information about how to respond to the Committee's request.

I would appreciate your cooperation with this request. If your staff has any questions about this request, they should contact David Rapallo and Anna Laitin with the Committee staff at (202) 225-5420.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Henry A. Waxman", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Henry A. Waxman
Chairman

Enclosure

cc: Tom Davis
Ranking Minority Member