

March 11, 2005

The Hon. Dennis Hastert
Speaker of the House
The Capitol, H-232
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Hon. Nancy Pelosi
House Democratic Leader
The Capitol, H-204
Washington, D.C. 20515

RE: Potential abuses of travel/gift rules

Dear Mr. Speaker and Ms. Democratic Leader:

Within the last week alone, a slew of news stories have documented a mounting body of evidence that ethics rules governing congressional travel may have been violated by House Majority Leader Tom DeLay (R-Texas), and Reps. John Carter (R-Texas), Ander Crenshaw (R-Fla.), Tom Feeney (R-Fla.), Mike Honda (D-Calif.), Jim McDermott (D-Wash.), Robert Ney (R-Ohio), Earl Pomeroy (D-N.D.), Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R-Fla.), and Del. Eni Faleomavaega (D-American Samoa) and several congressional staff members, including those working for DeLay, Pelosi and other Members.

The possible abuses of congressional travel privileges documented so far include golf outings for DeLay, Feeney and Ney on various trips to Scotland between the years 2000 and 2003, allegedly paid for by lobbyist Jack Abramoff and his lobbying firm, as well as a news account in yesterday's *Washington Post* documenting additional expenses-paid trips to South Korea for DeLay, Crenshaw and Ros-Lehtinen in 2001 and for Carter, Faleomavaega, Honda, McDermott and Pomeroy in 2003, financed by a foreign agent, the Korea-U.S. Exchange Council. Congressional staff also accompanied the Members on all of these junkets.

It is a violation of House ethics rules for a Member or congressional staff to accept travel expenses from "a registered lobbyist or agent of a foreign principal" (clause 5(b)(1)(A) of House Rule 26).

It is the responsibility of the House Committee on Standards of Official Conduct to enforce the rules governing congressional travel privileges and to conduct investigations into possible violations of the ethics rules. As you are aware, however,

American citizens who are not members of Congress have no right to file a formal complaint with the ethics committee requesting an investigation into abuses. Under the embarrassingly self-protective Rules of the House, only a member of Congress can request an investigation into the ethical lapses of fellow colleagues.

On behalf of American citizens who are not members of Congress, we request that you – as leaders of your respective parties in Congress – submit a formal complaint to the House ethics committee requesting an investigation into the charges of abuse of congressional travel privileges by the above-named members of Congress.

Sincerely,

Public Citizen
Judicial Watch
Common Cause
Public Campaign
Center for Responsive Politics
Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington