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June 16, 1995

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Federal Elections Commission
 Office of General Counsel
 999 E Street, N.W.
 Washington, D.C. 20463

Supplement To
 AOR 1995 - 18

Dear Commissioners:

This letter is to supplement my request for an FEC advisory opinion on whether federal election laws would permit the use of campaign funds to pay for the commissioning of an official portrait of former Banking Committee Chairman, Henry B. Gonzales. The FEC's General Counsel's office has asked three questions concerning my request. First, do these portraits always stay the property of the House? Second, how much will the portrait cost? And, three, will former Members of Congress contribute to the financing of the portrait?

From staff discussions with the curator's office and other House officials, it is my understanding that these portraits are the official property of the House of Representatives and that the costs of commissioning them range from \$10,000 to \$50,000. In addition, it would not be my intent to solicit funds from former Members of Congress, but I cannot preclude the possibility that they may contribute to a fund established for the purpose of commissioning the portrait.

The reason for the request for an advisory opinion from the FEC is to avoid a practice in the past of committees depending on individuals and groups with an interest in legislation before committees. It is my hope that Congress can develop institutional approaches that avoid conflicts and it is my understanding that the House Oversight Committee may be considering new guidelines, including the possibility of further involvement of the U.S. Capitol Historical Society. It is unclear at this point whether such guidelines will be forthcoming.

I hope you find this information helpful. Please feel free to contact me if you need any further information.

Sincerely,


 JAMES A. LEACH
 Chairman