

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 12, 2017

Ms. Lisa J. Stevenson
Acting General Counsel
Federal Election Commission
999 E St. NW
Washington, D.C. 20463

Dear Ms. Stevenson,

We write with regard to the conduct of Donald Trump Jr., Jared Kushner, and Paul Manafort, all of whom appear to have violated the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971 (FECA, U.S.C. § 30101) while serving as advisors to Donald Trump for President, Inc. While it is possible the conduct discussed in this letter may violate laws against treason and other crimes, at the very least it appears these individuals have violated FECA's ban on soliciting from a foreign national a "contribution or donation of money or other thing of value, or to make an express or implied promise to make a contribution or donation, in connection with a Federal, State, or local election."¹ The penalties for violations of FECA can include severe fines or imprisonment.²

If recent reports by the *New York Times* are correct, the Russian attorney with whom they met under the premise of receiving documents which would "incriminate Hillary [Clinton]"³ and which explicitly came from the Russian government would have constituted an offering of such a proscribed "thing of value."⁴ Given the gravity of these concerns, we request the FEC open an immediate investigation into possible violations of federal law by Donald Trump Jr. and his associates in connection with the 2016 presidential campaign.

The United States Congress has long understood that foreign interference in U.S. elections is among the most egregious possible assaults on our democracy and must be prevented. In this vein, Congress enacted the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA) of 1966. This Act established registration requirements and limitations on foreign nationals with regard to political contributions. In 1972, Congress absorbed FARA into FECA, giving the Federal Election Commission the power to enforce and interpret relevant laws. As such, it is incumbent upon the FEC to examine the following matters.

On July 11, 2017, the *New York Times* reported evidence of emails exchanged between Donald Trump Jr. and Bob Goldstone, an intermediary who offered to connect Donald Trump Jr. with Russian lawyer

¹ Federal Election Commission, "Quick Answers to Compliance Questions," *FEC* accessed July 11, 2017.

² "52 U.S. Code § 30121 - Contributions and donations by foreign nationals," Legal Information Institute, *Cornell University Law School*.

³ Jo Becker, Adam Goldman, and Matt Apuzzo, "Russian Dirt on Clinton? 'I Love It' Donald Trump Jr. Said" *New York Times*, July 11, 2017.

⁴ Jo Becker, Matt Apuzzo, and Adam Goldman, "Trump Team Met With Lawyer Linked to Kremlin During Campaign," *New York Times*, July 8, 2017.

Natalia Veselnitskay.⁵ These emails revealed Donald Trump Jr., along with White House advisor Jared Kushner and Trump campaign manager Paul Manafort, met Natalia Veselnitskay with the purpose of obtaining information the Russian government had acquired on then Presidential candidate Hillary Clinton. On June 3, 2017, Donald Trump Jr. replied to Goldstone's initial outreach writing, "...if it's what you say [it is], I love it especially later in the summer."⁶ This interaction may constitute solicitation of a "thing of value..." prohibited by U.S. law. Legal experts have noted that the phrase "other thing of value" in this context means the law extends beyond solely monetary contributions and can include material aid – for example, opposition research.⁷

In response to these public reports, Donald Trump Jr. defended his actions saying on June 9, 2017, "It quickly became clear that she [Natalia Veselnitskay] had no meaningful information."⁸ This followed his initial statement, which was misleading and had to be revised.⁹ Even if his second revised statement is true, the assertion that Donald Trump Jr. did not receive information deemed to be of value does not address the fact that 52 U.S. Code § 30121 criminalizes not only receipt of contributions or donations, but also the solicitation of such materials.¹⁰

As you are aware, the Justice Department as well as the House and Senate Intelligence Committees are conducting parallel investigations to determine whether President Trump's associates colluded with the Russian government during the 2016 campaign. We would request that, should any further evidence of criminal activity arise, the FEC coordinate and cooperate with Special Counsel Robert S. Mueller and his team to investigate further possible violations not covered by the scope of any initial FEC investigations.

Thank you for your attention to these critical matters. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact (202) 225-3976 or email Michael.Chernin@mail.house.gov or Matt.Lee2@mail.house.gov.

Sincerely,



Ted W. Lieu
Member of Congress



Ruben Gallego
Member of Congress

⁵ Jo Becker, Adam Goldman, and Matt Apuzzo, "Russian Dirt on Clinton? 'I Love It' Donald Trump Jr. Said."

⁶ Philip Bump, "What happened and when: The timeline leading up to Donald Trump Jr.'s fateful meeting," *New York Times*, July 11, 2017.

⁷ Zack Beauchamp, "Legal experts say Donald Trump Jr has just confessed to a federal crime," *Vox*, July 11, 2017.

⁸ Liam Stack, "Donald Trump Jr.'s Two Different Explanations for Russian Meeting," *New York Times*, July 9, 2017.

⁹ Liam Stack, "Donald Trump Jr.'s Two Different Explanations for Russian Meeting," *New York Times*, July 9, 2017.

¹⁰ "52 U.S. Code § 30121 - Contributions and donations by foreign nationals," Legal Information Institute.