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FEDERAL ELECTION COMMISSION
JULY 6, 2022 5:19 PM
OFFICE OF GENERAL COUNSEL

July 5, 2022

Office of General Counsel
Federal Election Commission
1050 First Street, NE
Washington, DC 20463

VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL

Dear Madam or Sir:

This letter is intended to serve as a formal complaint to the Federal Election Commission ("Commission") against Representative Matt Gaetz. From publicly available information, it clearly appears that Representative Matt Gaetz, his campaign committee, and the committee's Treasurer may have converted campaign funds to the Representative's personal use in violation of the Federal Election Campaign Act as well as of the Internal Revenue Code. That conversion may have occurred when Rep. Gaetz spent campaign funds to pay legal fees that he incurred in connection with efforts to defend himself against a widely reported child-sex trafficking investigation.

Reported Federal Investigation of Mr. Gaetz Unrelated to His Official Duties

On April 3, 2021, Fox News reported that "Federal investigators are reportedly determining whether Gaetz and another Republican paid underage girls for sex..." (Schultz, Marisa. "Orgy, underage girls, sex games and extortion: Inside the allegations surrounding Rep. Matt Gaetz," *FoxNews.com*, April 3, 2021)

On April 13, 2021, Politico reported that "federal agents executed a search warrant and seized his iPhone, according to interviews with three people who were told of the matter by Gaetz, who changed his phone number in late December." (Caputo, Marc. "New Details shed light on Gaetz's Bahamas trip" *Politico*, April 13, 2021)

On May 17, 2021, Fox News published an Associated Press article that states "a Florida politician who emerged as a central figure in the Justice Department's sex trafficking investigation into Rep. Matt Gaetz pleaded guilty Monday to six federal charges and agreed to cooperate with prosecutors as part of a plea deal." ("Matt Gaetz associate Joel Greenberg pleads guilty to sex-trafficking charges," *FoxNews.com*, May 17, 2021).

On January 17, 2022, Fox News reported that "Investigators are trying to determine whether Gaetz violated sex trafficking laws or obstructed justice." (Lee, Michael. "Gaetz's ex-girlfriend granted immunity before testifying in sex-trafficking investigation: report," *FoxNews.com*, January 17, 2022).

Multiple other news agencies have also reported on the existence of the Gaetz investigation.

Questionable Expenditure of Campaign Funds on Legal Fees

Reports filed with the Commission reveal that Gaetz's committee has spent nearly \$200,000 on legal fees between November 2020 and October 2021 - a timeframe which coincides with the beginning of the reported investigation into Mr. Gaetz's personal activities. By comparison, Mr. Gaetz's committee listed less than \$10,000 spent on legal fees between 2016 and 2018.

Between June and October 2021, Mr. Gaetz's committee reportedly paid \$75,000 to New York attorney Marc Fernich. On his website, Mr. Fernich states that his practice "centers on criminal defense." Mr. Fernich's website (FernichLaw.com) lists Jeffrey Epstein, mob boss John A. "Junior" Gotti, drug lord, Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman Loero, and Friends of Matt Gaetz as clients. (See <https://fernichlaw.com/clients>, accessed on July 2, 2022). Mr. Fernich appears well qualified to defend someone in matters related to a federal sex-trafficking investigation.

In June 2021, Mr. Gaetz's committee paid \$25,000 to Zuckerman Spaeder. Among its practice areas, Zuckerman Spaeder lists "investigations" as one of its service areas, stating "half of our partners" served as "former prosecutors" and have helped "hundreds of clients navigate investigations, respond to government inquiries, and work to minimize or avoid enforcement actions..." (See <https://www.zuckerman.com/practices>, accessed on July 2, 2022). Zuckerman Spaeder also appears to be well qualified to defend someone in matters related to a federal sex-trafficking investigation.

