

Holding Power Accountable

January 24, 2018

Dear Members of the House and Senate Judiciary Committees:

Last week, the *Wall Street Journal* [reported](#) that less than a month before the 2016 election, then-candidate Donald J. Trump's attorney, Michael Cohen, arranged a \$130,000 payment through a Delaware LLC to Stephanie Clifford (a.k.a. Stormy Daniels), with whom President Trump allegedly had an affair.

Earlier this week, Common Cause filed two complaints, [one with the Department of Justice](#) and [one with the Federal Election Commission](#), requesting investigations into possible campaign finance violations for these alleged hush money payments to Stormy Daniels. On behalf of our 1.1 million members around the country, we strongly urge your committees to uphold your oversight responsibility to investigate these allegations, too.

One purpose of campaign finance law is to provide Americans with a full accounting of the money raised and spent to influence federal elections, including the race for the White House. This information helps voters make meaningful choices at the ballot box. Transparency helps the public hold elected officials accountable.

As detailed in our complaints and the reporting in the *Wall Street Journal*, there are sufficient grounds to investigate whether the \$130,000 payment to Stormy Daniels should have been reported as in-kind contribution to and an expenditure by President Trump's authorized campaign committee. If the \$130,000 came from then-candidate Trump's personal funds, an investigation will surface reporting violations. If a corporation—such as the Trump Organization—provided the money, an investigation would show violations of the corporate contribution ban. And because the \$130,000 far exceeds the \$2,700 per-election limit in place last election cycle, if the money came from a person *other* than Mr. Trump himself, an investigation would show violations of the contribution limits.

Such violations are not simple bookkeeping errors, but may show a deliberate evasion of existing laws that exist so that Americans get a full accounting of the money raised and spent by and for federal candidates, including presidential candidates.

To help set the record straight, we respectfully ask you to investigate the source and purpose of the payment, and determine if there are laws and practices in place to protect against efforts to circumvent the transparency and accountability that Americans deserve. Political candidates should not selectively choose to follow the law when it is convenient for them and ignore it at other times. We hope you will put country over party and begin prompt oversight of these alleged actions.

Sincerely,



Karen Hobert Flynn
President
Common Cause

cc: House Oversight and Government Reform Committee
Senate Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee

Since 1970, [Common Cause](#) has been working to hold power accountable through lobbying, litigation, and organizing. Our non-partisan, pro-democracy work has helped pass dozens of reforms at the federal, state, and local levels. We now have more than one million members around the country who are working to strengthen our democracy.

