

Statement of Representative Henry A. Waxman
September 26, 2000

During the past four years, Mr. Burton and other Republican leaders have made lots of sensational allegations. We have just heard some new ones today.

So I asked my staff to see if those allegations held up once they were investigated.

Was Vince Foster murdered, for instance, as Mr. Burton suggested? Did the White House collect FBI files for “dirty tricks?” Did the Clinton Administration sell secrets to the Chinese Government for campaign contributions? Did the White House engage in an “abuse of power” by using the Internal Revenue Service to retaliate against “political enemies?”

Did John Huang really visit one of Mr. Burton’s star witnesses, David Wang, and give him a paper bag filled with \$10,000? Did the White House alter video tapes to mislead Congress and the American people? Did the President create a national monument in Utah to help James Riady? Did Attorney General Janet Reno withhold Waco material from Congress? Did Webster Hubbell, on a prison telephone,

actually say "The Riady is it's just not easy to do business with me while I'm here."

These are only a sample of the wild allegations that have been made. More are in a report my staff has compiled, which I will submit for the record. And as documented in this report, these allegations have repeatedly been proven false -- by Independent Counsels, the Senate, or, at times, even this Committee.

Today's hearing is simply more of the same.

Usually, I don't comment on the memos that Mr. Burton sends to Committee members in preparation for our hearings. But today's memo -- like so many of the other allegations -- is full of false and misleading statements. Some of them have been repeated here today.

So I wrote the Chairman a letter to set the record straight, which I will also submit for the record. It points out -- contrary to Mr. Burton's claims -- that several credible Northrop Grumman employees testified that there was no jail threat ... that these Northrop Grumman employees testified that they were never impeded in their efforts to fix the e-mail problem ... and that Mr. Burton's sensational speculation about Northrop Grumman's attorney, Earl Silbert, is just that -- speculation.

It used to be we were accountable for what we did here. We would admit our mistakes and we certainly would try to avoid making new ones.

But that's not the case on this Committee.

One hallmark of the Committee's approach is the search for the missing piece of evidence. It seems no matter how much information is provided to the Committee -- and we've received millions of pages of documents and interviewed hundreds of witnesses at a cost of over \$8 million -- there's always something missing to justify another wild goose chase.

Two years ago, the key was supposed to be four witnesses that the Chairman wanted to immunize: Nancy Lee, Irene Wu, Larry Wong, and Kent La. One Republican leader said they would have -- and I quote -- "direct knowledge about how the Chinese government made illegal campaign contributions." Speaker Gingrich said they would provide information about "a threat to the fabric of our political system."

Although the Democrats on this Committee had many legitimate procedural grievances about how the investigation was being conducted, we agreed to give these witnesses immunity. So we took their depositions and learned that they knew nothing at all.

In fact, one of the witnesses who was supposed to have “direct knowledge” about Chinese conspiracies, Larry Wong, turned out to be a volunteer cook for Democratic donors.

We should keep that experience -- and many others like them -- in mind as we evaluate the Chairman’s claims about the missing e-mails. So far, between 130,000 and 150,000 of the missing White House e-mails have been reconstructed and reviewed. Out of those 130,000-150,000 e-mails, only 55 have had any relevance to this Committee’s investigation.

And out of those 55 e-mails, virtually none contain any new information. In fact, many had been provided in slightly different form to the Committee or other investigators years ago.

My message this afternoon is this: it’s a good idea to discount much of what Mr. Burton said in his statement. It’s likely that the new

allegations will be proven to be as groundless as the ones that have come before.

If you're convinced that the Clinton Administration is corrupt -- as many of my Republican colleagues seem to be -- our Committee's endless pursuit of scandal may seem reasonable.

But most Americans don't share this obsession. Their concerns are providing a good education for their children, reducing the costs of prescription drugs for their parents, protecting the environment for their grandchildren, or paying down the national debt.

To them, we must seem incredibly out of touch.