Potential Violations of Law that Requires Investigation

The Commission has full authority to determine whether payment of legal expenses is a legitimate expenditure - or an unlawful conversion of donors' funds for personal use. **52 U.S.C. Sec. 30114**. The test should be similar to that applicable under the **Internal Revenue Code Sec. 527(d)** in assessing whether a candidate's use of campaign committee funds is an "exempt function" consistent with the committee's status and purpose, or else an improper diversion for personal use, resulting in a taxable event for the committee - and reportable income to the candidate (with potential penalties): "personal use" is expending the donors' money for any expense that would exist "irrespective" of the candidate's campaign or responsibilities as a federal officeholder."

The circumstances here resemble those in the matter of former Senator Larry E. Craig. As the Commission well knows, Craig represented Idaho in the United States Senate from 1991 to 2009. On June 11, 2007, he was flying from Idaho to Washington, D.C., with a stop for a connecting flight at the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport. During that stop, a police officer arrested the Senator in the airport bathroom on charges of disorderly conduct and interference with privacy. Mr. Craig paid for his legal defense with campaign funds.

On March 4, 2016, in a unanimous opinion written by then-Chief Judge Merrick Garland, the United States Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia affirmed the district court's ruling that former Senator Craig, his campaign committee, and the committee's Treasurer converted campaign funds to the Senator's personal use in violation of the Federal Election Campaign Act. Garland wrote: " ...[T]wenty years of [FEC] advisory opinions have concluded that legal expenditures made in response to charges of campaign or official misconduct are not personal [use]; expenditures to rebut allegations of personal misconduct **are**" (emphasis added). The district court granted summary judgment on the Commission's complaint and ordered Senator Craig to disgorge \$197,535 to the U.S. Treasury and pay a civil penalty of \$45,000. (See **Federal Election Commission vs. Craig for U.S. Senate and Larry E. Craig, Individually, and In His Capacity As Treasurer of Craig for U.S. Senate**, No. 14-5297, March 4, 2016).

Due to widespread media reports, the public has every reason to believe that Mr. Gaetz is under investigation for actions he took unrelated to his duties as a Member of Congress. There is no obvious or apparent legal justification for Mr. Gaetz to spend his campaign funds on personal legal fees related to a reported child sex-trafficking investigation.

As such, I respectfully request that the Federal Election Commission investigate whether Mr. Gaetz is in violation of federal campaign finance laws. For the Commission's information, I intend also to request that the Internal Revenue Service review this matter for potential violations of tax law.

Respectfully,



Cristov Dosev

NOTARIZED:



Michael Price



Michael P Price
NOTARY PUBLIC
STATE OF FLORIDA
Comm# GG927041
Expires 10/28/2023

Noted July 6th 2022. State of Florida
Escambia County.

Provided Florida P.L. - # D210-100-61-3870

Orgy, underage girls, sex games and extortion: Inside the allegations surrounding Rep. Matt Gaetz

Florida GOP congressman faces federal sex-trafficking investigation

April 3, 2021 6:43pm EDT

[Matt Gaetz says he has no plans to step down, denies allegations](#)

FOX News' Kevin Corke reports on evolving details in federal investigation into Florida congressman on 'Special Report'

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Long before bombshell allegations of [federal sex trafficking](#) rocked the political world this week, Rep. [Matt Gaetz](#)'s rumored sexual conduct was already a source of controversy.

When Gaetz was a young state lawmaker in the Florida House of Representatives, he allegedly participated in a competition with fellow male lawmakers to earn points for their sexual conquests, the [Business Insider reported](#) Friday.

Having sex with married lawmakers and spending the night in a college sorority house earned the lawmakers extra points. And the ultimate prize was sleeping with one particular conservative woman, they dubbed the "snitch," in a nod to the "Harry Potter" game of Quidditch, a Republican who worked with Gaetz in the 2010s revealed in an interview with the

Insider.

[REP. MATT GAETZ'S COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR STEPS DOWN AMID FEDERAL INVESTIGATION OF CONGRESSMAN](#)

The game was the "worst kept secret in Tallahassee," the GOP insider said.

The sex competition in Tallahassee has been alleged before by Chris Latvala, a Republican state representative. During a 2020 Twitter feud with his former colleague, Latvala said Gaetz "created a game where members of the FL House got 'points' for sleeping with aides, interns, lobbyists, and married legislators."



