ONE HUNDRED ELEVENTH CONGRESS

U.S. House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS OF
OFFICIAL CONDUCT

Washington, DC 20515–6328

STATEMENT OF THE CHAIR AND RANKING REPUBLICAN MEMBER OF THE COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS OF OFFICIAL CONDUCT

October 29, 2009

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Committee on Standards of Official Conduct (Standards Committee) has learned that certain electronic files of the Committee may have been exposed to unauthorized and inappropriate access by persons outside the Committee. Neither the Standards Committee's nor the House's information systems have been breached in any way. Our initial review suggests that this unlawful access to confidential information involved the use of peer-to-peer file sharing software on the personal computer of a junior staffer, who is no longer employed by the Committee, while working from home. The potential exposure is limited to several specific documents.

The Standards Committee is taking all appropriate steps to deal with this issue and is working with House Information Security to ensure that the Standards Committee's information systems remain secure.

No matter how robust our cybersecurity systems are, they remain subject to individual error. House Members, Officers and employees are reminded to exercise caution when handling House documents. The Committee notes that the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform has been investigating the privacy and security risks of peer-to-peer networks. Although peer-to-peer technology may offer benefits to the users of such networks – whether consumers, businesses, or government – they should also be aware of risks that may be associated with their use.

At any one time, the Committee has dozens of matters regarding Members, Officers, and employees before it, including both investigations and requests for advice regarding House rules, financial disclosure, and travel, among other issues. No inference to any misconduct can be made from the fact that a matter is simply before the Committee. For these reasons, the range of matters before the Committee is, and should remain, confidential.

The Committee will have no further comment on the matter at this time.