

# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM

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September 9, 2019

The Honorable Jim Jordan  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Oversight and Reform  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Ranking Member Jordan:

I received your letter today regarding recent Committee staff visits to border sites and immigration detention facilities. Unfortunately, the claims in your latest letter are inaccurate and, in some cases, highly misleading.

For example, your claim that we “did not notify” you about the visit to Juarez is inaccurate. At least five days before the trip, my staff informed your staff about this trip and provided details about the itinerary as they became available. More importantly, they invited your staff to join them on this trip, but your staff declined to go. It is incredibly disingenuous to suggest that you were unaware of this trip.

Your claim that we “did not provide enough notice to the State Department” about the trip to Juarez is also inaccurate. Even though there is no requirement to do so, staff notified the State Department and Mexican officials about the trip the day before, and the State Department officials acknowledged the information and raised no concerns. To the contrary, a State Department official wrote: “Hope the visit goes well. Let me know if you have any follow up questions.” In addition, before traveling to Juarez, our staff put your staff in direct touch with the State Department. Your staff contacted Department officials themselves, raising further questions about why you would claim today that you had no knowledge about it.

Your claim that I have “not explained” why I authorized this trip and your suggestion that the purpose of this trip was to “coach” immigrants on how to exploit immigration law loopholes are also inaccurate. My staff informed your staff—before the trip—that the purpose was to see firsthand the shelters currently housing immigrants who are being blocked from entering the United States to request asylum under our laws. What our staff found there was alarming: the Trump Administration has effectively sealed off the border in El Paso from legal asylum-seekers, leaving thousands of people stranded in Mexico.

Your letter also includes inaccurate and offensive attacks against another Member of Congress, Rep. Veronica Escobar. Rep. Escobar’s office—like other Members’ offices in the

districts we visited—helped support our work. Their assistance is entirely appropriate. You apparently worked with local Members of Congress when you visited the Texas border just last month, a trip you took without any Democratic Members or staff.

Finally, your claim that there was a second international trip is also inaccurate. As my staff informed your staff weeks ago, this was nothing more than a wrong turn at the very busy international border in Tijuana while our staff was en route to the U.S. port of entry facility there. No work was conducted, and staff returned without incident. Our staff informed your staff within minutes and met them at the next regularly-scheduled site visit.

The real question is why you so consistently defend the actions of the Trump Administration without question and without conducting independent oversight, which is our responsibility under the Constitution.

The Trump Administration separated small children and infants from their families in a heartless policy that even some of your own Republican colleagues condemned. The Administration recently made a policy decision to deport critically ill children who would die without the urgent medical care they are receiving at some of our nation's most preeminent hospitals—just to partially reverse the policy in response to widespread public outcry. This Administration diverted funds from military elementary schools and other Pentagon priorities to fund a border wall that the President promised the American people Mexico would pay for. And this Administration has treated immigrants in detention centers in a cruel and inhumane manner, according to independent Inspectors General. Yet, you have repeatedly objected to our Committee's investigations of the Administration's actions.

Before you make more claims against our Committee staff and other Members of Congress, I encourage you to get your facts right. It does not benefit anyone to have inaccurate and misleading claims leaked to the press, just to be debunked within minutes. If you have further concerns in the future, I sincerely urge you to check more carefully with your staff and, if you continue to have concerns, to raise them with me personally. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



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Elijah E. Cummings  
Chairman