Chris Latvala
 @ChrisLatvala · [Follow](#)



And you created a game where members of the FL House got "points" for sleeping with aides, interns, lobbyists, and married legislators. Hope DC is treating you well, Congressman.



Matt Gaetz  @mattgaetz

Sharpton has called

Cops "pigs"
 Whites "interlopers"
 Greeks "homos" and
 Jews "diamond merchants"

So that is pretty disgusting.

10:32 PM · Jan 13, 2020


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Gaetz replied to Latvala at the time, "just because I own you on twitter, don't confuse me for your daddy when it comes to abusing power for sex." That was a reference to Latvala's father, Jack, who [resigned from the Florida Senate](#) in December 2017 amid sexual harassment allegations.

Gaetz's past has come under renewed scrutiny this week amid a steady stream of damning headlines against the 38-year-old congressman -- a top ally to former President Donald Trump who rose to national prominence as a TV-ready surrogate for the president's causes.

Since a federal sex trafficking probe involving Gaetz was made public this week, more reports have surfaced about the conservative firebrand's conduct around women.



[Video](#)

In Congress, Gaetz would brag about his sexual escapades to his colleagues on the House floor and allegedly showed fellow lawmakers nude photos and

videos of women he had slept with, [CNN reported](#) Thursday. One video Gaetz revealed to colleagues allegedly showed a naked woman with a hula hoop.

In Tallahassee, where Gaetz served from 2010 to 2016, some women allegedly referred to the young lawmaker as "Creepy Gaetz" because they were made uncomfortable by him, [ABC News](#) reported.

Years ago, the [Miami Herald first reported](#) on the scoring system that young male lawmakers had used to rank women, but didn't name the lawmakers involved. There were special points given out in sexual conquests for "virgins," a source told ABC News.

Gaetz was often seen trying to pick up young women at 101 Restaurant in Tallahassee, where students from nearby Florida State University would frequent, ABC News reported.



Congressman Matt Gaetz speaks during an outdoor town hall style meeting at the Niceville-Valparaiso Chamber of Commerce Building in Niceville. Gaetz Town Hall

These past tales have emerged in recent days as Gaetz is faced with a federal criminal investigation that apparently started during the Trump Administration under former Attorney General William Barr. Despite the barrage of bad press -- even losing his communications director on Friday -- Gaetz has remained defiant.

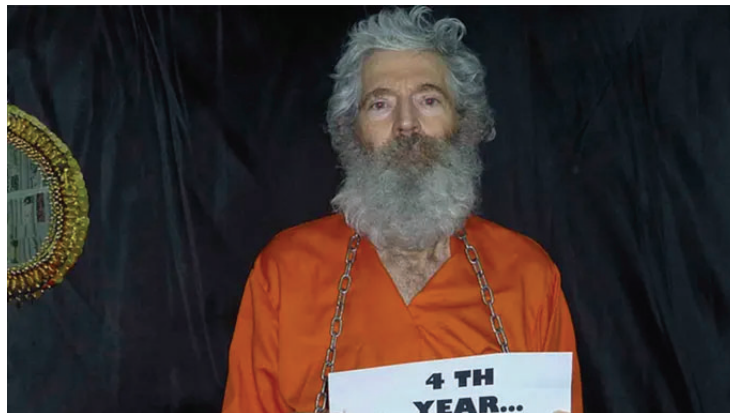
"I'm not resigning," Gaetz [told the Washington Examiner](#) on Friday.

Gaetz has suggested an ex-Justice Department official leaked the criminal investigation to the New York Times because Gaetz and his family would [not participate in a \\$25 million extortion plot](#).

"It is a horrible allegation and it is a lie. The New York Times is running a story that I have traveled with a 17-year-old woman and that is verifiably false. People can look at my travel records and see that that is not the case. What is happening is an extortion of me and my family," Gaetz [told Fox News' Tucker Carlson](#) Tuesday night.

