

Omar Ashmawy
Chief Counsel
Office of Congressional Ethics
U.S. House of Representatives
425 3rd Street, S.W. Suite 1110
Washington, DC 20024

Dear Mr. Ashmawy,

We respectfully request that the Office of Congressional Ethics (“OCE”) investigate Representative Van Taylor for any violations related to his engagement in inappropriate conduct, including the concealment of that conduct, in violation of federal law and the ethical standards of the House.

I. Background

Recent public reporting indicates that Representative Taylor engaged in an extramarital affair with Ms. Tania Joya from October 2020 until June 2021.¹

Representative Taylor was approached by Ms. Joya in August 2019 “...when she was looking to get involved with the Preventing Violent Extremism program in the district’s school system...”² and “...thought the congressman might have connections to facilitate her involvement.”²

In order to conceal the resulting affair, Representative Taylor asked Ms. Joya to delete text messages in June 2021 in exchange for a cash payment of \$5,000.³

II. Law

The Code of Ethics for Government Service requires that members “[u]phold the Constitution, laws, and legal regulations of the United States and of all governments therein and never be a party to their evasion.”⁴

Pursuant to 31 U.S.C. § 1301(a), official funds may be used only for the purposes appropriated. The Congressional Handbook provides that a Members’ Representational Allowance (“MRA”) may only be used for official and representational expenses. It may not be used for personal expenses. The House Code of Official Conduct and the House Ethics Manual provide that official resources of the House include the use of official staff time, which cannot be for a personal use.⁵

¹ Wendell Husbo, [Exclusive: ‘ISIS Bride’ Says Texas Congressman Van Taylor Paid Her to Keep Quiet About Affair](#), Breitbart (Feb. 28, 2022).

² Husbo, *supra* note 1.

³ Husbo, *supra* note 1.

⁴ Committee on Standards of Official Conduct, U.S. House of Representatives, [House Ethics Manual](#), 20 (2008).

⁵ Committee on House Administration, U.S. House of Representatives, [Members’ Congressional Handbook](#), 2 (2021); Committee on Standards of Official Conduct, *supra* note 4, at 197 (2008).

The House Ethics Manual holds that “[g]overnment is a trust, and the officers of the government are trustees; and both the trust and the trustees are created for the benefit of the people.”⁶

House Rule 23 holds that a Member shall behave at all times in a manner that shall reflect creditably on the House, and Members are expected to adhere to the spirit and the letter of the Rules of the House.⁷

III. Analysis

Ms. Joya reportedly approached Representative Taylor in his official capacity, hoping that he might be able to facilitate connections for her. He subsequently engaged in an affair with Ms. Joya, and then paid her \$5,000 in cash to have her delete text messages.⁸ If he used any official resources or staff time to either start the affair, or cover up the affair, he is in violation of laws restricting the misuse of official funds. Members must uphold the Constitution and the laws of the United States; this includes laws governing official conduct.⁹ Federal law makes clear that official resources, including staff time, may not be used for personal benefit.¹⁰

Members are charged with maintaining the public trust.¹¹ They are also expected to engage in behavior that reflects creditably on the House and to adhere to the letter and the spirit of the Rules of the House.¹² If Representative Taylor exerted any influence or authority—including the misappropriation of official resources—in order to advance or conceal his explicit affair, he has done so not for the benefit of the public, but for his own, a clear violation of the public trust and the Rules of the House.

IV. Request for Action

To the extent that Representative Van Taylor used his congressional office to engage in and conceal an extramarital affair raises serious questions regarding his misappropriation of official resources. It further highlights facts and circumstances which may have caused him to violate the Rules of the House. We therefore respectfully request that the OCE undertake an investigation into any and all violative conduct in order to ensure the integrity of the House.

Sincerely,



Caitlin Sutherland
Executive Director

⁶ Committee on Standards of Official Conduct, *supra* note 4, at 2.

⁷ [Rules of the House of Representatives](#), Rule 23, Cl. 1-2 (2021).

⁸ Husbo, *supra* note 1.

⁹ Committee on Standards of Official Conduct, *supra* note 4.

¹⁰ 31 U.S.C. § 1301(a)(1); Committee on Standards of Official Conduct, *supra* note 4 at 197; Committee on House Administration, *supra* note 5.

¹¹ Committee on Standards of Official Conduct, *supra* note 4, at 2.

¹² [Rules of the House of Representatives](#), *supra* note 7.