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By Office General of Counsel at 3:54 pm, Dec 22, 2020

Federal Election Commission
Office of General Counsel
999 E Street NW Washington, DC 20463

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to request that the Federal Election Commission (FEC) issue an advisory opinion on whether Members of Congress may use excess campaign funds to protect themselves and their homes by including lighting and wiring costs within the scope of purchasing a security system.

In 2011, in response to a request from Michael McNulty on behalf of former Representative Giffords, the FEC issued an advisory opinion finding that Members of Congress may use excess campaign funds to bolster home security in response to physical threats. Through this opinion, the FEC recognized that Members face threats greater than those to the general public due to their high-profile roles as elected officials. Since taking office as a Member of Congress, I have received numerous direct threats which Capitol Police have investigated. Furthermore, a violent incident occurred in a shared detached garage with my neighbor that has required further security measures.

I consulted with the Office of the House Sergeant at Arms and they recommended we install adequate security systems, which would require that we include additional wiring for a detached garage mentioned above and lighting to provide power and supplemental lighting needed in order for the cameras to pick up images. These services are outside of the scope of tasks that a security team may offer, and as a result, must be completed by an independently hired electrician. This installation is necessary to ensure the proper functioning of a comprehensive security system. This lighting in the surrounding house and wiring conduit from the main house to the detached garage is meant solely for supporting the effectiveness of the security system and not as an 'improvement' to the Member's home.

Minor upgrades to wiring and lighting as is necessary to provide a comprehensive security system to support its proper functioning are necessary and should fall within the allowable use of campaign funds. Therefore, I ask that the FEC issue an advisory opinion on whether Members of Congress may use excess campaign funds to protect themselves and their homes by including lighting and wiring costs within the scope of purchasing a security system.

Sincerely,

Veronica Escobar
Member of Congress