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**One Hundred Sixteenth Congress**  
**U.S. House of Representatives**  
**Committee on Foreign Affairs**  
2170 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515  
[www.foreignaffairs.house.gov](http://www.foreignaffairs.house.gov)

July 22, 2019

The Honorable Brian Bulatao  
Undersecretary of State for Management  
Department of State  
2200 C St. NW  
Washington, DC 20037

Dear Mr. Bulatao:

I am concerned over multiple reports that the State Department has been spending tens of thousands of U.S. taxpayer dollars that end up in the pocket of President Trump, in possible violation of the Domestic Emoluments Clause of the U.S. Constitution.<sup>1</sup> The President's refusal to divest from his myriad businesses interests, coupled with the opaque web of shell companies through which those businesses are owned and controlled, makes tracking the large sums of money taxpayers are sending to Trump-owned properties difficult. I write to ask you to provide clarification on the nature of, and justification for such payments, and to exercise vigilance in ensuring that State Department resources and employees under your purview are not employed to further violations of the Constitution or federal government and Department contracting regulations.

Recent reporting shows that the Department paid exorbitant hotel and conference room fees and bar tabs at the President's Mar-a-Lago Club in Palm Beach, Florida, amounting to 300% of the government's per diem rate, including during a two-day summit with the Chinese

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<sup>1</sup> See U.S. Constitution, art. II, § 1, cl. 7 (“The President shall, at stated Times, receive for his Services, a Compensation which shall neither be increased nor diminished during the Period for which he shall have been elected, and he shall not receive within that Period any other Emolument from the United States, or any of them”).

President held at Mar-a-Lago in April 2017.<sup>2</sup> We understand that the Department's Office of Presidential Travel Support has been pressured to make exceptions to traditional practices and procedures in order to accommodate the frequency and expense of official visits to Mar-a-Lago. The Department reportedly proposed a contract with Mar-a-Lago that would pay \$200,000 for all room costs for federal employees who stay at Mar-a-Lago through 2020. But Mar-a-Lago refused, and insisted on billing U.S. taxpayers the maximum permitted by federal rules, without competitive bidding as generally required by the Federal Acquisition Regulations, and at rates nearly double those negotiated by the government at nearby hotels.

In addition to the excessive spending of taxpayer funds at Mar-a-Lago, separate reporting alleges that the State Department has made at least four payments, totaling more than \$90,000, to the Trump Turnberry golf course in Scotland—an entity over which President Trump retains ultimate ownership through a trust.<sup>3</sup> The payments were reportedly described as “simplified acquisitions” and authorized by the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs as well as the U.S. Embassy in London. The most recent payment was reportedly an advance for hotel rooms to be used during July 2019. While the specific purpose for securing these rooms is unclear, reporting indicates that President Trump's son Eric is a regular at the resort—raising questions about whether any of the questionable payments may in fact be supporting the President's family business, as opposed to official Administration travel.<sup>4</sup>

The Department's decision to use the President's commercial properties as lodging or event venues for official travel creates unnecessary additional burdens for the Department and its employees, while personally enriching the President, seemingly in violation of the Constitution. As a Senate-confirmed official tasked with upholding public trust, you have a responsibility to ensure that the Department spends taxpayer dollars in accordance with U.S. law and to ensure that your employees have the training and support they need to carry out this responsibility on a daily basis.

Accordingly, I seek the following information in order to better understand whether and how the State Department's resources are being appropriately spent and to determine whether any legislative changes are necessary to enable the Department to avoid potential violations of the Constitution:

### **Documents**

We request the Department to produce, no later than August 2, 2019, complete and unredacted copies of:

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<sup>2</sup> Derek Kravitz, *How Taxpayers Covered a \$1,000 Liquor Bill for Trump Staffers (and more) at Trump's Club*, PRO PUBLICA, May 1, 2019 (online at: <https://www.propublica.org/article/trump-inc-podcast-taxpayers-covered-liquor-bill-for-trump-staffers-and-more-mar-a-lago>).

<sup>3</sup> Martin McLaughlin, *Donald Trump's Turnberry firm paid £11,000 by US State Department for rooms over summer*, the Scotsman, July 10, 2019 (online at: <https://www.scotsman.com/news/politics/donald-trump-s-turnberry-firm-paid-11-000-by-us-state-department-for-rooms-over-summer-1-4962105>).

<sup>4</sup> *id.*

- Any and all records, including but not limited to records from the Office of Presidential Travel Support, the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, and the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs, referring or relating in any way to Department spending at Mar-a-Lago, the Trump Turnberry golf course, or any other property or entity owned, operated or managed by any entity whose ultimate beneficial owner in whole or in part is the Donald J. Trump Revocable Trust or President Donald Trump (a “Trump Entity”).<sup>5</sup> Responsive records include, but are not limited to:
  - correspondence with or about any Trump Entities;
  - bills for hotel rooms, conference and function rooms at Trump Entities;
  - records relating to charges for meals, beverages, or other incidentals (room service, personal phone calls, mini-bar, movies, etc.) at any Trump Entities;
  - any invoices from any Trump Entities declined by the Department or referred to the White House or another agency or department for payment;
  - records related to any discounts sought, received or negotiated by the Department, as well as records relating to any proposed or concluded contracts between the Department and any Trump Entities;
  - records referring or relating in any way to reimbursements of expenses incurred at any Trump Entity;
  - any and all records referring or relating in any way to a dedicated Department credit card or other spending mechanism for use at Trump Entity.

This request includes, but is not limited to, briefing papers, action or info memos, emails, electronic messages (including, but not limited to, both governmental and commercial/personal email accounts, text messages, or messaging apps such as WhatsApp, Signal, and/or Telegram), but excludes documents the sole content of which is press clippings. Any forwarding of, or additional content added by a sender or receiver to an email containing press clippings would, however, render the document response to this request.

I thank you for your prompt response.

Sincerely,



ELIOT L. ENGEL  
Chairman

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<sup>5</sup> For detailed information regarding the variety of companies that are ultimately owned by the Donald J. Trump Revocable Trust, see Public Citizen, September 5, 2017 *President Trump Inc.*, An Analysis of President Trump’s Financial Disclosures: What we Know, Don’t Know, and Why It All Matters (online at [https://www.citizen.org/wp-content/uploads/migration/case\\_documents/president\\_trump\\_inc.pdf](https://www.citizen.org/wp-content/uploads/migration/case_documents/president_trump_inc.pdf)).