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One Hundred Seventeenth
Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON HOUSE ADMINISTRATION

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October 10, 2022

Cavalier Johnson
Mayor, City of Milwaukee, Wisconsin
City Hall
200 E. Wells Street, Room 201
Milwaukee, WI 53202

Dear Mayor Johnson:

As the Republican Members of the Committee on House Administration, which has broad oversight of our nation's federal elections, we write today to express our concern about the recent announcement of the Milwaukee Votes 2022 campaign, a privately funded, government-sponsored, partisan get-out-the-vote effort you endorsed while acting in your official capacity as mayor of Milwaukee.¹

We hope you agree that election integrity is of utmost importance to the success of our form of government and we should all strive to build confidence in our electoral system. Partisan politics should play no role in the official management, oversight, and operations of an election. However, your recent announcement has raised serious concerns about whether your office and the City of Milwaukee are allowing partisan politics to interfere with the operation of the upcoming election.

When pressed on the issue, your office directed all inquiries to GPS Impact, a self-proclaimed progressive organization that "help[s] Democrats, progressive organizations and initiatives, and elected officials win in red states."² At the same time, you and your office have claimed this program is nonpartisan. At the very least, announcing support of a partisan campaign effort in your official capacity gives the appearance of impropriety, which can only serve to undermine voters' faith in our elections processes and confidence in their results. At worst, this is a violation of the City of Milwaukee code of ethics and worthy of a formal investigation under the standards of conflict regulations.³ Given recent issues with outside funding for election administration that has shaken confidence in our elections, we take very seriously our responsibility to oversee federal elections, and actions like your announcement, at a minimum, jeopardize voter confidence in a time we can least afford it.⁴

We understand the Wisconsin Assembly Committee on Campaigns and Elections has launched an investigation, which our Committee staff will be monitoring closely. In the interest of ensuring that voter confidence in our elections processes and outcomes is protected in the next federal election, please provide copies of all communications you or anyone in your office

¹ Jason Calvi, *Milwaukee's mayor backs door-to-door election push*, FOX6 Milwaukee (Sep 12, 2022) <https://www.fox6now.com/news/draft-milwaukees-mayor-backs-door-to-door-election-push>; *See also* Jason Calvi (@jasoncalvi), Twitter (Sep 12, 2022) ("Milwaukee Mayor Johnson says city will be using a private grant to conduct door-to-door canvassing to urge people to vote" <https://twitter.com/jasoncalvi/status/1569361318666436614>; *see also* Jason Calvi, *Wisconsin GOP sues Milwaukee mayor vote effort*, FOX6 Milwaukee (Sept. 30, 2022), <https://www.fox6now.com/news/wisconsin-gop-sues-milwaukee-mayor-vote-effort>

² GPS Impact Home Page, <https://gpsimpact.com/> (last visited September 16, 2022)

³ Milwaukee, WI., Ord. Ch. 303-5

⁴ Jonathan Bain, *The Wisconsin "Zuckerbucks" Problem: New Data Reveals Private Funding of Election Offices Was More Widespread Than Initially Estimated*, FGA (July 13, 2022) <https://thefga.org/paper/the-wisconsin-zuckerbucks-problem/>

has had with GPS Impact or Milwaukee Votes 2022.⁵ Further, please respond with a detailed explanation of how your office's involvement with Milwaukee Votes 2022 complies with relevant state and federal law, taking into particular account (1) restrictions on the use of federal Help America Vote Act ("HAVA") grant funds, appropriated by Congress, that the City of Milwaukee may have received from the U.S. Election Assistance Commission; as well as (2) requirements under the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971, as amended, which requires organizations that receive contributions or make expenditures over certain thresholds and in connection with a federal election, must properly register and report their activity to the Federal Elections Commission.⁶

We look forward to receiving your response no later than October 19, 2022. Please contact Caleb Hays, Republican General Counsel and Deputy Staff Director, with any questions.

Sincerely,



Rodney Davis
Ranking Member
Committee on House Administration



Bryan Steil
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Elections,
Committee on House Administration



Barry Loudermilk
Member
Committee on House Administration

⁵ Wis. Stat. Ann. § 19.35

⁶ See U.S. ELECTION ASSISTANCE COMM'N, FAO-08-005, FUNDING ADVISORY OPINION (Sept. 14, 2010), https://www.eac.gov/sites/default/files/document_library/files/FAO-08-005_EAC_1.pdf; See also U.S. ELECTION ASSISTANCE COMM'N, HAVA FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS, <https://www.eac.gov/payments-and-grants/grants-faqs>). See also U.S. ELECTION ASSISTANCE COMM'N, HAVA FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS, <https://www.eac.gov/payments-and-grants/grants-faqs>.