REP. MATT GAETZ DENIES ALLEGATIONS OF SEXUAL MISCONDUCT IN 'TUCKER CARLSON TONIGHT' EXCLUSIVE

The wild extortion plot Gaetz alleges involves a \$25 million payoff to help find missing ex-FBI agent Robert Levinson in Iran in exchange to help Gaetz get out of a federal probe involving a purported orgy with underage girls.



This undated handout photo provided by the family of Robert Levinson after they received it in April 2011, shows retired-FBI agent Robert Levinson. In March 2007, Levinson flew to Kish Island, an Iranian resort awah with tourists, smuggler and organized crime figures. Days later after a meeting with an admitted killer, he vanished. For years the U.S. has publicly described him as a private citizen who was traveling on private business. However, an Associated Press investigation reveals that Levinson was working for the CIA. (AP Photo/Levinson Family)

According to documents obtained and reported by the [Washington Examiner](#), the alleged scheme revolves around attempts by former Air Force intelligence officer Bob Kent and Beggs & Lane attorney David McGee, a former federal prosecutor, to free Levinson. Levinson's family has presumed him to be dead.

Kent reportedly sought a \$25 million loan to fund an operation to rescue Levinson, and promised to help the congressman with legal woes in return. The money was to be transferred into a trust account of law firm Beggs & Lane, bearing the name of McGee, the Levinson family attorney.

Gaetz provided text message screenshots, an email, and a typed document to the Examiner to show the alleged extortion scheme that also involved his father, Don Gaetz, the wealthy former president of the Florida Senate.

MATT GAETZ CASE GETS MORE BIZARRE AS EXTORTION CLAIM INVOLVES SEARCH FOR MISSING EX-FBI AGENT ROBERT LEVINSON

In a document labeled "Project Homecoming" that Kent purportedly gave Don Gaetz, it outlined the feds' alleged case against the congressman saying he's "currently under investigation by the FBI for various public corruption and public integrity issues."

It says the FBI has learned of images of Gaetz in a "sexual orgy with underage prostitutes." The document says at least one underage girl has provided testimony to a Florida grand jury that Gaetz "paid her to engage in sexual activities."

If the Gaetz family paid the \$25 million and Levinson is successfully freed from Iran, Gaetz would be on the plane that returns Levinson to freedom and be "given credit" for facilitating the release, the document said.



FILE - In this Nov. 20, 2012, file photo State Sen. Don Gaetz, R-Niceville, left, is sworn in as Senate president by his son, state Rep. Matt Gaetz, R-Fort Walton Beach, as his daughter, Erin, holds the family bible on Tuesday, Nov. 20, in Tallahassee, Fla. (AP Photo/Bill Cotterell, File) (AP)

Gaetz told Fox News' Tucker Carlson that his family had notified the FBI about the alleged extortion, naming McGee as being behind it. Gaetz said his father had worn a wire during a meeting as part of an investigation of the extortion claim, and that he believes the Times story had been leaked in order to thwart that investigation.

Reached Saturday, McGee called Gaetz's allegations false.

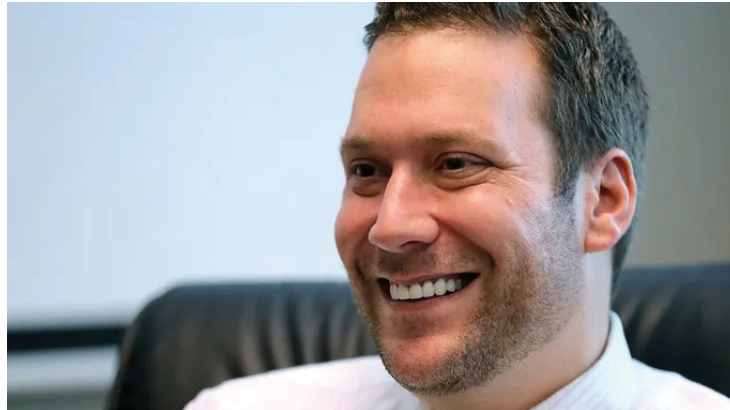
"It's silly. I didn't try to extort anything from anybody," McGee told Fox News. "I'm not going to go much beyond that."

