



The Hon. Doc Hastings, Chairman
The Hon. Alan Mollohan, Ranking Member
Committee on Standards of Official Conduct
HT-2 Capitol
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Hastings and Ranking Member Mollohan:

Common Cause urges the House Committee on Standards of Conduct to include in its investigation of Representative Tom DeLay's (R-TX) 2000 trip to England and Scotland whether the trip was a gift from lobbyist Jack Abramoff in exchange for legislative assistance from Representative DeLay and whether this trip was primarily recreational in nature.

The Justice Department is also investigating aspects of the 2000 trip as part of its wide-ranging investigation of Abramoff. Published reports have cited a document produced by the British Home Office that states: "U.S. officials are investigating whether Abramoff was involved in obtaining legislative assistance from public officials in exchange for arranging and underwriting trips to the U.K." The British document goes on to state that the investigation involves, "high-profile American and U.K.-based individuals, including a leading congressman and former Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher."

Officials in Britain and the U.S. have confirmed that the "leading congressman" was Representative DeLay.

The House Ethics Committee's investigation of Representative DeLay's 2000 trip must include whether Abramoff arranged and paid for trips to Great Britain in order to secure the assistance of elected officials, specifically Rep. DeLay, on legislative matters.

Clause 3 of House Rule XXIII states:

A Member, Delegate, Resident Commissioner, officer, or employee of the House may not receive compensation and may not permit compensation to accrue to his beneficial interest from any source, the receipt of which would occur by virtue of influence improperly exerted from his position in the Congress.

The Committee's investigation of Representative DeLay must also include whether the trip was primarily recreational in nature. Representative DeLay has maintained that the trip

complied with House rules governing privately funded Congressional travel because it was directly related to his official duties. However, according to the *Wall Street Journal*:

Rep. Tom DeLay's now-controversial 2000 trip to Scotland was organized by a Washington lobbyist who hired an Arizona golf-tour company to make the arrangements and invited his clients and associates to interact with the House majority leader, newly available documents show.

House rules say such trips are acceptable only if they are principally designed for information gathering, and Mr. DeLay's visit to Scotland and London was billed as an effort to promote an exchange of ideas with British conservatives.

Still, lobbyist Jack Abramoff's heavy involvement and the recreational nature of much of the trip raise questions about the true purpose of the Scottish leg of the expensive outing, which Mr. Abramoff initially helped pay for, according to travel documents and billing records reviewed by The Wall Street Journal.

The new information suggests instead that recreation was the primary purpose of going to Scotland, and the excursion appears more a gift and contrary to House rules defining "necessary" travel expenses as not including "entertainment or recreational activities."

According to the Gifts and Travel booklet cited on the Committee's website:

Where a Member, officer or employee proposes to accept travel under this provision, the rule is very specific in requiring that a determination be made that the travel is in connection with the individual's official duties. As phrased in the rule, the requirement is for a determination that – "the travel is in connection with the duties of the [individual] as an officeholder and would not create the appearance that the [individual] is using public office for private gain." [clauses 5(b)(2)(D), 5(b)(3)(F) of House Rule 26]

The Committee must investigate whether Abramoff was involved in obtaining legislative assistance from Representative DeLay in exchange for arranging the 2000 trip and whether the trip was connected to Representative DeLay's official duties.

We further urge you to make public your findings in this matter, and to provide appropriate guidance to Members to ensure that improper and unethical practices of this nature do not occur.

We would appreciate a reply to this request at your earliest opportunity.

Sincerely,



Chellie Pingree
President

cc: Representative Judy Biggert (R-IL)
Representative Lamar Smith (R-TX)
Representative Melissa Hart (R-PA)
Representative Tom Cole (R-OK)
Representative Stephanie Tubbs Jones (D-OH)
Representative Gene Green (D-TX)
Representative Lucille Roybal-Allard (D-CA)
Representative Michael F. Doyle (D-PA)