



FACT

FOUNDATION FOR
ACCOUNTABILITY
AND CIVIC TRUST

June 27, 2019

Omar Ashmawy
Chief Counsel
Office of Congressional Ethics
U.S. House of Representatives
425 3rd Street, S.W., Suite 1110
Washington, DC 20024
Email: oce@mail.house.gov

Dear Mr. Ashmawy,

The Foundation for Accountability and Civic Trust (FACT) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting accountability, ethics, and transparency in government and civic arenas. We request that the Office of Congressional Ethics (“OCE”) investigate whether Representative Donald Norcross has failed to disclose a “full and complete” Financial Disclosure Report as required by 5 U.S.C. App. 4 § 102(a) and therefore, has failed to provide the American public with a complete and accurate representation of gifts he received and their source.

I. Background

Representative Donald Norcross represents New Jersey’s 1st Congressional District.¹ He is a member of the House Armed Services Committee.²

The 2018 Doha Forum was held in Doha, Qatar December 14-16, 2018.³ According to recent reports, Representative Norcross attended the Doha Forum.⁴ The all-expenses paid trip was reportedly funded by the government of Qatar.⁵ A photo posted by the Qatar News Agency shows Representative Norcross and other members of Congress meeting with both the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Qatar at the Doha Forum.⁶

However, Representative Norcross does not list the trip on his 2018 financial disclosure.⁷

¹ U.S. Congressman Donald Norcross, Our District (last visited June 25, 2019), <https://norcross.house.gov/>.

² House Armed Services Committee, About, Meet Our Members (last visited June 25, 2019), <https://armedservices.house.gov/meet-our-members>.

³ Doha Forum, Schedule (last visited June 25, 2019), <https://2018.dohaforum.org/schedule>.

⁴ Luke Rosiak, *Democrats Hid Gifts From A Notorious Foreign Meddler*, Daily Caller (June 21, 2019), <https://dailycaller.com/2019/06/21/democrats-hide-foreign-gifts/>; Ben Smith (@BuzzFeedBen), Twitter (Dec. 14, 2018), <https://twitter.com/BuzzFeedBen/status/1073843238220513280>.

⁵ Luke Rosiak, *Democrats Hid Gifts From A Notorious Foreign Meddler*, Daily Caller (June 21, 2019), <https://dailycaller.com/2019/06/21/democrats-hide-foreign-gifts/>.

⁶ Qatar News Agency (@QNAEnglish), Twitter (Dec. 16, 2018), <https://twitter.com/QNAEnglish/status/1074381270388494336>.

⁷ Clerk of the House of Representatives, Hon. Donald W. Norcross, 2018 Financial Disclosure Report (June 14, 2019) http://clerk.house.gov/public_disc/financial-pdfs/2018/10028507.pdf.

II. Law

Members must file a financial disclosure, including “[t]he identity of the source, a brief description, and the value of all gifts aggregating more than the minimal value....”⁸

Members must also disclose “[t]he identity of the source and a brief description (including a travel itinerary, dates, and nature of expenses provided) of reimbursements received from any source aggregating more than the minimal value....”⁹

Under the Ethics in Government Act (“EIGA”), the minimal value for reporting a gift or reimbursement during the 2018 calendar year is \$390.¹⁰

5 U.S.C. App. 4 § 104(a)(2) makes it unlawful for any person to knowingly and willfully fail to file or report any information required under § 102, with penalties of up to \$50,000 and imprisonment of not more than one year.

III. Analysis

As a member of the U.S. House of Representatives, Representative Donald Norcross is subject to the requirements of the EIGA, and should have reported any travel paid for by the government of Qatar on his financial disclosure.¹¹ By omitting this disclosure, Representative Norcross has concealed gifts or reimbursements he received from a foreign government.

Representative Norcross has obscured any potential conflicts that he may have regarding his own finances, knowledge that is important to the national security of the United States. Qatar is the site of Al Udeid Air Base, the largest U.S. air base in the Middle East which hosts approximately 10,000 U.S. service personnel.¹² As a member of the House Armed Services Committee, it is of particular importance to understand financial ties that Representative Norcross has with foreign governments, especially as it impacts the men and women serving our nation in the Persian Gulf and around the world.

Federal law prohibits members from knowingly and willfully failing to report the requisite information on their financial disclosures.¹³ It is vital to determine if Representative Norcross’ omission was made knowingly and willfully in an attempt to hide his travel to Qatar.

⁸ 5 U.S.C. App. 4 § 102(a)(2); *see* Committee on Standards of Official Conduct, U.S. House of Representatives, House Ethics Manual, 249 (2008); *see* 116th Congress, Rules of the House of Representatives, Rule 26, Cl. 2 (2019).

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ 5 CFR § 2634.304.

¹¹ 5 U.S.C. App. 4, § 101(a).

¹² Matthew Wallin, U.S. Military Bases and Facilities in the Middle East, American Security Project (June 2018), <https://www.americansecurityproject.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Ref-0213-US-Military-Bases-and-Facilities-Middle-East.pdf>.

¹³ 5 U.S.C. App. 4 § 104(a)(2)(A).

IV. Request for Action

Representative Norcross accepted travel from a foreign government. He then failed to properly report this travel on his Financial Disclosure Report. We ask that the OCE review, and where appropriate, take corrective action to ensure that such omissions are not made by Representative Norcross in the future. Further, the OCE should determine if, given the source of funding for the trip, Representative Norcross can legally accept such a gift or reimbursement.

Sincerely,



Kendra Arnold
Executive Director, Foundation for Accountability & Civic Trust