McGee pointed to a statement his Pensacola law firm Beggs & Lane released that called Gaetz's allegations "[false and defamatory](#)."

Federal investigators are reportedly determining whether Gaetz and another Republican paid underage girls for sex or offered them gifts in exchange for sex. The New York Times reported the [existence of the federal investigation](#) on Tuesday first revealing that the feds had zeroed in on whether Gaetz had a sexual relationship with a 17-year-old girl and paid her to travel with him.

MATT GAETZ SAYS HE WON'T RESIGN AS PRESSURE MOUNTS

The Times and other outlets went on to report further details of the investigation that apparently started with Gaetz's political ally, Joel Greenberg. Greenberg is a former GOP Florida tax collector who was indicted last year and is facing a slew of charges, including sex trafficking of a child.



FILE — In this Monday, Sept. 30, 2019, file photo, Seminole County Tax Collector Joel Greenberg talks to the Orlando Sentinel during an interview at his office in Lake Mary, Fla. Greenberg has implicated in an investigation with U.S. Rep. Matt Gaetz, R-Fla., for their involvement with multiple women who were recruited online and received cash payments for sex. (Joe Burbank/Orlando Sentinel via AP) (AP)

The [New York Times reported Friday](#) that the investigation focuses on their alleged involvement with multiple women who were recruited online for sex and received cash payments.

Greenberg, a former tax collector in Seminole County, Fla., allegedly met the women through websites that connect people who go on dates in exchange for gifts, fine dining, travel and allowances, The Times reported. The investigation is looking at whether Greenberg introduced the women to Gaetz and whether the congressman had sex with them, the newspaper reported.

Federal prosecutors are reportedly focused on payments to the women through the mobile payment service Cash App.

Gaetz purportedly came to federal investigators' attention after they learned he was spotted visiting a closed Seminole County Tax Collector's Office on a weekend night with Greenberg back in 2018. Greenberg was there going through a basket of driver's licenses that were turned in by residents for disposal, [the Orlando Sentinel reported](#).

Feds allege Greenberg used fake IDs for individuals he was involved in "sugar daddy relationships" with and to engage in "commercial sex acts," according to [clickorlando.com](#). Greenberg has pleaded not guilty to the charges against him.

Gaetz's office did not immediately respond to Fox News' request for comment about the wave of new reports involving sex games, picture sharing and misconduct. But the congressman has repeatedly denied any criminal wrongdoing, including paying for sex and sleeping with underage women. He said he's been the victim of a federal extortion plot.

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"Matt Gaetz has never paid for sex," Gaetz's office said in a [statement to The Times](#). "Matt Gaetz refutes all the disgusting allegations completely. Matt Gaetz has never ever been on any such websites whatsoever. Matt Gaetz cherishes the relationships in his past and looks forward to marrying the love of his life."



CHEYENNE, WY - JANUARY 28: Rep. Matt Gaetz (R-FL) walks with his fiancée Ginger Luckey before speaking to a crowd during a rally against Rep. Liz Cheney (R-WY) on January 28, 2021 in Cheyenne, Wyoming. Gaetz added his voice to a growing effort to vote Cheney out of office after she voted in favor of impeaching Donald Trump. (Photo by Michael Ciaglo/Getty Images) (Getty Images)

Gaetz proposed to [Ginger Luckey](#), a 26-year-old food analyst, at Mar-a-lago in December 2020. The couple met at Trump's Florida club earlier that year.

Fox News' Ronn Blitzer and Morgan Phillips contributed to this report.



CONGRESS

New details shed light on Gaetz's Bahamas trip

Federal agents executed a search warrant and seized the Florida congressman's iPhone last winter.



Rep. Matt Gaetz, who has not been charged, has consistently denied the two anonymous claims against him: that he had sex with a 17-year-old girl and paid for sex. | Joe Raedle/Getty Images

By **MARC CAPUTO** and **MATT DIXON**

04/13/2021 07:22 PM EDT

Updated: 04/13/2021 08:14 PM EDT



MIAMI — The group took off for their Bahamas weekend getaway on three separate flights. Most of the passengers, which included at least five young women, flew out of Orlando on two separate private planes. Matt Gaetz flew commercial.

