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Statement of Rep. Henry A. Waxman September 28, 2006

Today, Chairman Tom Davis and I are releasing a joint staff report on Jack Abramoff's efforts to influence White House officials. The report is 95 pages long, and we are releasing with the report 50 pages of billing records and 266 pages of e-mails.

I have tremendous admiration for the role Chairman Davis has played in this investigation. There are obvious partisan and political reasons why a Republican chairman might refuse to examine Mr. Abramoff's relationship with White House officials. Chairman Davis put those considerations aside in the interest of conducting an independent and impartial investigation. In pursuing this inquiry, Chairman Davis has been willing to follow the facts where they lead — even if they lead into the White House itself.

I am proud of the Chairman's leadership and I am proud to be releasing this bipartisan staff report with him today.

The principle the Chairman and I instructed our staffs to follow in preparing the report was to let the facts and the documents speak for themselves. As you will see when you read the report, the report avoids characterizations and spin. It describes the documents objectively so that members of Congress and the public can reach their own conclusions. That's the essence of good oversight.

The report also contains an important caveat, which I want to emphasize. This report is based on documents provided by Mr. Abramoff's former firm, Greenberg Traurig, so for the most part, it can tell only one side of the story. The documents we are releasing are authentic, but that does not mean that Mr. Abramoff or his associates are telling the truth. Further investigation will be necessary to answer these questions.

There are three main points I draw from the bipartisan report and the documents. First, the documents depict a much closer relationship between Mr. Abramoff and White House officials than the White House has previously acknowledged.

Second, if what the documents describe is accurate, there is evidence that White House officials at the most senior levels of our government repeatedly took actions that benefited Mr. Abramoff and his clients.

Third, the documents raise serious questions about the legality and ethics of the actions of multiple White House officials.

Today's bipartisan report on Mr. Abramoff's efforts to lobby the White House raises both investigative and policy issues. As an investigative matter, there are many unanswered questions. We do not know whether White House officials paid for the meals and tickets they received from Mr. Abramoff. We do not know why White House officials were using RNC e-mail accounts to communicate with Mr. Abramoff about official business. And we do not know whether White House officials actually took the actions that the e-mails say they did. I plan to consult with Chairman Davis about the best way to proceed to obtain answers.

As a policy matter, the report underscores the need for fundamental reforms in the laws governing lobbying of the executive branch. Earlier this year, our Committee unanimously approved legislation that would require the disclosure of White House contacts with lobbyists. This legislation, the Executive Branch Reform Act (H.R. 5112), should be a top priority for Congress in the lame duck session.