



January 29, 2014

Office of Congressional Ethics
United States House of Representatives
P.O. Box 895
Washington, DC 20515-0895

Common Cause respectfully requests your review of the below information concerning Representative Michael Grimm of New York's 11th Congressional District.

On January 28, 2014, following President Obama's State of the Union address to a joint session of Congress, Representative Grimm gave an on-camera interview to Michael Scotto, a reporter for NY1.¹ Representative Grimm abruptly ended the interview when Mr. Scotto began to ask him a question unrelated to the State of the Union. After Mr. Scotto reported that the Congressman did not want to "talk about some of the allegations concerning his campaign finances," Representative Grimm responded on camera with violent and intimidating rhetoric, threatening grievous bodily harm to the reporter.²

According to news reports, the Federal Bureau of Investigation recently arrested a former associate of Representative Grimm on charges that she utilized straw donors to hide illegal contributions to the Congressman's campaign.³ The *New York Times* reported that "[t]he charges suggest that a two-year-old federal investigation into [Representative Grimm's] fund-raising is still active."⁴

As you will see in the video of the interview,⁵ upon the conclusion of Mr. Scotto's reporting, Congressman Grimm approached Mr. Scotto, saying "[l]et me be clear to you. If you ever do that to me again I'll throw you off this f---ing balcony." When Mr. Scotto asked "Why? It's a valid question?" the Congressman told Mr. Scotto that "you're not man enough, you're not man enough. I'll break you in half. Like a boy."

According to the *New York Times*, Congressman Grimm issued a statement late on the evening of January 28, 2014, explaining that he was "extremely annoyed because I was doing NY1 a

¹ Sarah Wheaton, *Rep. Michael Grimm Threatens an NY1 Reporter*, N.Y. Times, Jan. 29, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/29/nyregion/rep-michael-grimm-physically-threatens-a-ny1-reporter.html>.

² Sarah Wheaton and Marc Santora, *After 'I'll Break You in Half,' Grimm Apologizes*, N.Y. Times, Jan. 29, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/30/nyregion/rep-michael-grimm-threat-ny1-reporter.html?hpw&rref=nyregion>.

³ William K. Rashbaum, *F.B.I. Arrests Fund-Raiser for Congressman*, N.Y. Times, Jan. 14, 2014, at A-22, http://www.nytimes.com/2014/01/14/nyregion/fbi-arrests-fund-raiser-for-congressman.html?_r=0.

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ *Supra* note 2.

favor by rushing to do their interview first in lieu of several other requests. The reporter knew that I was in a hurry and was only there to comment on the State of the Union, but insisted on taking a disrespectful and cheap shot at the end of the interview, because I did not have time to speak off-topic. I verbally took the reporter to task and told him off, because I expect a certain level of professionalism and respect, especially when I go out of my way to do that reporter a favor.”⁶

The *National Journal* reported that Representative Grimm today called Mr. Scotto to apologize, Mr. Scotto accepted the apology, and that “we put it all behind us.”⁷

Irrespective of Representative Grimm’s words of apology, his admitted misconduct raises serious questions about whether he violated Rule XXIII of the Rules of the House, which requires Members of Congress to “behave at all times in a manner that shall reflect creditably on the House.” According to the House Ethics Manual, the Committee on Ethics has invoked this rule in investigating or disciplining Members for “making statements that impugned the reputation of the House,” and the rule encompasses “abuses of one’s official position.”⁸

Common Cause respectfully requests an investigation of this information concerning Representative Grimm and a referral to the Standards Committee.

I acknowledge that section 1001 of title 18 United States Code applies to the information provided in this letter.

Sincerely,



Stephen Spaulding
Staff Counsel, Common Cause

Common Cause
1133 19th St. NW
9th Floor
202-736-5781
sspaulding@commoncause.org

⁶ *Supra* note 2.

⁷ Matt Berman and Elahe Izadi, *Rep. Michael Grimm Apologizes to Reporter for Threatening to Break Him in Half*, *National Journal*, Jan. 29, 2014, <http://www.nationaljournal.com/congress/rep-michael-grimm-apologizes-to-reporter-for-threatening-to-break-him-in-half-20140129>.

⁸ Committee on Standards of Official Conduct, House Ethics Manual 16.