The details of that September 2018 trip are sparse, but they are critical to the allegations against Gaetz, the Florida congressman currently the subject of a federal sex-crimes investigation that is threatening his career.

AD

Gaetz, who has not been charged, has consistently denied the two anonymous claims against him: that he had sex with a 17-year-old girl and paid for sex.

Gaetz's predicament as the subject of a serious investigation became clearer this winter when federal agents executed a search warrant and seized his iPhone, according to interviews with three people who were told of the matter by Gaetz, who changed his phone number in late December. Around that time, the sources said, federal agents also seized his former girlfriend's phone before she went into work in the morning. She declined comment.

At the time of the 2018 trip, Gaetz was a top adviser to Republican Ron DeSantis, who was running for governor, and went on to manage his transition team months later. DeSantis has long been a top Gaetz ally but declined to comment on his legal woes Monday when asked by reporters.

In the Bahamas, Gaetz was joined by two GOP allies: Halsey Beshears, then a state legislator, and Jason Pirozzolo, a hand surgeon and Republican fundraiser for DeSantis, according to three sources, including one who was part of the group.

Also among those on the trip: the former minor who is key to the investigation, whose presence on the trip was previously unreported. According to one of the women in the group who spoke on condition of anonymity, everyone on the trip was over the age of 18 — including the woman in question, who had turned 18 years old months before the trip, she said.

The woman was born in December 1999, according to a personal website, but POLITICO has been unable to confirm the woman's official date of birth.

No one on the trip engaged in prostitution, the source said.

But questions surrounding the ages of some of the women surfaced immediately upon their return — three of them looked so young when they returned on Beshears' private plane that U.S. Customs briefly stopped and questioned him, according to sources familiar with the trip, including a woman on the flight.

As the investigation intensified this winter, Beshears abruptly resigned as Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation Secretary, a post that made him the state's top business regulator, noting he had contracted Covid-19. But he confided to two friends recently that he believes he's the subject of the investigation, the friends told POLITICO.

Beshears refused comment and his lawyer did not return calls. Both the lawmaker and his former girlfriend declined to comment.

Conspicuously absent from the 2018 Bahamas trip was [another official in their circle](#), former Seminole County Tax Collector Joel Greenberg, whose alleged criminal conduct sparked the wide-ranging investigation. Indicted last August for sex trafficking the underage girl in question — conduct federal authorities say occurred between May and November 2017 — Greenberg is currently in jail and reportedly contemplating a deal with federal prosecutors as he faces 33 charges including federal stalking and a host of financial crimes. In July 2020, as the full scope of his legal troubles were coming into view, Greenberg made a failed attempt to get politically connected friends to ask Gaetz to get President

Donald Trump to pardon him, two of the friends told POLITICO.

Greenberg was not invited to the Bahamas, the three sources said, because of a conflict with Pirozzolo's girlfriend. Pirozzolo, who recently told patients that his office was closed “[due to a family emergency](#),” could not be reached for comment, nor could his lawyer or girlfriend.

The woman whose age is in question has also declined to comment on the case, in which investigators are also examining whether sex was explicitly exchanged for money or drugs. POLITICO is withholding her name because she is the alleged victim of a sex crime.

Before his indictment for sex-trafficking the underage girl, Greenberg told a mutual friend in an Aug. 14 WhatsApp chat last year that federal agents sought to speak to her, but she was unwilling.

AD

“They contacted her and are wanting her to talk. She doesn’t want to talk to them,”[he wrote to the friend](#).

The woman’s testimony would be crucial in a case against Gaetz — among other details, she can clarify her age when they allegedly had sexual relations. Three Gaetz friends told POLITICO that the lawmaker, who was single at the time, had told them he had sexual relations with the woman after she turned 18.

