

Board
Porter Goss, Chair David Skaggs, Co-Chair
Jay Eagen Yvonne Burke
William Frenzel Karan English
Abner Mikva Allison Hayward

Omar S. Ashmawy, Staff Director & Chief Counsel

oce.house.gov
oce@mail.house.gov

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

OFFICE OF CONGRESSIONAL ETHICS

Washington, DC 20515

Mailing Address:
P.O. Box 895
Washington, DC 20515-0895

Office Address:
425 3rd Street, SW
Suite 1110
Washington, DC 20024

(202) 225-9739
(202) 226-0997 (FAX)

FOURTH QUARTER 2011 REPORT

October 2011 – December 2011

I. INTRODUCTION

The Office of Congressional Ethics (“OCE”) is an independent, non-partisan entity charged with reviewing allegations of misconduct against Members, Officers and staff of the House and, when appropriate, referring matters to the Committee on Ethics (“Committee”). In all but one set of circumstances, the report and findings of the OCE Board included in a referral to the Committee must be publicly released.

The mission of the OCE and its Board is to assist the United States House of Representatives in upholding high standards of ethical conduct for its Members, Officers and staff and, in so doing, to serve the American people.

The following is a report of the OCE’s work in the fourth quarter of 2011.

II. CITIZEN COMMUNICATIONS

Any member of the public may bring a matter of suspected misconduct involving a Member, Officer or staff of the House to the attention of the OCE. Approximately 75 private citizens have contacted the OCE in the October through December 2011 period. These contacts were of two types: (1) requests for information on the OCE and its procedures and (2) allegations of misconduct. Staff or any Board member may also submit information regarding an alleged violation for consideration by the Board. The OCE requests all submissions of information be made in writing.

III. BOARD ACTIONS

The OCE’s investigations have two stages: (1) a preliminary review, which must be completed in 30 days and (2) a second-phase review, which must be completed in 45 days, with the option of a 14-day extension. Two Board members (one appointed by the Speaker of the House and one appointed by the Minority Leader) may authorize a preliminary review if all available information provides a *reasonable basis* to believe that a violation may have occurred.

Three Board members may authorize a second-phase review if all available information provides *probable cause* to believe a violation may have occurred.

A decision to undertake a preliminary review or second-phase review should not be misconstrued. Historically, the majority of reviews have resulted in termination or dismissal of the matter.

At the end of any second-phase review, the Board must recommend to the Committee on Ethics either that the matter warrants further review by the Committee or that the Committee should dismiss the matter. A recommendation for further review does not constitute a determination that a violation occurred. Similarly, a recommendation for dismissal does not constitute a determination that a violation did not occur, but only that the information available to OCE does not provide a substantial reason to believe a violation occurred; *substantial reason* is the standard of proof generally required under OCE Rules to refer a matter to the Committee for further review. The OCE is not authorized to sanction Members, officers or employees of the House or to recommend any sanctions. The Committee has the exclusive authority to determine if a violation has occurred and, if so, what sanction may be in order.

When it makes its recommendation, the OCE Board may also transmit to the Committee on Ethics findings that include, among other things, findings of fact and citations to laws, rules or regulations that may have been violated. A chart depicting the OCE's review process is available on the OCE website at <http://oce.house.gov>.

The following is a statistical summary of the Board's actions in the fourth quarter of 2011.

Type of Action Date	Commence Preliminary Review	Vote to Terminate Matter	Commence Phase II Review	Commence Phase II Review Extension	Transmit Referral for Review	Transmit Referral for Dismissal
October 13	0	0	0	0	2	0
October 28	0	1	0	0	0	0
October 29	0	0	4	0	0	0
November 3	1	0	0	0	0	0
November 8	0	0	0	0	1	1
December 3	0	0	1	0	0	0
December 9	3	0	0	0	0	0
December 13	0	0	0	4	0	0
Total for Quarter	4	1	5	4	3	1
Total for 112th Congress	22	5	14	10	7	2

IV. SCHEDULE OF PUBLIC RELEASE OF OCE REPORTS AND FINDINGS

The OCE's reports and findings in the matters transmitted to the Committee on Ethics for further review must be made public according to the schedule contained in House Resolution 895 of the 110th Congress, as amended.

A chart depicting this schedule for public disclosure of OCE reports is available on the OCE website at <http://oce.house.gov>. The following is a summary of the various matters pending release that the OCE has referred to the Committee on Ethics.

Review No.	Status	Release Date
11-9366	On December 22, 2011, the Chair and ranking of the Committee on Ethics announced that the Committee is taking an additional 45 days to consider the matter.	By February 6, 2012, the Committee on Ethics must release the OCE report or make a public announcement that the Committee has voted to empanel an investigative subcommittee.