And as one of at least five women who went on the Bahamas trip with Gaetz, she could shed light on details that would be key to a prosecution under the Mann Act, which forbids transporting people of any age across state lines for purposes of prostitution. An attorney representing another target in the Greenberg indictment said investigators are examining the Bahamas trip in light of the Mann Act.

Such cases can be complicated, which is one reason prosecutors in Florida gave up more than a decade ago on filing federal charges against notorious pedophile Jeffrey Epstein. Federal prosecutors in New York did indict Epstein in 2019, but he died in jail weeks later, apparently by suicide.

Former federal judge Paul Cassell, a University of Utah law professor, cautioned that the statute “is largely in disuse but it still remains a theoretical option” for prosecutors.

Some of the women on the Bahamas trip entered the orbit of Gaetz and Greenberg through the SeekingArrangement website — a dating website that connects women with so-called sugar daddies — according to interviews with friends and associates who know the two men, and Greenberg introduced him to young women he met on the site. Gaetz said he’s never been on the site.

Lawrence Walters, a First Amendment lawyer in Orlando who has represented sugar daddy websites and clients accused of prostitution, said prosecutions in such cases can be difficult.

“Every type of dating relationship has an exchange of value. It’s largely why law enforcement hasn’t wanted to weigh into these sugar daddy-type relationships area because of that tremendous grey area,” Walters said, noting the distinction between “dating and exchange of value in a relationship vs. all-out commercial prostitution. We don’t have a lot of court rulings on that. Prosecutors tend to focus on very clear cases so they don’t get into these issues. But if they wanted to pursue a sugar daddy-type relationship, dating relationship, there are very thorny personal, societal and constitutional issues they have to deal with.”

Josh Gerstein contributed to this report.

FILED UNDER: FLORIDA, MATT GAETZ

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Matt Gaetz associate Joel Greenberg pleads guilty to sex-trafficking charges

Federal prosecutors examining whether Gaetz and Greenberg paid underage girls and escorts or offered them gifts in exchange for sex

[Associated Press](#) ORLANDO, Fla. (AP) –

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A [Florida](#) politician who emerged as a central figure in the [Justice Department](#)'s sex trafficking investigation into [Rep. Matt Gaetz](#) pleaded guilty Monday to six federal charges and agreed to cooperate with prosecutors as part of a plea deal.

Joel Greenberg, a longtime associate of Gaetz, appeared in federal court in Orlando. He pleaded guilty to six of the nearly three dozen charges he faced, including sex trafficking of a minor, and he admitted that he had paid at least one underage girl to have sex with him and other men.

Gaetz was not mentioned in the plea agreement or during the court hearing. But Greenberg's cooperation — as a key figure in the investigation and a close ally of Gaetz — may escalate the potential legal and political liability

that the firebrand Florida congressman is facing.

Federal prosecutors are examining whether Gaetz and Greenberg paid underage girls and escorts or offered them gifts in exchange for sex, according to two people familiar with the matter. Investigators have also been looking at whether Gaetz and his associates tried to secure government jobs for some of the women, the people said. They are also scrutinizing Gaetz's connections to the medical marijuana sector, including whether his associates sought to influence legislation Gaetz sponsored.

BIDEN DOJ NOMINEE KRISTEN CLARKE WALKS BACK ATTACKS ON SENATORS, KAVANAUGH AMID CONTENTIOUS CONFIRMATION

The people had knowledge of the investigation but were not allowed to publicly discuss the ongoing investigation and spoke to The Associated Press on the condition of anonymity.

Gaetz has denied the allegations and any accusation of wrongdoing and has said repeatedly he will not resign from Congress. A spokesman for the congressman has said Gaetz "never had sex with a minor and has never paid for sex."

During the nearly hourlong hearing Monday, Greenberg acknowledged he understood the charges he was pleading guilty to and the possible punishment he faced and told the judge he was of a sound frame of mind.

U.S. Magistrate Judge Leslie Hoffman told Greenberg that even though prosecutor may request some leniency from his sentencing judge because of his cooperation, there was no guarantee a judge would agree to the prosecutors' recommendations and that Greenberg would be unable to change his plea. No sentencing date was immediately set.

Monday's court appearance marked the first time Greenberg has been seen in court since the Gaetz investigation blew into the public spotlight in March. Outside the courthouse, a plane flew over during the hearing pulling a banner that read: "TICK TOCK MATT GAETZ."

ORGY, UNDERAGE GIRLS, SEX GAMES AND EXTORTION: INSIDE THE ALLEGATIONS SURROUNDING REP. MATT GAETZ

After the hearing Greenberg was taken back to jail in handcuffs and shackles, wearing a dark inmate uniform and looking worn down.

As part of his plea deal, Greenberg, who served as the tax collector in Seminole County, admitted he recruited women for commercial sex acts and paid them more than \$70,000 from 2016 to 2018, sometimes through online payment services like Venmo. They include at least one underage girl he paid to have sex with him and others, the plea agreement says.

Prosecutors wrote in the plea agreement that Greenberg had introduced the girl to others, who also "engaged in commercial sex acts" with her. The agreement does not identify the men.

Greenberg first met the girl online from a website where she was posing as an adult and first paid her \$400 after a meeting on a boat, the documents said. He later invited her to hotels in Florida where he and others would have sex with her and supplied the girl and other people with ecstasy, according to the plea deal.

In total, prosecutors say Greenberg had sex with the girl at least seven times.

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Greenberg's legal scrutiny began when he was arrested last summer on charges of stalking a political opponent, Brian Beute. Prosecutors said he

mailed fake letters to the school where his opponent worked, signed by a nonexistent "very concerned student," who alleged the opponent had engaged in sexual misconduct with another student.

"I wouldn't want to be him," Beute, who showed up at the courthouse on Monday, said after the hearing.

Greenberg is also accused of embezzling \$400,000 from the Seminole County Tax Collector's office, according to the indictment filed against him.

Gaetz's ex-girlfriend granted immunity before testifying in sex trafficking investigation: report

Investigators are trying to determine whether Gaetz violated sex trafficking laws or obstructed justice

January 18, 2022 7:37am EST

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An unnamed ex-girlfriend of Rep. [Matt Gaetz](#), R-Fla., was granted immunity by prosecutors before her testimony in front of a federal grand jury last week as part of a sex trafficking investigation of the lawmaker, according to a report.



Rep. Matt Gaetz. (Photo by Anna Moneymaker/Getty Images)

ORGY, UNDERAGE GIRLS, SEX GAMES AND EXTORTION: INSIDE THE ALLEGATIONS SURROUND REP. MATT GAETZ

"This may be a willing participant who has a smart lawyer who sought an immunity deal from the government," CBS News legal analyst Rikki Kleiman said in a report [by the network](#) Monday. "The government does not give immunity blindly, they know what they're getting in exchange."

Investigators are trying to determine whether Gaetz violated sex trafficking laws or obstructed justice, with the woman being seen as a potential key witness in the case. One source told CBS News that she has information related to both allegations against the congressman, with investigators looking into whether Gaetz had a phone call with the ex-girlfriend and another woman who was already a witness in the probe.



Rep. Matt Gaetz, R-Fla. (AP Photo/Marta Lavandier)

Gaetz has denied all wrongdoing in the case, saying that he has never paid for sex or had sexual relations with an underage female. An attorney for Gaetz told CBS News last week that "we have seen no credible basis for a charge against Congressman Gaetz. We remain steadfast in our commitment to challenge any allegations with the facts and law."

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Rep. Matt Gaetz, R-Fla. (AP Photo/Phelan M. Ebenhack, File)

Part of the investigation circles around an alleged 2018 trip Gaetz took to the Bahamas with the ex-girlfriend, another woman and a third 18-year-old woman with whom Gaetz was allegedly in a sexual relationship at the time, with investigators trying to determine whether the sexual relationship started before the woman turned 18.

Investigators are also attempting to find out if any of the women were paid to have sex with the [Florida](#) lawmaker or were illegally trafficked across state and international borders to have sex with Gaetz.